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Kyiv Post

UKRAINE'S GLOBAL VOICE • SINCE 1995

26th year!

Faking it: Forgery of COVID-19 certificates endemic

By Anna Myroniuk
myroniuk@kyivpost.com

"You don't have to get vaccinated to obtain a certificate," an anonymous Telegram channel tells its 500 followers. "We'll do it all for you."

The channel, called "Getting COVID-certificate," claims to sell forged vaccination documents, both paper and digital, which will pass for the real thing.

It's one of many accounts offering falsified vaccination certificates on

social media. As proof of vaccination becomes increasingly important in everyday life, these scams started booming in Ukraine a month ago to meet growing demand.

By Sept. 23, all of Ukraine's 24 oblasts moved from the "green" to

the "yellow" adaptive quarantine status, imposing restrictions on dining out, mass gatherings and cultural events. People with proof of vaccination are exempt from these restrictions.

Some people also buy forged vac-

ination documents to travel abroad. The European Union countries began accepting Ukrainian certificates in August. Other people buy fakes to display at their workplace

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Remembering Babyn Yar

Israeli president will pay his respects in Kyiv



Opinion

Michael Brodsky

This year, the world marks the 80th anniversary of mass shootings in Babyn Yar.

On Sept. 29 and 30, 1941, the Nazis murdered over 33,000 Jewish men, women and children.

Later, they used this site to shoot Jews, Ukrainian, Roma as well as the patients of the Kyiv psychiatric hospital, Soviet POWs, partisans, resistance members. The total number of people murdered in Babyn Yar is estimated at 70,000 to 100,000.

What happened here went down in history as one of the largest mass murders of civilians during World War II. Mass executions of Jews happened also in other cities of Ukraine — every town, every village on the way of the Nazi troops has its own ditch or a pit which became a grave for thousands of people, whose only guilt was that they were Jews. But it was Babyn Yar that forever became a major symbol of the Holocaust in the post-Soviet space.

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People light candles at the Minora memorial in Kyiv on Sept. 29, 2021, on the 80th anniversary of the start of the Babyn Yar massacre, when more than 33,000 people, most of them Jews, were executed in the Kyiv ravine. Over the next two years, Nazi Germany killed an estimated 100,000 people at Babyn Yar.

International leaders, including the presidents of Germany and Israel, will join Ukraine in marking the 80th anniversary of the massacres in Babyn Yar, the Kyiv ravine where Nazis killed 100,000 people from 1941-1943 and 33,000 in a two-day period alone.

See the list of public events on page 8

Honoring lives lost to the Nazis' mass killing machine



Opinion

Yuri Polakiwsky

The upcoming commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre will attract hundreds of foreign visitors and dignitaries from around the world. Many will be coming to Ukraine for the first time.

A large delegation will arrive from New York and will be largely made up of political dignitaries, representing the state of New York and New York City.

Their primary goal, of course, will be to commemorate the 33,000 Ukrainian Jews that were massacred at this site over a two-day period in September 1941, a killing field that eventually saw the murder of thousands of Ukrainian nationalists, communists and others at the hands of the invading Nazis.

This commemoration is supported by many of Ukraine's Western friends and partners, an important act of recognition of the murder

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OCTOBER 7



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Mailing address:
Kyiv Post, 68 Zhylianska St.,
Kyiv, Ukraine, 01033

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

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

Subscription & Distribution
tel. +380 44 591-3344
subscribe@kyivpost.com

Employment Advertising
tel. +380 44 591-7788
advertising@kyivpost.com

Adnan Kivan
Publisher

Brian Bonner
Executive Director/Chief Editor

Alyona Nevmerzhytska
Commercial Director

News Editor
Igor Kossov

Features Editor
Toma Istomina

Photo Editor:
Pavlo Podufalov

Multimedia Editor:
Austin Malloy

Chief Designer:
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Natalia Datskevych, Olena Goncharova,
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Accountant: Aleksandra Lyfar.

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Office Manager: Lena Veleshchuk.

IT: Oleksiy Bondarchuk,
Oleksandr Slipachenko.

Cartoonist: Anatoliy Vasylenko.

Big Tobacco tries to improve its image through 'greenwashing'

By Dylan Carter
carter@kyivpost.com

The United Nations Global Compact Ukraine, an initiative promoting responsible business practices, recently named international tobacco giant Imperial Tobacco as one of "the most responsible and far-sighted companies in Ukraine."

While the company has basked in praise, almost 28% of cancer deaths in Ukraine in 2020 were attributed to smoking. Also, according to the World Health Organization, the global tobacco industry has accelerated deforestation, it uses massive amounts of water and contaminates water systems worldwide.

"For decades, tobacco companies in Ukraine, have been using sustainability ratings for greenwashing and legitimizing themselves as trustworthy and socially responsible," Lilia Olefir, executive director of anti-tobacco advocacy center Life, told the Kyiv Post.

"Greenwashing" is a PR strategy when companies hide behind ecological and social initiatives to distract from their dubious business practices.

"This allows the industry to gain access to the policy-making table where they can advocate for preferential policies," Olefir added.

UN Global Compact Ukraine and Imperial Tobacco Ukraine did not respond to the Kyiv Post's request for comment.

Greenwashing strategy

Global corporations attempt to mask or detract attention from their unsustainable business practices by hiding behind the label of sustainable development and environmental friendliness.

The United Nations Global Compact, which encourages companies to partake in sustainable and socially responsible practices, heavily discourages the participation of tobacco companies in its program and forbids its use in attempts "to raise their profile."

This rule has not stopped UN Global Compact Ukraine from including Imperial Tobacco in its ranking of the sustainability of Ukrainian companies.

Meanwhile, tobacco companies do far more harm than good. Every year, about 4.5 trillion toxic cigarette butts are released into the environment. Tobacco growing depletes the soil, and toxic pesticides and chemical fertilizers pollute ground-water and rivers, Olefir said. About 200 hectares of forest is cut down to grow tobacco yearly.



A man holds a pack of cigarettes outside a kiosk in Kyiv on Sept. 30, 2021. International tobacco company Imperial Tobacco recently attempted to greenwash its image using a ranking by UN Global Compact Ukraine, which labelled it as one of "the most responsible companies in Ukraine."

She added that contrary to popular belief, cigarette filters are made of cellulose acetate which takes longer than 10 years to decompose and arsenic and mercury from cigarettes penetrates into the ground, slowing and stunting the growth of plants.

"The tobacco industry always uses a variety of positive ratings, sponsors research on reducing the harm of tobacco to the environment to greenwash its reputation," said Olefir. "Under the guise of beautiful words, they continue to contaminate the earth with toxins and kill their customers. That is why tobacco corporations are constantly looking for new smokers among teenagers and young people."

"To reduce cigarette butts, it's necessary to introduce an environmental tax for tobacco companies and strengthen legislation to reduce the number of teenagers, who use tobacco — because according to research, 95% of smokers start smoking before the age of 21."

Tobacco companies aren't the only ones using the greenwashing strategy. The field of corporate social responsibility in Ukraine is a fast-growing industry.

Some companies organize so-called "socially conscious" programs to divert attention from less socially conscious business practices, Maryna Saprykina, chairman of the board of the CSR Development Center, told the Kyiv Post.

Major companies try to gain recognition from international orga-

nizations to portray themselves as being guided by sustainability when in reality they are not.

Saprykina said that major companies in dire need of a new reputation regularly approach the center, which helps develop responsible corporate practices in Ukraine.

"We encountered situations when a company received negative comments about its corporate social responsibilities from investors and wanted to join our community immediately," she said.

In most cases of greenwashing, products are mislabeled as "bio" or "eco-friendly," when most are not. Companies use misleading branding to appear more environmentally friendly than they are.

In a 2017 paper published by the National Technical University of Ukraine, a researcher highlighted many instances of misleading labels on popular brands across Ukraine.

One brand called out by the paper was Ukrainian horilka (vodka) producer Morosha, which in 2014 created the world's first "eco-horilka," made from the "water of Lake Synevyr." Local experts, however, concluded that this was just a marketing ploy, as the western Ukrainian lake contains very little water.

Another example is the Coca-Cola-owned bottled water company "BonAqua," that sells a so-called "eco-friendly" bottle containing 20% less plastic, which is supposedly easier to recycle.

While these bottles do use less packaging, the research illustrated that the savings were used for eco-advertising, which led to more bottle sales and even more waste.

Ukraine does not currently have the infrastructure to recycle plastic bottles and much of the extra plastic ended up in a landfill. According to Nestlé, as little as 16% of waste in Ukraine is segregated and only 5–6% is recycled.

Coca Cola didn't answer the Kyiv Post's request for comment.

Misleading labels

The Ukrainian government recent-

ly attempted to crack down on attempts to use greenwashing to influence and mislead consumers, especially about consumer products.

In August 2019, Ukraine enacted a law to limit misleading titles in consumer brands. The use of the words "eco," "organic," and "bio" now require official certification.

According to Saprykina, corporate responsibility is still developing in Ukraine.

"In terms of business ethics, I believe that it is improving, and companies are working more closely with suppliers, customers, employees and communities," she said.

"Both social media and greater transparency influence this."

CSR for investment

Still, there are many successful, well-intentioned and thoroughly developed CSR projects in Ukraine.

Saprykina provided the Kyiv Post with many examples of sustainable corporate practices in Ukraine.

For instance, tech company Softserve created projects to test web applications on behalf of the visually impaired; Starline Media was rewarded for its robust HR and diversity practices, in which it increased the share of women at all levels of the company; and Ukrainian law firm Asters launched charity races on behalf of children with cancer.

The head of the CSR Development Center board also advised Ukrainian companies to pay attention to the projects they implement, ensuring that their projects are both sustainable and fully developed.

A company's CSR practices may now determine how likely it is to attract foreign investment, retain customers and expand into new, socially conscious markets.

"It is important not to forget that companies that want to work in the European market should pay attention to CSR, because EU countries... are increasingly paying attention to what the company is doing," Saprykina stated. ☺

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BELARUS

Belarusian opposition activists **Andrei Sannikov, Dmitry Bondarenko and Oleg Bebenin** — assaulted by Korotkikh and his ally and relative Valery Ignatovych in February 1999

Opposition leader **Yury Zakharenko** — killed in May 1999; Ignatovych was investigated as part of the “death squads” case into the murders of opposition leaders

Opposition leaders **Viktor Honchar, Anatoly Krasovsky** — killed in September 1999; Ignatovych was investigated as part of the “death squads” case into the murders of opposition leaders

Azeri citizens — killed in March 2000; Ignatovych was charged with murdering them

Journalist **Dmitry Zavadsky** — killed in July 2000; Ignatovych was convicted of kidnapping him, Korotkikh was interrogated in the case

Neo-Nazi **Gleb Samoylov** — killed in August 2000; Ignatovych and Korotkikh were investigated in the murder case

Opposition activist **Oleg Bebenin** — allegedly committed suicide in September 2010

Belarusian anti-fascists — assaulted by Korotkikh in February 2013

Death & violence seem to follow Sergei Korotkikh in 3 countries



RUSSIA

Neo-Nazi nicknamed Wolf — killed in 2002; Korotkikh's ally and friend Maksym Martsinkevich was investigated in the murder case

Two immigrants — killed in 2003; Martsinkevich was investigated in the murder case

Prostitute, Armenian and two immigrants — killed in 2004; Martsinkevich was investigated in the murder case

Shamil Odamanov and a Tajik citizen — killed in April 2007; Korotkikh and Martsinkevich were charged with murder

Explosion on Moscow's Manezhnaya Square — December 2007; Korotkikh was investigated over the incident

27 immigrants — killed in 2008; Korotkikh's allies from neo-Nazi group NSO-Sever convicted of murder

Korotkikh's allies **Roman Nifontov, Maksym Bazylev** — allegedly committed suicide in 2009

Korotkikh's ally **Maksym Martsinkevich** — allegedly committed suicide in September 2020

Korotkikh's ally **Artyom Kostylev** — allegedly committed suicide in October 2020

UKRAINE

Azov fighter **Artem Merkulov** — killed in Zaporizhzhia Oblast in July 2015 following an alleged conflict with Korotkikh and other Azov members

Azov fighter **Yaroslav Babych** — allegedly committed suicide in July 2015; his wife accused Korotkikh of murdering him

Journalist **Pavel Sheremet** — killed in July 2016; Korotkikh visited him on the eve of the murder following an alleged quarrel with him

Azov fighter **Oleksandr Alyabyev** — allegedly committed suicide in August 2016

Student **Danylo Savchenko** — killed in May 2017 following an alleged conflict with Azov members

Azov fighter **Vitaly Knyazhesky** — allegedly committed suicide in October 2017

Regional lawmaker **Vyacheslav Sobolev's** three-year old son — killed in December 2019 as a result of an assassination attempt on Sobolev; Sobolev named Azov member Mykhaylo Ivanyuk as one of the potential organizers

Nationalists **Serhiy Filimonov, Nazary Kravchenko** — assaulted by Azov members in April 2020

Azov member **Maksym Pashkevych** — allegedly committed suicide in September 2020 after telling Yaroslav Babych's wife about Korotkikh's alleged involvement in his murder

Nationalist **Ivan Beletsky** — accused Korotkikh of organizing assaults on him in December 2020 and February 2021 after he published an expose on Korotkikh

Honor nationalist group — assaulted by Azov members in June 2021

Belarusian activist **Vitaly Shishov** — killed in August 2021; he was acquainted with Korotkikh and allegedly had disagreements with Azov members

Suspicious deaths around Azov fighter remain uninvestigated

By Kyiv Post

Sergei Korotkikh, a member of Ukraine's Azov volunteer force, has been a member of neo-Nazi and far-right movements in three countries.

He grew up in Belarus, then moved to Russia in the early 2000s and went on to Ukraine in 2014. In Ukraine, he fought against Russia as part of the Azov contingent and was a top police official under ex-Interior Minister Arsen Avakov.

Some of the groups that Korotkikh joined have publicly praised Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler and declared a “racial war” on immigrants. In Ukraine, Korotkikh continues to espouse far-right ideas and casts himself as a crusader against Western liberalism.

But questions are raised about whether Korotkikh's actions are more dangerous than his views. Members of the far-right groups co-led by Korotkikh have been convicted of murders and were involved in numerous assaults.

Also, multiple people around Korotkikh have been killed or died in suspicious circumstances in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Some of the dead may have known a great deal about the fighter and his alleged crimes.

Korotkikh could be crucial in helping to solve the 2016 murder of Belarusian journalist Pavel Sheremet

and the 2021 hanging death of Belarusian activist Vitaly Shishov. The official Sheremet investigation has effectively reached a dead end, and no progress has been reported in the Shishov case.

Korotkikh, who was charged by Russia with the 2007 murders of two immigrants near Moscow, had been investigated in several criminal cases before but always escaped punishment.

His critics say that he got away with everything due to his alleged links to Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian intelligence agencies and law enforcement bodies, and due to testimony he gave against his closest associates.

In Ukraine, he and his fellow Azov fighters enjoyed the patronage of Avakov, the former interior minister and one of the nation's most powerful officials from 2014–2021.

Ukraine's dysfunctional law enforcement has failed to investigate Korotkikh's alleged wrongdoings, deepening the sense of impunity with which extremists operate in Ukraine. Despite ultra-nationalists being a political fringe group in Ukraine, rumors about Korotkikh have played into the false Kremlin narrative that neo-Nazis are running the country.

Korotkikh, who previously denied the accusations of wrongdoing, did not respond to requests for comment.

“Azov's official position can only be stated about the events that concern Azov fighters during the period when they officially served,” the press service of the Azov regiment told the Kyiv Post. “The questions you asked do not concern (Azov's) activities.”

Belarusian period

Korotkikh, who is of Belarusian descent, was born in Russia and grew up in Belarus, where his first intelligence links appeared.

In the 1990s, Korotkikh served in Belarus' military intelligence and studied at the Belarusian KGB academy. At the time, both Korotkikh and his relative Valery Ignatovych were among the leading members of the Belarusian branch of RNE, a Russian neo-Nazi group.

The first violent episodes, murders and mysterious deaths around Korotkikh, also occurred in Belarus.

In February 1999, Korotkikh took part in an assault by neo-Nazis against Belarusian opposition activists Andrei Sannikov, Dmitry Bondarenko and Oleg Bebenin.

“Sannikov was lying in a pool of blood, and several people were kicking him,” Bondarenko told the Charter 97 news site in 2013. “He was in effect being killed.”

Korotkikh later dismissed the incident as an “ordinary clash between subcultures.”

In 2010, Bebenin was found dead

in what appeared to be a fabricated suicide.

Korotkikh's relative Ignatovych has been given a life sentence by a Belarusian court for a murder and an armed assault that took place in Minsk Oblast in December 1999.

Ignatovych was also charged with killing five Azeri citizens in March 2000. Despite extensive incriminating evidence, Ignatovych was acquitted of this crime.

Korotkikh testified against Ignatovych, saying that the knife found on the crime scene belonged to his relative.

Ignatovych has also been convicted of kidnapping Belarusian journalist Dmitry Zavadsky, who disappeared in July 2000 and is believed to be dead. He was the cameraman and friend of Sheremet, who was assassinated in Kyiv in 2016.

A spade with Zavadsky's DNA was found in Ignatovych's car but that was not enough to upgrade the conviction from kidnapping to murder.

Korotkikh was also interrogated in the Zavadsky case but escaped official charges. He told a Belarusian news site in 2015 he had an alibi in the case.

In 2000, two bodies were found near the town of Krupky in Minsk Oblast. Zavadsky's mother Olga and lawyer Garry Pogonyaylo said one of them could belong to Zavadsky. Both Korotkikh's and Ignatovych's

parents grew up in Krupky.

At around the same time, Korotkikh and Ignatovych had a conflict with Gleb Samoylov, head of their RNE branch in Belarus, and Samoylov expelled Ignatovych from the organization.

Samoylov was murdered on Aug. 5, 2000 — after Ignatovych had already been arrested.

Former Belarusian investigator Dmitry Petrushkevych told the Kyiv Post that Korotkikh had also been investigated in the case of Samoylov's murder. But, again, he was not charged.

Ignatovych's murky career did not prevent Korotkikh from praising him.

“Valery (Ignatovych) has been accused of a lot, but nobody mentions that he was a man of high quality,” he told Ukrainian journalist Natalia Vlashchenko in 2019. “I believe him to be one of the most consistent and ideologically-driven people I've known.”

Murder of immigrants

Later Korotkikh moved to Russia, where he became one of the leaders of the National Socialist Society, founded in 2004. It openly supported Hitler and Nazi Germany and prepared for a “racial war.”

He was a close ally and friend of Maksym Martsinkevich, the leader

EDITORIALS

Germany's election

As largely expected, Germany's federal election did not produce any major surprises. The center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) narrowly beat the ruling center-right alliance of the Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) as Angela Merkel's 16-year chancellorship comes to an end.

The complex task of creating a new working coalition is under way and Merkel will stay on for a while longer until her successor is chosen. The Sept. 26 vote was continuity and stability, with no fundamental changes in domestic or foreign policies.

Ukraine had hoped for a result that would modify Berlin's policy towards Moscow — marked by ambiguity, accommodation and appeasement.

German politicians are behind the times and out of step in trying to have it both ways — staying on good terms with the Kremlin dictator while claiming to be the leader in upholding European values. Germany is simply not doing enough to stop Russia's war or help Ukraine's European integration.

Merkel personified this approach. Indeed, her foreign policy adviser Christoph Heugen has just revealed in Der Spiegel that "she always kept in mind what was tolerable for Russia."

This meant blocking any steps to advance Ukraine's membership into NATO or the European Union and refusing to sell defensive arms to Kyiv, which is fighting off Russia on its own. The current leaders of Germany's main two political parties campaigned on sticking to the appeasement strategy.

Merkel will not be missed in Ukraine for other reasons. After former U.S. President Barack Obama abdicated leadership in stopping Russia's war, Merkel became the architect of the Minsk and Normandy Four processes. The peace talks have helped slow the conflict considerably and reduce bloodletting from a full-scale hot war. And the West has applied modest sanctions against Russia, with Merkel helping Europe hold the line.

But Merkel nevertheless let Moscow off the hook by accepting its cynical claim to a "facilitator of peace," rather than the perpetrator of aggression and war.

Her staunch defense of the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 pipeline made a mockery of any Western and Ukrainian hopes of tough sanctions against the Kremlin. It's a disgrace that Berlin is fine with an \$11 billion pipeline that threatens the economic and national security of Eastern Europe. Even before the pipeline starts pumping gas, all the critics of the 1,230-kilometer pipeline have been proven right: The Kremlin is withholding natural gas supplies, driving up prices, and cutting deals with such nations as Hungary to end Ukraine's status as a gas transit country after 2024. That was the plan all along, which Merkel must have known.

The silver lining in the German elections is the fact that the leader of the Greens, Annalena Baerbock, whose party came in third with 15 percent, has emerged as a kingmaker in the coalition-building process.

While focused on environmental and climate change issues, she has adopted a more principled and tougher stance towards Russia. Baerbock wants Nord Stream 2 to be scrapped and has no illusions about the nature of Russia's aggression and hybrid warfare. The fourth party likely to be involved in the new coalition is the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP). It too is more critical of the Kremlin.

The best that Ukraine can hope for is that the Greens and the FDP will be able to influence Berlin's foreign policy and get tougher with Moscow. Then Germany can reclaim its role as Europe's leader, a status in doubt today.

Razumkov dilemma

Verkhovna Rada Speaker Dmytro Razumkov is the latest ally of President Volodymyr Zelensky to part ways with him.

Razumkov's criticism of Zelensky is about to cost him his job in leading a parliament controlled by the president's Servant of the People party, one of the last obstacles to Zelensky's control over the legislature and government.

An ex-key adviser credited with helping Zelensky get elected in 2019, Razumkov has not disguised his personal political ambitions as he distances himself from the president.

The rift between former allies accelerated after Zelensky threw down the gauntlet to the oligarchs with a new law designed to clip their wings. The opposition has questioned both the motive behind Zelensky's move and the manner in which it is being carried out.

Razumkov voiced his concerns and has attempted to block or delay adoption of the law by questioning its consistency with democratic and constitutional norms, after first speaking in favor of the need to break up the oligarchy. Zelensky's close allies linked the speaker's opposition to the law with his frequent appearances on Ukrainian oligarch-controlled TV channels.

Razumkov has previously dissented from his party's line on other major issues, such as the imposition of sanctions on three pro-Kremlin TV propaganda channels. He now often appears on the channels of various oligarchs implicitly or explicitly challenging Zelensky's policies.

Razumkov's ability to make connections across the aisle and publicly support only popular legislation has made the speaker a trusted politician with electoral potential. For those reasons, removing Razumkov is seen as a logical and timely step for the president.

Losing one of the last persons daring to criticize the president across all three branches of government gives Zelensky far greater powers. Razumkov's potential successor will be loyal to the president and will most likely actively work to get the president's agenda adopted into law. Yet, the country is poorly served by the reduced checks on the president.

By the time of the next presidential election in 2024, Ukraine will know whether Razumkov is a serious contender or just another political casualty whose career ended because of his criticism of the president.

Either way, the Zelensky administration has a long way to go to even remotely live up to its promises of ending Russia's war, taking on corruption, developing strong institutions, establishing rule of law, and modernizing an economy in a way that attracts rather than repels foreign direct investment. It's possible, but not clear now, how replacing Razumkov as speaker will advance progress on these goals.

NEWS ITEM:
Speaker Dmytro Razumkov is looking at a potential not-confidence vote, after the governing Servant of the People faction began collecting signatures for the speaker's ouster on Sept. 30. Razumkov has been embroiled in a long-standing conflict with President Volodymyr Zelensky and his party, which Razumkov used to lead. Deputy Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk is said to be Razumkov's likely successor. The two recently had a public spat on national TV.

Nothing personal, just party business



Time for another rotation, boys



NEWS ITEM:
Russian President Vladimir Putin "is a supporter of the succession of power," his spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said on Sept. 27. "But this should not be an obsession," he added. Putin has been in power for over 21 years and has forged elections and jailed political opponents, including opposition leader Alexey Navalny.

My mystic senses tell me that the suspect is near!

NEWS ITEM:
Andriy Lysiuk, who ran for parliament on the Servant of the People ballot in the 2019 parliamentary elections, was appointed deputy head of the Security Service's anti-corruption department. Lysiuk is best known for appearing as an "expert" on the Ukrainian TV show Battle of the Psychics, where people were acting to solve mysteries using "supernatural powers."



See these features online at Kyivpost.com

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Friend

Annalena Baerbock
The German Greens party leader understands the Kremlin threat well, wants Germany to put more pressure on Vladimir Putin to end Russia's war against Ukraine. The Greens are also against the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline. It's a pity they won only 15 percent in the Sept. 26 elections.



Foe

Péter Szijártó
The Hungarian foreign minister not only defended his nation's stabbing of Ukraine in the back with a 15-year contract for Russian natural gas bypassing Ukraine, he leveled harsh criticism against Kyiv. The European Union must take on dictator Viktor Orban.

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Razumkov will likely be ousted for his disputes with Zelensky

By Oleksiy Sorokin
sorokin@kyivpost.com

Verkhovna Rada speaker Dmytro Razumkov has seemingly been the only top official daring to publicly disagree with President Volodymyr Zelensky and his governing party.

Razumkov, the former leader of Zelensky's ruling Servant of the People party, has successfully distanced himself from the president. He says he puts his job as speaker before party affiliation. Pro-government lawmakers accuse him of playing to oligarchs' interests. On Sept. 30, Zelensky's party began officially collecting votes for the speaker's ouster.

The speaker was the only National Security and Defense Council member who didn't support sanctions against the pro-Kremlin TV channels linked to oligarch lawmaker Viktor Medvedchuk. He also abstained from supporting the Zelensky-led council's decision to impose sanctions on Ukrainian citizens.

Now, after failing to support Zelensky's anti-oligarch bill, the president's 244-member faction is looking to get rid of the recalcitrant speaker.

Mykhailo Podoliak, an adviser to Zelensky's chief of staff, went even further, accusing the speaker of working for Ukrainian oligarchs. "The president will have to intervene," he said. Razumkov denied all accusations, adding that he's not planning to resign.

The decision to oust Razumkov is proving to be difficult. The former loyalist Razumkov had found powerful backers, both in and outside the parliament, seeing in him the only real check on Zelensky's hold over parliament.

Zelensky's top opponent

In two years, Razumkov has switched from being one of Zelensky's key aides to one of the top opponents.

In 2019, then-political consultant Razumkov joined Zelensky's campaign as an advisor and key spokesperson. After Zelensky's landslide victory in the 2019 presidential elections, the newly elected president was preparing for snap parliament elections.

Razumkov took charge of creating the new pro-Zelensky political project named Servant of the People after the president's hit TV series.

Yet, Razumkov sought personal recognition, says political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko.

He was appointed speaker in August 2019 and soon became one of the most prominent politicians in the country. According to a September poll by sociological Rating Group, Razumkov is trusted by 29% of Ukrainians, second only to Zelensky. Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal is trusted by a mere 17%.

Such a showing was achieved by Razumkov's ability to make connections across the aisle and publicly support only popular legislation distancing himself from what was unpopular.

In February, Razumkov support-

President Volodymyr Zelensky (R) and Servant of the People faction head, David Arakhamia (C), talk to Speaker Dmytro Razumkov after lawmakers vote to lift parliamentary immunity in Kyiv on Sept. 3, 2019.



Volodymyr Petrov

either to vote to oust Razumkov or to go against the president's will," Fesenko says. "I don't think (lawmakers) will risk going against the president."

Consolidation of power

It doesn't seem that Razumkov will be prepared to leave without a fight. He has favorable media coverage and the support of all four opposition political parties up his sleeve.

"He's trying to defend at least a modicum of parliamentary independence," said Iryna Herashchenko, co-head of the 27-member European Solidarity faction that has been a staunch adversary of the party that brought Razumkov to the fore.

Yuriy Boyko, the leader of the 44-member pro-Kremlin Opposition Platform – For Life faction, and Yaroslav Zhelezniak, head of the fragmented 20-member Voice party, said they won't support Razumkov's ouster.

"He's doing his job," Zhelezniak said.

Meanwhile, in speaking about his political future Razumkov has begun a future election campaign. In the Sept. 30 interview with *Ukrainska Pravda*, Razumkov said he hopes Zelensky keeps his promise to not stand for reelection.

Asked whether he's aiming to succeed Zelensky, Razumkov was more diplomatic.

"For certain, I'll run for parliament," Razumkov said.

Anatoly Oktyusiuk, a political expert at the local think tank Democracy House notes that after the seemingly imminent replacement of Razumkov, there will be no checks on Zelensky's powers.

"This is the final consolidation of power by Zelensky," says Oktyusiuk. "There's absolutely no critics left."

No critics among those holding power, that is. ☹️

ed sanctions against Medvedchuk, yet didn't support sanctions against his ally Taras Kozak, a lawmaker from Medvedchuk's Opposition Platform – For Life party.

Kozak was the official owner of three pro-Kremlin TV channels – NewsOne, 112 Channel and ZIK. Sanctions against him meant the closure of the pro-Kremlin network.

"For all media, there should be a uniform approach," said Razumkov when defending his decision to abstain from voting on introducing sanctions against the pro-Kremlin propaganda channels.

By then, the relationship between Zelensky and Razumkov was already strained. Since then, Razumkov has regularly appeared on oligarch-controlled Ukrainian TV channels criticizing some of the government's decisions.

The Speaker has been a frequent guest on Ukraine media holding owned by oligarch Rinat Akhmetov as well as the ICTV channel owned by oligarch Victor Pinchuk. He's been receiving positive coverage on both networks, as well as the channel Nash owned by a vehement critic of the Zelensky administration Yevhen Muraev.

Razumkov had meetings with ex-Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko, who have been in opposition to Zelensky. Groysman has also been actively promoted on Akhmetov's channels.

Yet, the final rift occurred when Razumkov didn't support the anti-oligarch bill.

The draft law is set to legally define the word oligarch creating a special list of businesspersons holding monopolies in crucial sectors of the economy and having a pronounced influence over media and politics.

The initial draft entailed a substantial increase of the Security Council's powers, led by Zelensky, receiving the final say in deciding who is an oligarch and who should be added to the list.

Razumkov actively criticized the law and publicly disagreed with Security Council Secretary Oleksiy

Danilov, who said that oligarch influence in parliament is "extremely high." Razumkov invited Danilov to give concrete examples.

Despite his party's opposition, Razumkov sent the anti-oligarch draft bill for consideration of the Venice Commission, a legal advisory board of the Council of Europe.

The law was passed on Sept. 23, when Razumkov was on sick leave, though some of his critics suspected that it was contrived to avoid being present.

"This was the point of no return for Razumkov," Fesenko says

Removing Razumkov

On Sept. 20, Razumkov publicly alleged that some lawmakers are taking bribes. According to the speaker, he had "heard rumors" that deputies were being offered between \$2,000 and \$4,000 for supporting the sacking of certain officials.

Given his predicament, Razumkov's statement didn't come as a surprise.

"It's obviously a self-defense strategy," Fesenko says.

On Sept. 30 David Arakhamia, Servant of the People faction head, launched an official process of collecting votes for Razumkov's ouster.

At this stage, it's not certain there will be enough votes to support Razumkov's replacement. But that could soon change.

On Oct. 1, the Servant of the People faction will hold a convention in Truskavets, a resort city of 30,000 people 590 kilometers west of Kyiv.

Most top government officials were invited, including Zelensky, while Razumkov was left out.

One of the key issues discussed will be what to do with the Speaker. "(Servant of the People) lawmakers will be placed before a choice

World in Ukraine: Germany



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Alexander Vindman talks Ukrainian roots, Trump call, Nord Stream 2

By **Sergii Leshchenko**

mail.pravda@gmail.com

Editor's Note: The following is a Q&A with Alexander S. Vindman, Ukraine-born retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, who served as the European Affairs director for the U.S. National Security Council in 2018–2020. He testified before Congress on Oct. 29, 2019, during former U.S. President Donald Trump's impeachment trial about Trump's attempts to get Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate then-Democratic rival, current U.S. President Joe Biden. Here is the entire transcript. Vindman spoke to Kyiv Post columnist Sergii Leshchenko on Sept. 11, 2021, at the Yalta European Strategy (YES) conference in Kyiv.

Kyiv Post: Alexander, I'm glad to see you in Kyiv. Is this your home town?

Alexander Vindman: I apologize that I don't speak Ukrainian. I rarely do, I only studied the language for eight months in the war college 12 years ago. I was born in Kyiv in 1975, but I only lived here for five years. Our family immigrated, and I grew up in New York, so I am an American. We were refugees, a Jewish family. Our family had two reasons to leave the Soviet Union. First, my mother died of cancer and my father heard that the Shah of Iran (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) also had the disease and got cured in New York. Second, anti-Semitism. We didn't have equal opportunities like the Jews in the Soviet Union, and it would have been a better life for us in the U.S.

KP: Did you attend a war college there?

AV: I attended a military department in the university and began serving in the Army. This was around 20 years ago. I served for 21.5 years in the army. I started as an infantryman for the first 10 years and afterward could choose my major. I chose geopolitics and finished my master's in Harvard, chose the Ukrainian language, worked in the Moscow Embassy from 2012 to 2015 under Ambassadors Mike McFaul and John F. Tefft. In 2015, I arrived to the U.S. and started service at the Pentagon. I was the advisor for the general staff

if we were to find a Ukrainian equivalent. (The chairman of the joint chiefs.) This is not an easy job, I was developing the main policy towards Russia, as I am a specialist on Russia. After that, I was asked to transfer to the White House. Since I understood the Ukrainian language and worked in Kyiv at the embassy from 2009–2010, I was asked to be in charge of Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the Caucasus.

KP: You were part of the delegation at President Volodymyr Zelensky's inauguration?



Former National Security Council Director for European Affairs Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman is sworn in to testify before the House Intelligence Committee in the Longworth House Office Building on Capitol Hill November 19, 2019 in Washington, DC.

AFP

AV: Yes, and not only. I coordinated and prepared the U.S. delegation led by National Security Adviser John Bolton to attend the 2018 Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations. Then we met with President Petro Poroshenko. And then I was in the delegation led by Kurt Volker in December 2018. 2019 was the last time I was in Ukraine and have not come back for two and a half years.

KP: You were also the director of the Department for Europe in the U.S. Security Council.

AV: This is not entirely correct. This is the position of the director. This means that there was no big headquarters, but there was a person who coordinated the entire U.S. policy on Ukraine for the White House among all specialists from the State Department, the Pentagon, and so on. I coordinated this policy at my level. I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Johns

Hopkins University, writing a paper on how Ukraine influenced U.S. politics after 1991.

KP: How do you think Ukraine is changing? How does it look through the eyes of a U.S. specialist?

AV: I have been coming to Ukraine for 12 years now, and I want to say that your country has changed dramatically. In 2009, I visited here for the first time since our emigration, was at the end of President (Viktor) Yushchenko's term, and since then I have been constantly visiting, and

I am very pleased to see how this country is slowly moving forward. I didn't come during (President Viktor) Yanukovich's presidency, he interrupted the direction of the country's development, and I don't know if my impressions would have been positive or not. But since then, I have been visiting Kyiv every year and see changes. I walk the streets, talk to people and see that the country is moving forward.

Alexander S. Vindman is the author of "Here, Right Matters."

KP: Ukraine wants to secure its progress by joining NATO. Zelensky asks: 'Why is Ukraine not in NATO?' U.S. President Joe Biden responds: 'Make reforms, fight corruption.' How fair is this statement?

AV: This is a purely political statement. There is a level of requirement that must be reached in order to join NATO. But we know that in different periods of time not everyone reached this level when they were admitted to NATO. At the moment, there is still work for Ukraine that needs to be done in order to "cleanly" enter NATO, meaning deservedly. But at the same time, NATO does not always accept (members) based purely on their merit. This is a political decision. And in this sense, Ukraine is not far away. The U.S. rhetoric often says "Ukraine is a strategic partner." But in reality, we need to make sure that Ukraine is indeed a strategic partner. It is necessary to help Ukraine, and the sooner this happens, the better it will be not only for NATO, the European Union, but also for the bilateral relations between Ukraine and the U.S.

KP: Yet, when will Ukraine join NATO?

AV: It's hard to answer. Ukraine can achieve membership in NATO within five years, that is, by fulfilling all the requirements for membership. But in reality, I don't think this will happen. If we do not reconsider our policy in the U.S., if the EU does not reconsider its policy, then Ukraine will not join NATO.

KP: Do the NATO members themselves lack the will?

AV: Yes. But if we evaluate Ukraine as a strategic partner and give it assistance, five years will be enough to fulfill all the requirements. This is my personal opinion, but I believe that much more needs to be done to help Ukraine. And Russia, too, will not be able to continue authoritarian politics if Ukraine is a successful country. This is one of the main reasons to help Ukraine.

KP: What is Biden's view of Ukraine?

AV: I'm not sure I know. He's been here many times. He himself understands your country quite well, he also wants success for Ukraine.

KP: Many in Ukraine perceived his deal with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Nord Stream 2 as a betrayal.

AV: No, I do not agree with that. I think that Ukraine does not feel that he is a friend because Biden has so many responsibilities at the moment. And there is simply not enough attention, and the priorities are focused on other goals. The internal problems of the U.S. are the first priority, then – to keep our allies close, and then Ukraine at some point. I think Biden is unhappy with the way things are ending

around Nord Stream 2. Nobody in the U.S. knows about Nord Stream 2, and even if Congress supports sanctions on the operational activities of Nord Stream 2, this is also not a high priority for the U.S. I am also not completely sure that Nord Stream 2 is a big thing.

KP: If Nord Stream 2 is launched, Ukraine will lose \$2 billion in gas transit, there is a risk to Ukraine's security. Russia's President Vladimir Putin will no longer be restrained from attacking Ukraine by gas transit through Ukraine.

AV: I don't think gas transit through Ukraine has ever restrained Putin. The reason is that Putin knows that Ukraine is not the country it used to be in 2014, and Ukraine will withstand his attack. Russians will have huge losses and Putin doesn't need that. Income from the gas transit is rather big: At some point, the sum was equal to Ukraine's Defense Ministry budget. But Ukraine also needs to develop its energy business to change the situation with the money.

KP: What do you think about Zelensky's trip to the U.S. to visit Biden?

AV: This visit was much better than the previous one in 2019. I was worried that Ukraine wasn't going to be a priority because of the Afghanistan issue. Photographs and videos from meetings in the White House were not impressive. I felt slightly relieved when the two-side agreement was released: It contained specific steps towards the bilateral relations. The allocated



Vindman: 'Many internal problems in Ukraine' paved way for Putin's attack in 2014

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resources are not huge — \$60 million is actually a small amount of money. But the spheres of cooperation are actually good — in the energy sector, economy, and the fight against corruption. Economy, energy, and security are the main areas. Strategic negotiations are to be held within the next few months and there is a chance to move this relationship forward. But I'm not fully satisfied that the U.S. doesn't seem to fully understand Ukraine's impact on the region and even at a larger level of geopolitics. It's not a small country, it's the biggest in Europe and it has great potential. In our competition with Russia, we can achieve a lot through Ukraine.

KP: I can't help but ask you about former U.S. President Donald Trump and his phone call with Zelensky.

AV: I have just released a book on that issue and the first part begins with the two presidents' call.

KP: What did the call look like to someone who eyewitnessed it?

AV: My workplace was located at the Dwight Eisenhower building, where the National Security Council staff is based. The White House and Dwight Eisenhower building share a yard. That day, I relocated from my office to the West Wing situa-

tion room, a closed meeting room. I coordinated that call, just like the other call in April 2019 with Trump's congratulations to then-newly elected President Zelensky. The first call was successful, but the second one was different. Even before the call took place, I was disappointed with what happened on the U.S. side and was worried that it wouldn't work out how we wanted. My boss Bolton tried to cancel the phone call. I thought that the call should take place as there should be an opportunity for the presidents to talk. That could have saved the situation. But Bolton was thinking differently, he was afraid that something bad would happen.

KP: Did Bolton already know about Trump's blackmail on Ukraine?

AV: I knew about that too. The day before, there was a meeting between (former Energy Secretary) Rick Perry, (U.S. Ambassador to the EU) Gordon Sondland and (former special envoy to Ukraine) Kurt Volker on the U.S. side and (ex-Finance Minister) Oleksandr Danyliuk and (Zelensky's chief of staff) Andriy Yermak. At the end of that conversation, Sondland suggested blackmail. So we just ended the negotiations at that moment. I refused to do it. I gave the first testimony saying that we were not going to do it, we were not politicians, and such method

had nothing in common with U.S. security.

KP: Whom did you testify to?

AV: The same people I testified to the second time — the senior lawyers who are to ensure that the president's actions are consistent with the law. And in July 2019, during Trump's call to Zelensky, it became clear that Trump was personally promoting this deal. Until that moment, there was not enough evidence to say whether the U.S. president was involved in pressuring Zelensky or not. Not only was he involved, but he was the driving force behind that blackmail. Let's get back to what happened on July 25, 2019: I came to work very early, at around 6 a.m. to prepare for the call. At 9 a.m. I went to the West Wing of the White House, to the Situation Room, with five more people in it besides me. Trump was talking (with Zelensky) not from this room, but from his residence, which is in the other wing of the White House. I heard everything in that phone call. There is a transcript of it, so one can also read it. As soon as I heard Trump, I realized that the phone call would not only not help in the U.S.-Ukraine relationship, but it would be a step back, if not worse. The military support has already been suspended by that time. I was hoping the call could help in resuming

it. But it turned out the other way around. I didn't spend much time thinking after the call. I knew exactly what my responsibility was, so I filed a report on the call — through official channels, not through the media — to John Eisenberg, the White House's legal adviser on national security, one of the oldest officers in the White House.

KP: Your scientific work is called "How Ukraine influenced U.S. foreign policy." Did it really have an influence in fact?

AV: Not always and not directly in bilateral relations. It often had an influence through Russia or the EU. It all started in 1991 with the "Chicken Kyiv" speech (given by U.S. President George H.W. Bush in Kyiv). In the process of nuclear disarmament, we did not perceive Ukraine as an independent country. It had huge nuclear potential but it was necessary to conduct relations through Russia.

KP: It's quite a popular opinion nowadays that Ukraine should have kept its nuclear weapons, and it would have helped Ukraine to not become (Russia's) victim in the Donbas and Crimea.

AV: I don't think it's true. I did many interviews with Ukrainian experts for my scientific work. In fact, Ukraine has gained a lot from these disarmament negotiations.

Ukraine couldn't maintain nuclear weapons, it was necessary to invest billions of dollars just to keep it so that there were no accidents. There was no capability to use it. It was necessary to somehow alter the control system, based on how the nuclear potential was arranged. But it was impossible to do it technically. In exchange for nuclear weapons, Ukraine received \$100 million and a meeting with (U.S. President Bill) Clinton, which was very important because it helped in asserting the sovereignty of Ukraine. This opened the door for negotiations between Ukraine and NATO and became the foundation for the Kuchma-Gore commission. Nothing would have happened if Ukraine didn't get rid of the nuclear weapons. One can say that it's been 25 years and Russia used a very difficult moment, after the EuroMaidan Revolution, to be able to attack Ukraine. But the absence of nuclear weapons was not the reason. There were also many internal problems in Ukraine that allowed Putin to attack the country. You should recall how (ex-President Viktor) Yanukovych continued the lease of the Black Sea Fleet until 2042, how the Armed Forces of Ukraine lost their potential. In retrospect, it looks like Ukraine had no other option but to abandon nuclear weapons. ❁



Specialists perform an above water tie-in during the final stage of Nord Stream 2 pipeline construction in the Baltic Sea in September 2021.

Nord Stream 2 AG / AFP

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Ukraine's plans to commemorate 80th anniversary of Babyn Yar

By Daria Shulzhenko,
Viktoria Petryk

shulzhenko@kyivpost.com
v9petryk@gmail.com

Ukraine will hold several public events in early October to mark the 80th anniversary of the Sept. 29–30, 1941, start of the Babyn Yar massacres. Nazi Germany killed more than 33,000 people in two days alone, and an estimated 100,000 people, most of whom were Jews, over the next two years.

During a ceremony honoring the victims, President Volodymyr Zelensky laid flowers at the monument near the site of the mass shootings in Kyiv. Zelensky said that the tragedy affected the world.

"Babyn Yar. Two short words that sound like two quick shots, but carry long and horrible memories for generations," Zelensky said.

Students in 15,000 schools across the country learned about Babyn Yar on Sept. 29 during a lesson developed by the Ministry of Education and Science together with the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center. "The national memory lesson is designed to cultivate a lasting negative attitude towards discrimination, contempt for human dignity and encroachment on the right to life," the ministry wrote on Facebook.

The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, an educational and memorial complex to commemorate the victims of Babyn Yar, is set to open as early as 2025.

Here are some upcoming public

events to commemorate the tragedy's anniversary.

Sept. 27 — Oct. 10 Art exhibition

The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center decided to make people think about the tragedy even before they reach it. The nearby Dorohozhychi metro station is hosting an exhibition of photographs by French photographer and director Antoine d'Agata. Called "Exclusion Zone." The exhibit features over 80 striking, mysterious photographs of the area that surrounds the ravine, as well as locals who live nearby. It also displays 42 short stories by U.S. novelist Jonathan Littell philosophizing on Babyn Yar's significance in modern Kyiv and highlighting the dissonance between the horrific crimes committed in the area and the current livelihood of the site. The photographs and stories are displayed on the digital billboards in between the escalators underground.

"Exclusion Zone." *Dorohozhychi metro station (Kyivskiy Shliakh Street).* Sept. 27 — Oct. 10. 5:30 a.m. — 12 a.m. Free

Oct. 3 March of Remembrance

The March of Remembrance, the annual walk that repeats the route the thousands of victims took before being massacred in the ravine, will take place on Oct. 3. Those who want to participate should gather in front of the Kyivan Rus cinema at 12 p.m. The "walk of sorrow" will

start at the square near the cinema, heading to the "Menorah" memorial at Babyn Yar to commemorate the victims of the tragedy. "As long as we remember, it will not happen again," the march's organizers say.

March of Remembrance. Kyivan Rus cinema (93 Sichovykh Striltsiv St.) Oct. 3. 12 p.m. Free

Oct. 5 Book presentation, conference, exhibition

On Oct. 5, visitors to the memorial center can attend the international academic conference "Mass shootings during the Holocaust as a criminal process," during which well-known researchers from Ukraine, Germany, the U.S., France and Israel will discuss the criminal proceedings of the Nazi crimes. The conference will start at 9 a.m.

Later that day, the center will hold a book presentation by Borys Zaborko, the acclaimed Ukrainian author and historian. Zaborko has personally witnessed the horrors of World War II: As a child, he was a prisoner at the Nazi concentration camp in Sharhorod, a small town in Vinnytsia Oblast. The terrifying experience has affected his life and career. For over 20 years, he has been collecting historical evidence of the tragedy and recording the memories of Holocaust survivors. All of it is now brought together in Zaborko's recent book, "We Wanted to Live," published in Ukrainian. Zaborko, who is also the head of the Ukrainian Jews association, spotlights the damaged lives of Ukrainian



Kostyantyn Chernichkin

A man touches an art installation at Babyn Yar on Sept. 29, 2020, during a ceremony marking the 79th anniversary of the massacre, which killed nearly 34,000 Jews on Sept. 29–30, 1941. This year's commemorative events that mark the 80th anniversary of the tragedy will be held in Kyiv until Oct. 7.

Jews who witnessed World War II. The author depicts the tragedy of the whole nation through the memories of the Holocaust survivors.

Another event kicking off on Oct. 5 is exhibit "The Faces of the Babyn Yar People." The team behind the memorial complex will publish more information on the exhibition soon.

National Scientific Medical Library of Ukraine (7 Lva Tolstoho St.) Oct. 5. 9 a.m. Register at www.80.babynyar.org.

Oct. 6 Book presentation

Aside from having his stories displayed at the subway exhibition, U.S. novelist Jonathan Littell will present his book "The Kindly Ones." His 2006 fiction novel has become a bestseller, getting several literary awards. Narrated by a fictional ex-Nazi officer, the book highlights the petrifying episodes of World War II and the Holocaust.

Some of the major events are invitation-only:

On Oct. 5, the memorial center will hold a premiere screening

of the 2021 Cannes Film Festival Special Prize winner, the documentary "Babyn Yar. Introduction" by acclaimed Ukrainian director Sergei Loznitsa. Based on archival material, the documentary consists of several episodes, each with a separate plot. Prior to the screening, Kyiv Chamber Choir will perform the "In Memorium" symphony, composed by renowned Ukrainian composer Valentyn Silvestrov.

On Oct. 6, the center will arrange a grand commemoration ceremony involving Zelensky and foreign guests, including President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier and President of Israel Isaac Herzog. The ceremony will unveil the memorial sculpture Crystal Wall of Crying crafted by internationally famous contemporary artist Marina Abramovich, known for her honest and sometimes shocking artworks.

National Scientific Medical Library of Ukraine (7 Lva Tolstoho St.) Oct. 6. 3 p.m. Register at www.80.babynyar.org.

The full commemoration program is available at www.80.babynyar.org.

Michael Brodsky: Isaac Herzog will visit Babyn Yar, 30 years after Chaim Herzog's historic message

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The tragedy was not only the physical extermination of people but also an attempt to erase the very memory of them. Leaving Kyiv, the Nazis tried to obliterate all the traces of their crimes. A special squad had been assigned to the exhumation and burning of the bodies of tens of thousands of victims. Even the perpetrators of these atrocities understood that they would inevitably be punished for their crimes.

The Soviet authorities also tried to destroy — physically and mentally — all traces of the tragedy. They came up with a plan to build a rubbish dump at the ravine. This plan was condemned by the writer and war veteran Viktor Nekrasov, who in 1959 spoke out, calling for a monument to those murdered at Babyn Yar. But the authorities ignored his warning, and in 1961 it led to a catastrophic mudslide, which claimed the lives of about 2,000 people. The Kurenivka tragedy of 1961 was a terrible reminder of what had happened in Babyn Yar 20 years earlier. It became also a reminder that no matter how the tragedy is silenced, it will definitely be revealed.

Despite the official position of silence, both Jewish and Ukrainian



Women look at the exhibition near the Minora monument at Babyn Yar during the ceremony to mark the International Holocaust Victims Remembrance Day in Kyiv on Jan. 27, 2021.

voices were raised louder and louder in the 1960s, speaking of a common tragedy, a common pain, a common memory. Contrary to Soviet policy, Jewish and Ukrainian activists went together to an unauthorized rally to commemorate the 25th anniversary

of the Babyn Yar tragedy in 1966. Among others, Ukrainian writer and dissident Ivan Dziuba addressed a crowd of several hundred people surrounding him:

"I want to say a few words — a one-thousandth part of what I am

thinking today and what I would like to say," he told the crowd. "I want to turn to you as people, as to my brothers in humanity. I want to address you, Jews, as a Ukrainian, as a member of the Ukrainian nation, to which I proudly belong. Babyn Yar,

this is a tragedy of all humanity, but it happened on Ukrainian soil. And that is why a Ukrainian does not have the right to forget about it, just as a Jew [doesn't]. Babyn Yar, this is our common tragedy, a tragedy first of all of the Jewish and Ukrainian people."

For many decades, Babyn Yar was also a symbol, a special token of Soviet Jewry. The silencing of the tragedy during the Soviet regime, the desire to tell the truth and to preserve the memory of the murdered were among the reasons for the mass departure of Soviet Jews to Israel.

In 1991 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine for the first time since the tragedy decided to hold a series of commemorative events of the 50th Anniversary of Babyn Yar at the highest state level. It was done "taking into consideration the significance of these tragic events for affirmation of universal values and humanism."

It is symbolic that Isaac Herzog, the president of Israel, is set to visit Ukraine and attend the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Babyn Yar. This will happen exactly 30 years after the words of his father, the sixth president of Israel, Chaim Herzog, were first heard in this place.

Michael Brodsky is Israel's ambassador to Ukraine.

Yuri Polakiwsky: Ukraine invites world to never forget tragedies of Babyn Yar

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of so many helpless Jewish families.

As Yale historian and author of the seminal history book, "Bloodlands" Timothy Snyder has said, "After Babyn Yar they (Germans) understood that they could massacre... Auschwitz was later...they just changed the technology with use of gas chambers. It was just Babyn Yar which showed that the Holocaust was possible". The attendance of so many will be a recognition of the suffering soul of the Ukrainian nation, both Jews and Gentiles and of the massive suffering that took place on Ukraine's lands.

But it will also be the sharing of communal "corporate grief" with other civil societies, which Ukraine is in the process of becoming and with which it hopes to articulate shared values for the dignity of human life. Finally realizing the fact that such commemorations unite civil societies and help form 'communities of shared understanding'.

For decades, the massacre had been denied by the Communists. Though the reasons are many, it is largely because they didn't have the philosophical wherewithal, nor the values to admit the value of human life and the respect for individuals. Thus, one lesson that will be reiterated this weekend in Kyiv is that all authoritarian governments are inherent liars, not only truth deniers, but active contradictors of fact especially when they perpetrate atrocities on fellow human beings.

That said, this gesture of commemoration will be more than just an event of recognition. It will be a communal act of remembrance by all Ukrainians, of all faiths, political affiliation, of all languages with the support of Ukraine's friends. But at the same time, it will also be an act of defiance against the authoritarian deniers, both Nazi and Communist, past and present, who have lied for decades about the atrocity that had been committed at Babyn Yar.

This anniversary comes during a key phase in Ukraine's development into a civil society, for this public act of defiance against those that would destroy human life, probably would not have been possible without the visionary recognition

Volodymyr Petrov



A man lays flowers at the monument for the victims executed by the Nazis in Babyn Yar on Sept. 29, 2021 in Kyiv. The commemorative event marks the 80th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre, which killed nearly 34,000 Jews on Sept. 29-30, 1941.

that has permeated Ukrainian life after the "Revolution of Dignity". Ukraine is full of such "death stages", where its ground has been stained by the blood of millions of innocents. This event should both announce teach that Ukraine will no longer accept or tolerate such barbarianism on its independent and sovereign lands.

Commemorating Babyn Yar is a statement that is especially being made by Ukrainians, in association with the civilized world, declaring that such moral atrocities are unacceptable and are an anathema to civilized societies and that the ethic of tolerance should be pursued.

But in addition, it is also a declaration, even a statement of faith if you will, that Ukraine is ready to join the community of civil and law-abiding nations, making a hearty attempt to fulfill the axiom as stated by Timothy Snyder, "Where there is civil society, there are always people who care about history, A functioning civil society is always concerned with the truth about the past."

To put it more philosophically,

the very act of commemorating this event is a 'historic act of memorialization' for the people of Ukraine, the most human of compassionate acts towards the dead that condemns such atrocious crimes against humans in the present while affirming the principle of the sanctity of individual human life for the future. The commemoration of Babyn Yar will be a civics lesson in a way as to how to do "history" in the new Ukraine.

"Of course, the main goal of the short mission to Ukraine by the New York State delegation is to honor the lost of the Babyn Yar massacre," says Leonard Petlakh, a community organizer and a one-time professor of Jewish history at New York

University and one of the leaders of the delegation. But in addition, it is also an educational trip. There will be meetings with various political leaders, religious and cultural leaders."

The upcoming trip to Ukraine was a result of some cultural diplomacy undertaken by Ukraine's consul-general in New York, Oleksii Holubov.

"The time with the consul general was invaluable," Petlakh adds. "For them the conversations that they had with him were very educational. They were intrigued and wanted to know more about Ukraine and so, in light of the Babyn Yar anniversary, a visit was organized. I think this is a wonderful example of 'cultural diplomacy'".

It is only recently that Ukraine is seeing the fruits of a form of diplomacy that pursues the use of 'soft power' for the purpose of exchanging ideas, experiences, information in order to foster mutual understanding.

Seeking and taking advantage of opportunities that provide a context where peoples can gain understanding of Ukraine's ideals and its emerging democratic institutions is essential if it is to take its place in the community of democracies. Put most profoundly and essentially, Ukraine must aggressively pursue a diplomacy of culture that reveals "the soul of a nation".

Those who will be visiting Kyiv in the next weeks will be exposed and experience the most up to date understanding of modern Ukraine.

They will be given an opportunity to establish for themselves, Ukraine's unique national and cultural identity. To conceive of its new growing national identity and confidence as an emerging democracy, exuding a new national narrative that will replace, and hopefully, eliminate any connection with Russia in people's minds.

But perhaps most of all, they will be provided with an untainted portrait of a Ukraine that is based on a foundation of facts and not on propagandist lies.

The commemoration of the Babyn Yar massacre will go a long way in establishing Ukraine's relevance in the establishment and even extension of liberal democratic values in the region and affirm Ukraine's growing desire to affirm international standards of a law-based world order.

Yuri Polakiwsky is a writer who resides both in Toronto and Kyiv. He is the author of the book, "Ukraine – A Lament of a Promise" and a member of the Association of Ukrainian Writers and Poets in Kyiv. 🇺🇦

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It is easy to get a fake COVID-19 vaccination certificate in Ukraine



Fraudsters that forge vaccination certificates against COVID-19 find buyers online by offering their services on social media. They claim to be able falsify both paper and digital certificates, which is illegal.

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on news that businesses may be shut down if the majority of their staff is unvaccinated.

“The sale of fake tests and vaccination certificates is turning into a real illegal industry,” Mykhailo Radutsky, the chairperson of the parliamentary committee on health, said on Facebook on Sept. 8.

The problem is serious enough to have drawn the attention of the president. At a Sept. 27 discussion at his office, President Volodymyr Zelensky asked the Cabinet of

Ministers to come up with ways to fight the spread of forged coronavirus tests and vaccination certificates.

The government said it is working on tougher penalties for faking medical documents. The Health Ministry announced it would revoke licenses from clinics involved in forging certificates.

The police have opened over 300 criminal investigations into such scams, Chief Sanitary Doctor Ihor Kuzin told news outlet RBK-Ukraine on Sept. 27. A few fraudsters, including medical workers, were caught. Now, police are going after the customers.

Five steps

The Kyiv Post found at least six accounts offering fake vaccination certificates on Telegram, a messenger app widely used in Ukraine for selling drugs and other illegal activities.

The “Getting COVID-certificate” Telegram channel was set up on Sept. 13 and has since actively promoted its services. One of its posts lists the five steps of making a forged certificate.

“Designers create a certificate, programmers enter this information into the databases of the Ministry of Digital

Transformation of Ukraine, then we dispose of the numbered ampoules and within 13–14 working days you will see a certificate and a QR code in your app,” the account says.

By “numbered ampoules,” the channel was likely referring to vials of vaccine kept in medical institutions throughout the country. These vials are numbered. It’s possible that the scam involved discarding a dose of vaccine that would have otherwise been used.

“If you need a paper document with a stamp, we will mail it to you,” the channel says.

To find out more, the Kyiv Post went undercover and pretended to be Larysa, a Ukrainian woman who is unwilling to get a shot but eager to go on vacation to Italy, where vaccination is mandatory for entry.

It’s possible to get a fake certification for two types of vaccines, a channel manager, who introduced herself as Ekateryna Morgunova, told the Kyiv Post.

“You can choose either Moderna or Pfizer. For travel, it is better to have a digital certificate that would be available in Diia application,” she said referring to the e-governance mobile app.

“A digital certificate costs Hr 1,250, a paper one costs Hr 1,100, a set of both costs Hr 1,800,” she said, adding that it would take two weeks to prepare either of them.

She claimed that these certificates are identical to real ones and are accepted at home and internationally.

Poor paper copy

“The document is genuine. Yes, it has the stamps of a doctor and a medical center,” the Telegram account says about its forged paper certificate.

To prove this, the scammers published an example in the Telegram channel.

At first glance, this vaccination certificate looks like the real thing. It lists the brand of the vaccine, Pfizer in this case, and the issue date, May 28. The names of the patient and the doctor are hidden for privacy reasons.

But the name of the medical center that allegedly issued the document is visible. It is a state-owned clinic located in central Kyiv, called Primary Healthcare Center No. 2.

The Kyiv Post confronted the clinic’s manager with the sample certificate.

“This is the first time I’m hearing about this... you’ve brought such ‘good’ news to me,” said center director Svitlana Symonenko.

Symonenko said her employees are well aware of criminal responsibility for forging documents.

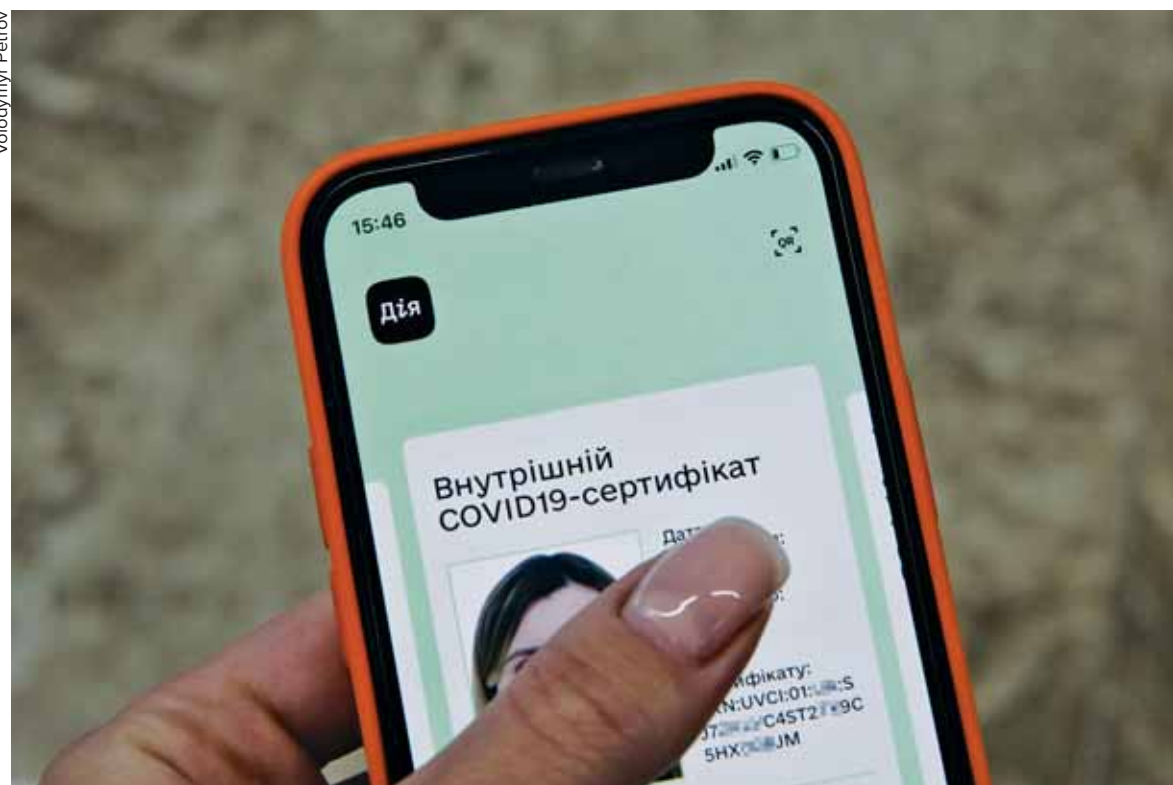
“Our lawyer has worked with every single employee,” she said, “They are responsible people. I cannot think bad of my people.”

After examining the forged certificate closely, Symonenko said it looks nothing like the documents her institution issues.

“We even fill out the form differently. Where it says ‘COVID-19’ in the first column we just put the name of the vaccine, for example, Coronavac,” she said.

“The serial number of the vaccine is totally made up. We do not have such numbers in Kyiv at all. It’s clear to me that the person behind this has nothing to do with medicine,” Symonenko said.

The dates do not add up either. The administration of



A patient shows their digital certificate of vaccination against COVID-19 in Diia, the e-governance application, opened on their mobile phone. In August, Ukrainian digital vaccination certificates were approved for use in the European Union, reopening Europe to vaccinated Ukrainian travelers. Some Ukrainians who don’t want the vaccine but do want to travel buy fake certificates online.

Dangerous lies: Fake certificates pose threat to public health

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Shevchenkivsky district, where the clinic is based, told the Kyiv Post, that local hospitals received their first Pfizer vaccine batches in June, while the forged certificate was issued in late May.

"This stamp is not even similar to ours," Symonenko said. "It's twice as big as the stamp from my clinic."

The Kyiv Post informed the police. Symonenko said she has done the same and that cops came to the clinic on Sept. 24 to investigate. According to her, it's not the first time scammers have issued fake documents on behalf of her medical center.

About five years ago, fraudsters used the name of the clinic to issue fictitious disability letters for workers, a widespread practice in Ukraine to take sick leave. A police investigation failed to bring results.

But on Sept. 29, Kyiv cyber police said they caught a 22-year-old woman and a 24-year-old man allegedly responsible for the "Getting COVID-certificate" Telegram channel the Kyiv Post brought to their attention. Police said they forged at least 200 medical documents including tests and vaccination certificates. The pair faces from three to eight years in jail for large-scale fraud.

Hacking state databases?

But if forging paper medical documents is relatively easy — it's a common illegal practice in Ukraine — falsifying digital ones is much more challenging, the Ministry of Digital Transformation believes.

The digital certificate has a unique QR code and can be generated only in the Diia app. Diia checks a person's vaccination status in the Health Ministry's vaccination database, where it's filled in by medical workers who administer the shots.

Hacking the state database or Diia is nearly impossible, according to Mstyslav Banyk, head of electronic services development at Digital Transformation Ministry.

"Tests showed that there are no security vulnerabilities in Diia, or they are insignificant and do not affect the certificate element," Banyk said during a briefing on Sept. 27.

"Diia will display the certificate only after a patient signs a form using facial recognition technology," he said.

A family doctor must also sign the form with their electronic key to issue a certificate in the first place. Otherwise, Banyk said, it won't appear in the app.

But the "Getting COVID-certificate" Telegram channel claims it employs programmers able to break into the system and falsify someone's vaccination record.

The only possible security flaw, Banyk said, is the human factor: "If a doctor forges the document, they are



committing a crime and there will be consequences."

One family doctor in Cherkasy Oblast, some 190 kilometers southwest of Kyiv, has already faced these consequences. Police searched her office on Sept. 27, looking for evidence of vaccination certificate forgery.

According to law enforcement, the doctor entered false information into the Health Ministry database, but deliberately made mistakes to avoid getting caught. This way, the certificates did not appear in the Diia app, but the doctor was still able to issue a paper version and affirm it with her stamp.

She allegedly took Hr 5,000 per certificate. Now the doctor faces up to six years in jail for information misconduct.

Patients who use fake certificates will also be brought to justice, the police said.

On Sept. 24, the police handed a notice of suspicion to a Ukrainian who tried to cross the border with a domestically-made vaccination certificate. He now faces up to two years in prison.

Since September, border guards have been actively checking travelers' vaccination certificates using tablets with special software — 500 out of 300,000 certificates turned out to be invalid, according to a State Border Guard Service spokesperson.

Vasyl Zhyvoteniuk, a vaccination coordinator in the city of Kyiv, believes responsibility for fraud should be with the patients.

"First of all, these people are harming their health," he told the Kyiv Post. Zhyvoteniuk says that preventing getting tested or vaccinated by having a fake certificate can lead to infection and eventually death.

"And they pay money for this. This is absurd," he said, emphasizing that Kyiv and other cities have enough vaccines to go around and they are free. As of Sept. 29, Ukraine has 1.3 million doses ready to be used.

Why so popular?

Only 13.1% of the country's 42 million citizens are fully vaccinated. This places Ukraine at the bottom of EU countries' vaccination performance list, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina (13.1%).

Belarus (16%), Bulgaria (19.1%), and Moldova (19.3%) are doing slightly better.

Ukraine's vaccination drive has been slow primarily because people have little trust in the authorities and vaccines.



A woman receives a dose of CoronaVac, the vaccine against coronavirus made by the Chinese company Sinovac, in the vaccination center launched in the International Exhibition Center in Kyiv on May 29, 2021.

Ukrainians' opposition to vaccination is among the strongest in the world, according to a study by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Foundation and the Center of Political Sociology, conducted in August and published in September.

The survey showed that 56% of Ukrainians do not plan to get vaccinated.

Scammers exploit people's vaccination skepticism and spread fakes about vaccines all over social media, encouraging them to buy forged certificates.

The "Getting COVID-certificate" Telegram channel did exactly that until it was shut down by the police.

Since mid-September, the account has been blogging about the disad-

vantages of vaccination. The channel claimed that cutting-edge mRNA vaccines, like Pfizer or Moderna, have not been licensed for use before the coronavirus pandemic.

"Progress makes new technologies emerge," said Semen Yesylevsky, biophysicist and leading researcher at the Institute of Physics of Ukraine's National Academy of Science. The Kyiv Post asked the scientist to assess the claims this Telegram channel spreads.

"Available mRNA vaccines have successfully passed all clinical trials and tests. Efficacy and safety have been proven in practice by billions of doses administered. Billions!" Yesylevsky went on.

Another scammers' claim is that

mRNA vaccines cause allergies, autoimmune illnesses, and damage to the liver.

"It is nonsense and a lie," said Yesylevsky. According to him, the percentage of complications like allergies is insignificant. Moreover, there is no data on autoimmune illnesses or liver damage caused by vaccines.

Yet, Yesylevsky said, it's hard to measure the effect of forged vaccination certificates on the nations' health as the scale of the problem is unknown.

"If we are talking about 1–2% of fakes this will not be a massive problem. But if it stands at 10–20% or more, then this would undermine and discredit the idea of vaccination." ☞

TOP 10 KYIV POST exclusives online this week

Editor's Note: Most of the Kyiv Post's journalism is published online. Subscribe today at the low rate of \$45 annually for access to all articles, photos, videos, the PDF editions of the weekly printed newspaper and our complete archives dating to 1995.



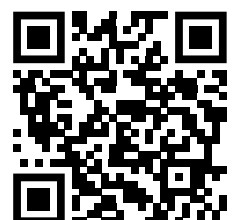
1. Alexander Vindman talks Ukrainian roots, Trump-Zelensky phone call, Nord Stream 2
2. Parliament passes law to curtail oligarchs' influence
3. EU countries consider revising visa-free travel with Ukraine due to 'abuses'
4. Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk wins world heavy-weight boxing championship (PHOTOS)
5. Tensions rising between Ukraine, Hungary over Russian gas deal
6. COVID-19 in Ukraine: 9,058 new cases, 140 new deaths, 153,628 new vaccinations
7. Despite Zelensky's pledges, obstruction of judicial reform continues
8. All English film screenings in Kyiv cinemas are now on one website
9. An assassination attempt leaves Ukraine's authorities perplexed
10. COVID-19 in Ukraine: 7,866 new cases, 123 new deaths, 144,768 new vaccinations

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Azov fighter is often close to death, violence in a mysterious 3-nation career

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of the neo-Nazi group Format 18.

In Russia, Korotkikh was also accused of involvement in murders.

In April 2007, near Moscow, neo-Nazis killed Shamil Odamanov, a native of Russia's North Caucasus republic Dagestan, and an unknown Tajik citizen.

According to a 2015 investigation by Israeli documentary maker Vladi Antonevycz, the 2007 murder could have been carried out by Korotkikh and his allies Martsinkevich and Dmitry Rumyantsev. Korotkikh and Rumyantsev denied the accusations.

In August 2007, anonymous neo-Nazis, who said they were the National Socialist Society's military wing published a video in which they cut off Odamanov's head and shot the Tajik. They also declared war on immigrants and called for releasing Martsinkevich, who had been arrested in a separate hate crime case, and appointing Rumyantsev as the president of Russia.

At that time, Korotkikh, Martsinkevich and Rumyantsev were not charged.

But in September 2020, Martsinkevich was found dead in a Russian prison, right after he allegedly testified about Korotkikh. The Russian authorities claimed his death was a suicide.

Russia's Investigative Committee said that before his death Martsinkevich had admitted to multiple murders, including the 2007 murder of Odamanov and the Tajik citizen.

In August 2021, the Investigative Committee also charged Korotkikh with murder. He denied the accusations, dismissing them as "fake news."

Antonevycz and Russia's Baza

investigative journalism project have published what they say is a note written by Martsinkevich to a friend. In the alleged note, Martsinkevich confessed that both he and Korotkikh had taken part in the 2007 murder.

"I told them that Malyuta (Korotkikh) cut off (Odamanov's) head," the note reads.

In his book "Destrukt," Martsinkevich described numerous situations when he brutally beat up, crippled and robbed immigrants on a weekly basis. In 2007 he also publicly said that he sought to kill Tajiks and "blacks" who come to Russia.

"He was my friend, brother and in some respects a sort of a son," Korotkikh said about Martsinkevich after his death in 2020. "And the worldview that he had was largely formed by me... He was smart and bright, and that's why he was killed."

Other deaths

Martsinkevich's alleged suicide was just one in a series of mysterious deaths. Other people who knew about Korotkikh's alleged wrongdoings also vanished.

Martsinkevich's alleged accomplices Roman Nifontov and Maksym Bazylev committed suicide in 2009, while another accomplice, Artyom Kostylev, took his life in October 2020, according to the official version.

In 2007–2008, the National Socialist Society collapsed. However, 13 members of one of its offshoots, the National Socialist Society-North (NSO-Sever) were convicted in 2011 for 27 murders and 50 assaults that took place in 2008. NSO Sever was led by Bazylev, a close ally of Korotkikh and Martsinkevich.

Just like in Belarus, Korotkikh's career in Russia involved alleged links to Russian law enforcement



Yulia Kuzmenko (L), Yana Dugar and Adnriy Antonenko (R), who were charged with the 2016 murder of journalist Pavel Sheremet, sit in a courtroom on Jan. 12, 2020 in Kyiv. Evidence against them is weak, and Azov member Segrei Korotkikh's critics suspect him of involvement in the murder.

and intelligence agencies.

The National Socialist Society was co-founded by Maksim Gritsai, whose brother is an officer of Russia's FSB intelligence agency.

According to video footage and a document leaked in August, Korotkikh allegedly agreed to cooperate with Russian law enforcement and gave testimony on Martsinkevich and other allies.

Ukrainian period

Korotkikh moved to Ukraine after Russia launched its aggression in 2014, joining the far-right Azov volunteer unit.

In Ukraine, he enjoyed the patronage of Avakov, Ukraine's long-serving interior minister. Azov reported to his ministry and Korotkikh used to work as a top police official under Avakov and calls himself a friend of his son Oleksandr.

A trail of blood followed Korotkikh's career in Ukraine too.

Another gruesome death — that of Azov fighter Yaroslav Babych — occurred in July 2015. The coroner and Azov members claimed that he died because of erotic asphyxiation.

But others argue that his death was an assassination disguised as a suicide.

Oleh Odnorozhenko, an ex-deputy head of Azov, and Babych's wife Larysa have accused Korotkikh of killing Yaroslav — an accusation that he denied.

"My husband was vehemently against Botsman (Korotkikh). He knew his history," Larysa Babych told the Kyiv Post.

She said that Korotkikh had personally threatened Babych in the Azov base in the village of Urzuf in Donetsk Oblast in June 2015.

"Botsman said 'we've gotta do something about traitors,'" Larysa Babych recounted, describing a meeting between her husband, Azov leader Andriy Biletsky and Korotkikh in Urzuf. "And a month later my husband was dead."

She said that she and her husband had to flee from Urzuf after the threats, and Babych had said "I would not like Korotkikh to stab me in the back with a knife."

Sheremet

Another acquaintance of Korotkikh, Belarusian-born journalist Sheremet, was blown up in his car in central Kyiv on July 20, 2016.

Late on July 19, 2016, six Azov

members, including Korotkikh and Biletsky, met with Sheremet near his house. The Azov members later said that they were going to participate in a coal miners' rally the next day and had sought Sheremet's advice about media strategy for the event.

Odnorozhenko and another source told the Kyiv Post that Sheremet and Korotkikh had a quarrel on the eve of the murder. The second source spoke on condition of anonymity due to fear of reprisals.

There is another link to Azov in the Sheremet investigation. A source familiar with the investigation told the Kyiv Post that Zoryana Kohut, a member of the National Corps — Azov's civilian branch, had also been investigated in the Sheremet case.

Kohut's phone was geolocated near the place where a person filmed by surveillance cameras was taking photos of the cameras. Kohut's face is similar to the face of the person taking pictures in the surveillance videos. She declined to comment.

Other deaths

Vitaly Knyazhesky (Vitus), an Azov fighter, was found dead in October 2017. According to the official version, Knyazhesky committed suicide by shooting himself with a rifle. Skeptics don't believe in the suicide version.

Knyazhesky had previously testified against Biletsky in a criminal case.

Israeli documentary maker Antonevycz claimed in May that Knyazhesky and Yekaterina Logunova, an associate of Korotkikh and Martsinkevich based in Ukraine, resemble the couple in surveillance footage that planted the bomb under Sheremet's car.

Logunova did not respond to a request for comment.

Knyazhesky was not the last Azov member to die mysteriously. Maksym Pashkevych, a driver for Biletsky, was found dead in September 2020. According to the official version, he also committed suicide.

Larysa Babych says that Pashkevych died after he told her about Azov members' alleged participation in her husband Yaroslav's death.

According to Larysa Babych, Pashkevych had claimed that he had driven Azov members to Babych's house, and that six Azov members, including Korotkikh, killed Yaroslav. He also told her that he was afraid of

being killed for leaking information about her husband's death.

Shishov

Korotkikh has also admitted to being acquainted with Shishov, head of the Belarusian House — a Belarusian opposition group in Kyiv — and having links to the organization.

On Aug. 3, 2021, Shishov was found hanged in a park on the outskirts of Kyiv in what appears to be a murder disguised as a suicide.

Korotkikh told the TV channel Nash and the Zaborona news site that he had helped Shishov get a residence permit and registered him in his own apartment.

A source in Kyiv's Belarusian diaspora told the Kyiv Post that there was a split in Kyiv's Belarusian community due to Korotkikh's attempt to take over the protest movement against Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko in late 2020. Many people were fearful of Korotkikh and did not trust him, the source said.

Shishov was not comfortable with the idea of Azov ultra-nationalists dominating the Belarusian House, the source said. He tried to distance himself from Korotkikh and even to remove him from the movement, according to the source.

Rodion Batulin, a deputy head of the Belarusian house, is a close associate of Korotkikh. He declined to comment.

Batulin's far-right background is also controversial. His Telegram account is called @denverevki — a Russian translation of "Day of the Rope" — a term from a book by U.S. neo-Nazi writer William Luther Pierce, referring to the lynching of racial and ethnic minorities.

Batulin left Ukraine before Shishov's death, prompting suspicion that he was trying to create an alibi. On Aug. 4, the Security Service of Ukraine banned Batulin from entering the country, citing national security concerns.

The Belarusian House said Shishov had noticed that he had been under surveillance.

According to WhatsApp correspondence published by the Belarusian House in August, in June Batulin asked Shishov to tell the police he was being watched.

"Make sure that, when you are killed, people won't say that Botsman (Korotkikh) sent me," Batulin advised him. "So that everyone understands that it's the (Belarusian) KGB." ❦



Activists hold portraits of murdered Belarusian activist Vitaliy Shishov at a rally next to the Belarusian Embassy in downtown Kyiv on Aug. 3. Shishov was acquainted with Azov member Sergiy Korotkikh and allegedly had disagreements with Azov before he was found hanged in a Kyiv park.

'Hey Guide' offers insiders' insights to Kyiv's many gems

By Daria Shulzhenko
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

The new Instagram page "Hey Guide" can be easily mistaken for an account of a typical Kyiv creative. Just like many locals, it posts analog photos from hip locations framed in one eye-catching style. But this is no coincidence.

Hey Guide was created by knowledgeable locals to help others discover the capital's many hidden gems.

"We love Kyiv and want everyone to see it the way we see it," Anastasia Ivchenko, one of the co-founders, told the Kyiv Post.

Visual diary

Hey Guide was launched by the duo behind communications agency Public Kitchen, Ivchenko and Eugenia Skibina. Their company contributed to the betterment of Ukraine's international image by promoting fashion brands like Ksenia Schneider and Ienki Ienki. Both have grown to be a success abroad.

Ivchenko and Skibina have roamed the world but say there is no place like home, in their case, Kyiv.

"We are the generation that doesn't want to immigrate somewhere but plans to spend our lives in Ukraine," Ivchenko says.

Their love for Kyiv pushed them to launch Hey Guide, an Instagram account on a mission to help foreigners discover the Ukrainian capital, as well as help locals rediscover their home.

"Showing Kyiv to the world is great, but we also want locals to see the city like we do, with love," Ivchenko says.

They capture the local color using film photography, which is booming in Kyiv. Their brand colors are Ukraine's national yellow and blue, but dimmed, to match the overall "analog" look. And their content is the abundance of unconventional places to see and experience in Kyiv, with short but insightful captions in English and Ukrainian.

"It's like a visual diary," Ivchenko says.

Thanks to its appealing modern look and out-of-the-ordinary recommendations, Hey Guide proved to be a hit soon after its launch in late July. It is now thriving with over 7,500 followers.

Spectacular Kyiv

The guide offers "authentic and unique" places that are divided into four categories such as "see & do," "eat & drink," "shop" and "escape."



The Petrivka flea market (L) and the Saliut hotel (R) are some of the offbeat Kyiv attractions recommended to visit by Hey Guide. The guide posts various locations with short descriptions on Instagram to help visitors and locals discover Kyiv's hidden gems.

One of the "shop" options is Kyiv's legendary Petrivka flea market that takes place every weekend in the middle of the railway, near the Petrivka book market.

"This place is addictive: Everything that is lying on the floor has its own story, and sellers are almost always happy to share it," the caption reads.

Hey Guide also recommends shopping for goods at Zhytniy Market in the Podil neighborhood. Settled in a mesmerizing Soviet modernist building with a concave roof, the market "has everything Podolyanin (the resident of Podil) could ever need, from top-notch salo to authentic jewelry."

Their "eat & drink" section invites readers to visit a cozy little cafe Kalyna in the Pechersk neighborhood that has been operating since 1994.

Skibina says she has been passing by Kalyna for many years on the way to her friends' residence nearby. When she once finally entered the cafe, she realized that it reminded her of "confectioneries from her childhood."

The team recommends trying Kalyna's special "vyshnevi roga-

lyky"— cherry-filled crescent rolls. Hey Guide even organized Cherry Rogalyky Weekend in August to further promote their beloved dessert.

"We think that Kyiv cake is too obvious, so we decided to give this city a new dessert," Ivchenko says.

The guide suggests that locals "escape" from the city's buzz and fuss to the quiet and picturesque Gryshko National Botanical Garden, which is "a real oasis in the middle of a busy city."

The "see & do," category features the no-name electronic music club at 41 Kyrylivska St., the garbage sorting station Plastic Club and the Dnipro metro station that offers a picturesque view of the eponymous river, the longest in Ukraine.

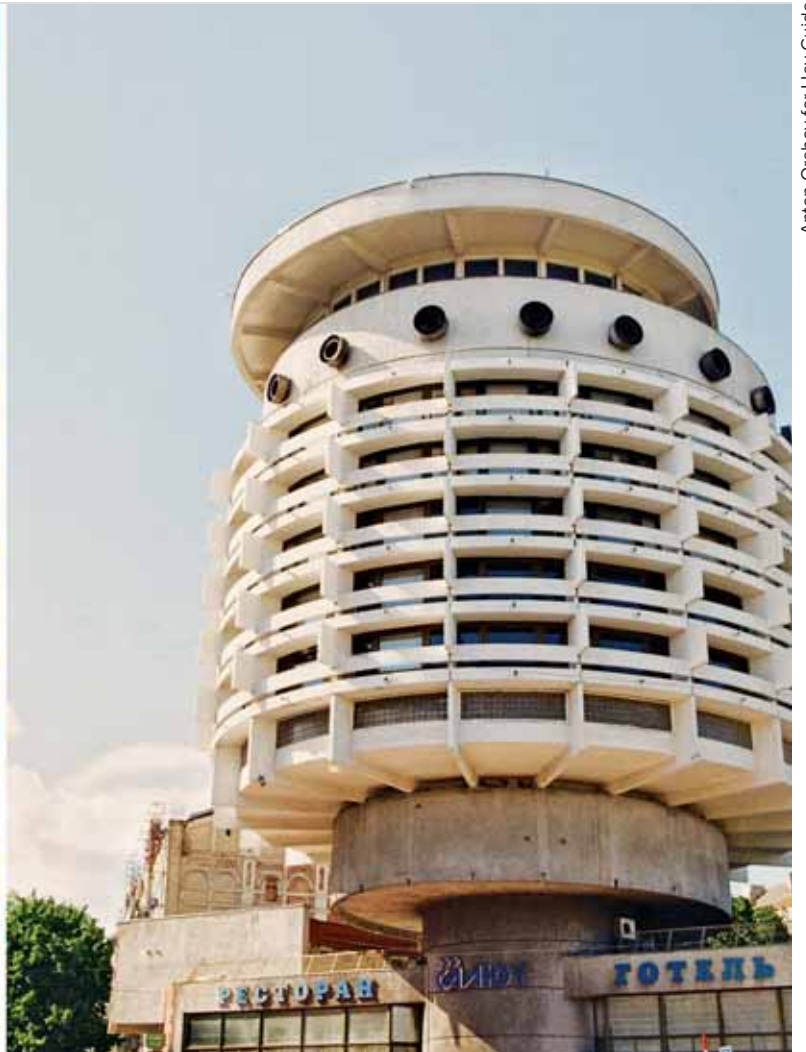
Numerous posts spotlight Kyiv's architectural wonders such as the 1984 Soviet modernist Hotel Salute, often referred to as "the grenade" for its unusual round shape, and St. Nicholas Cathedral, Kyiv's second-oldest Roman Catholic church that was damaged by a fire on Sept. 3.

"We want people to see how beautiful Kyiv is and how important it is to preserve its historical buildings," Ivchenko says.

Supporting the local

Aside from helping their audience to discover offbeat Kyiv, the guide is on a social mission to support local businesses and institutions.

According to Ivchenko, many of their followers visited little-known



Anton Orehov for Hey Guide

Strumok restaurant outside of Kyiv after they posted about it. A rare exemplar of wooden modernist structure, the restaurant has maintained its original Soviet chic style. Many also discovered Kalyna café thanks to the guide.

"We like the people who develop this city, we admire their projects and therefore we add them to the guide," Skibina says.


Hey Guide is also here to build a community of those who love and appreciate Kyiv. The team plans to hold events that would bring them together.

They started with arranging an excursion in the National Opera of Ukraine on Sept. 18. The grand 1901 building houses one of Ukraine's most prominent opera and ballet theaters. Renowned Ukrainian artists Maria Ralko and Stanislav Adamenko, who participated in the

building's renovation in the late 1980s were the tour guides.

The team charged Hr 1,000 (\$38) per person. They say that they transferred all the money from ticket sales to an initiative called "Kyiv, clean," which cleans some of the capital's busiest and dirtiest places using powerful washing equipment that local public utility services do not possess. Hey Guide doesn't disclose the sum they raised. They say they keep a low profile about their charitable deeds since it's not the main focus of their platform.

Hey Guide plans to hold at least two more events by the end of the year, which will also be announced on their Instagram account.

In the meantime, the team is dedicated to continue spotlighting Kyiv they love. "A contrasting, often unexpected, very homey, tasty and beautiful city," Skibina says. 



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Palingenesy turns shabby sneakers into wearable art

By Artur Korniienko
korniienko@kyivpost.com

Everyone had a favorite pair of shoes they wanted to keep wearing even when their seams and soles started to come apart.

That may become possible with Palingenesy, a Kyiv initiative that combines bits of old sneakers to create a new pair that is truly unique. The brand emerged in August and plans to start selling in November.

And there is an ecological upside: The parts of old shoes are used to create new ones with almost no carbon footprint and the rest is fully recycled.

“Old sneakers don’t have to be burned as trash. We’re showing that there is another way,” says founder of Palingenesy Mitya Hontarenko. “And it can also be cool.”

Palingenesy stems from a passion. A self-described sneakerhead, Hontarenko started customizing sneakers in 2019 for himself, friends and a couple of local celebrities, like rapper Kyivstoner and boxer Denys Berinchyk.

It was a creative outlet for a young manager at a tire company, who comes from Donetsk, a city occupied by Russia-backed militants in Ukraine’s east.

“I realized I liked it (customizing sneakers) when I would wake up at night to draw,” Hontarenko, who is now 26, told the Kyiv Post.

But after a while, simply painting and decorating sneakers felt limiting for Hontarenko, especially since so many people do it these days. A blessing in disguise helped: While stuck at home recovering from a knee injury in 2020, he started tinkering with two old pairs from his collection. And something clicked.

“On my balcony, I cut two Nike



Co-founder of Palingenesy Mitya Hontarenko poses with the sneakers created by the brand from parts of old pairs in Kyiv on Sept. 20, 2021.

Kostyantyn Chernichkin

models and sewed them together by hand intuitively,” Hontarenko remembers. “I showed this first pair to friends, and they said ‘Damn, it’s lit!’”

Reassembling sneakers from other pairs was then a new idea for Hontarenko, he says. But there have been a few others doing similar things around the world.

The pioneer is Helen Kirkum in London, a designer who usually takes apart one pair of sneakers and

puts it back together in a deconstructed high fashion aesthetic. In Japan, Shun Hirose of Recouture shop fits popular sneakers with outsoles from other shoe types, like boots or brogues.

But what Hontarenko set out to do was still different: custom handmade sneakers created from an unlimited number of worn old pairs and intended for daily use in street fashion. And the brand is no obstacle: His sneakers can be built from

parts of Nike, Adidas, Puma, Asics, etc.

Soon, friends introduced him to Elena and Nick Yarovenko, professional shoemakers who would become his confidants. But first, he had to persuade them to go against their training in making shoes.

“They would tell me ‘It doesn’t work this way,’” Hontarenko says. “But after we made the first pair together, they changed their mind.”

Having day jobs in Kyiv, the three are now creating upcycled sneakers after work or on the weekends in a cozy shed outside the city. They called their emerging brand Palingenesy to reference the concept of rebirth in philosophy and biology.

A pair is handmade in about two days. Hontarenko, who designs the shoes, compares the process to painting: With elements added on the go, the design may change at every step. Most importantly, each pair and even individual shoe is different.

“It’s art that you can wear,” he says.

And it has a message.

Shoe production accounts for 1.4% of the global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Measuring Fashion report by Quantis sustainability consulting firm. This is significant given that air travel is responsible for 2.5% of emissions that impact global climate.

According to the World Footwear Yearbook, the world produces over 24 billion pairs of shoes annually. Their many components are hard to recycle, so most shoes end up in landfills, where the plastic parts decompose for centuries. Otherwise, shoes are incinerated, contributing

more toxic gas emissions.

Palingenesy gives a new lease on life to parts of shabby shoes. The residue, like plastic shoe soles, are sent for recycling. And the production of a new pair leaves a minimal carbon footprint.

While their small production volumes won’t have a global impact, Hontarenko says they may draw attention to the problem and show the alternative.

“If these things bother you – you have to talk about it. If no one hears you – you need to do something,” Hontarenko says.

And his cause is gaining traction. An established Ukrainian streetwear brand, Riot Division, has put up a box for old shoes in its store, which Palingenesy will use to create new sneakers. Hontarenko now also works on other ecological initiatives at Riot Division.

Palingenesy is currently working on its first for-sale collection. They want to release sneakers in monthly drops, with the first one planned for November. Starting price for a pair will estimate at \$100.

But Hontarenko is in no rush to make Palingenesy a commercially oriented project. They take time to ensure that each pair is uniquely handmade, has the best quality and carries the message for sustainability.

“This story started as an action art,” Hontarenko says. “If it grows commercially – cool, if not – we will still deliver our message through our products.”

Palingenesy sneakers will be available through the brand’s Instagram in November: www.instagram.com/palingenesy

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Ukraine's new world champion

Left: Ukrainian boxer Oleksandr Usyk (L) fights British heavyweight champion boxer Anthony Joshua at the end of their heavyweight boxing match at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in north London on Sept. 25, 2021. Usyk defeated Joshua on points. Bottom: Ukrainian boxer Oleksandr Usyk poses for a photo as he celebrates after defeating British heavyweight champion boxer Anthony Joshua.



usyk17/promotions/instagram

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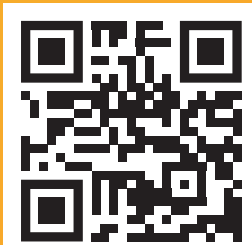
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