The Maidan Diary

Dmitry Petrov, February 2014



AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE UKRAINIAN REVOLUTION OF 2014

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Introduction

About Maidan

In November 2013, protests broke out in Kyiv against the government of Viktor Yanukovych, then president of Ukraine, in response to Yanukovych prioritizing economic and diplomatic ties with Russia. Demonstrators occupied *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), employing tactics familiar from previous movements in Egypt, Spain, and Turkey. In response, Yanukovych ordered police attacks and the government introduced repressive anti-protest laws. This situation came to a head in February 2014 with clashes in which police killed over a hundred people.[1] Yanukovych lost control and fled to Russia; a new government took power in Ukraine, seeking to shift Ukrainian economic and diplomatic ties toward the European Union. In response, Vladimir Putin's government ordered the seizure of Crimea, precipitated a civil war in eastern Ukraine, and ultimately launched a wholesale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The sequence of global uprisings that led up to the Ukrainian revolution had begun with the anarchist-initiated insurrection in Greece in December 2008. Over the following five years, this momentum had spread around the world, from the so-called "Arab Spring" and the Occupy movement to Brazil and Bosnia. The uprising in Ukraine drew on some of the same sources of discontent and used many of the same tactics. Yet in Kyiv, fascists established a foothold within the uprising, forcibly sidelining anarchists.

In retrospect, the Ukrainian revolution represented a turning point, introducing a new era in which some of the strategies that had previously been associated with anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian politics would be adopted by neoliberal, nationalist, and fascist groups with completely different agendas. As we argued at the time,

> The model we have seen in Kyiv opens the way for fascists and other reactionaries to recreate the ruling order within resistance movements—not just by reinserting formal hierarchies and gender roles, but also by confining the substance of the struggle to a clash of armed organizations rather than spreading subversion into every aspect of social relations. Once nationalism is added to this equation, war is not far away.

It is not surprising that, once it became clear that these uprisings could overthrow governments, additional political actors got involved, bringing their agendas with them. The question is how anarchist visions of liberation can contend with much better-resourced political forces as the world enters a period of widespread instability.

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[1] One of the dead was the anarchist Sergey Kemski, author of "Do you hear, Maidan?." Some evidence suggests that Kemski may have been shot by pro-Maidan nationalists rather than police.

About Dmitry Petrov

One of the participants in the events of February 2014 was Dmitry Petrov, a twenty-four-year-old anarchist from Moscow. Dmitry had cut his teeth in various anti-fascist, anti-authoritarian, and ecological struggles, founding the Black Blog as a venue in which to report direct action and participating in the Russian protest movement of 2011–2012 in response to the rigged elections that kept Vladimir Putin in power. He traveled to Kyiv in early February, joining other Russian anarchists in supporting Ukrainians as they resisted a government that was aligned with the same autocracy that anarchists were fighting in Russia.[2] In the process of participating in the Ukrainian uprising, Dmitry hoped to promote an anarchist vision of liberation.

What Dmitry saw in Kyiv was by turns exhilarating and disheartening. In his reports, he documents how militarism, nationalism, and hierarchical organization channeled the movement away from the kinds of profound social change that he sought. At the same time, he retained his faith in the potential of all human beings to collectively self-organize their lives, passionately arguing for solidarity between Russians and Ukrainians in resistance to all forms of oppression. In the face of fascist threats, he did his best to make a space for anarchist proposals in the Maidan protests.

Dmitry's involvement in Ukraine did not end with this diary. Four years after the 2014 revolution, having learned that the Russian secret police were interested in him, Dmitry returned to Kyiv to live in exile. Despite his precarious situation as an expatriate, he continued to put his politics into action: for example, in 2020, anarchists attacked the Investigative Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kyiv in solidarity with the George Floyd Uprising. When Russian forces invaded Ukraine in 2022, Dmitry helped to form an "anti-authoritarian platoon" within the territorial defense forces around Kyiv; he was killed in battle in Bakhmut in April 2023.

About his diary

We have translated and annotated Dmitry's reports from Kyiv in February 2014 because they represent a valuable document offering insight into historic events, but also because the questions that Dmitry faced that month in Kyiv continue to confront us today. As we argued in 2014,

> We are not simply in a conflict with the state in its present incarnation, but in a three-way fight against it and its authoritarian opponents. The present social order will regenerate itself indefinitely until a form of resistance emerges that is capable of overthrowing governments without replacing them. This is not just a contest of arms; it is a clash between different forms of relations. It is not just a struggle for physical territory, but also for tactics and narratives—for the territory of struggle itself.

[2] In doing so, Dmitry was following in the footsteps of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who developed his anarchist politics in the course of his efforts to act in solidarity with oppressed Polish people (since much of Poland was a Russian colony in the 19th century). Supporting those who resist Russian imperialism has long been a foundational priority for Russian anti-authoritarians.

> The fact that these movements can be hijacked by nationalists does not mean that we should remain aloof from them. This was the initial reaction of many anarchists to the plaza occupations in Spain and Occupy in the US, and it could have been disastrous. Standing aside at a moment of popular confrontation with the state permits rival antagonists to seize the initiative, connecting with the general public and defining the stakes.

In the years since the Ukrainian Revolution, nationalists and fascists have gained momentum around the world, falsely presenting themselves as rebels against the ruling order even as they seek to impose an even more oppressive version of it. Anarchists and anti-authoritarians have not ceded the terrain of rebellion to them, but nationalists are becoming a dangerous force even in places that were previously associated with left-wing movements. In France, in 2018, the yellow vest movement became a battleground in which anti-authoritarians contended with fascists to represent the alternative to Emmanuel Macron's neoliberal policies.[3] While Dmitry's experience in the Maidan protests might have appeared to represent a worst-case scenario in 2014, today many of us elsewhere around the world could experience something similar in the not-too-distant future.

Thankfully, in the years following the 2014 revolution, fascists failed to secure state power in Ukraine. They did surprisingly badly in subsequent elections, considering the leverage they had wielded in the streets of Kyiv. But in the course of the war that Russia provoked in eastern Ukraine, fascists managed to associate themselves with the Ukrainian military, providing Putin with a facile excuse to order the wholesale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. War offers fascists on all sides fertile soil in which to recruit and promote their mythologies.

If the protest movement in Russia in 2012 had succeeded in toppling Putin, the revolution that took place in Ukraine in 2014 might have been part of a wave of real change throughout the region. Even the staunchest reactionary must acknowledge that that would have been preferable to the war that has killed or maimed hundreds of thousands of people. Instead, the movement was crushed in Russia, and only managed to achieve a change of governments in Ukraine, setting the stage for the war that continues today.

Anarchists continue to debate how best to conceptualize and engage with the war between Russia and Ukraine. There are still anarchist groups active in Ukraine, such as Solidarity Collectives and Assembly. Repression has silenced most forms of dissent in Russia; Solidarity Zone organizes to support political prisoners there.

This translation is a joint project of English-speaking and Russian-speaking anarchists, a humble effort to promote mutual understanding and collective action on an international basis. We are up against a lot, but together, we can make a difference.

> "There is a struggle going on inside everyone—on the one hand, the people here have come out to resist the coercion of those in power, but on the other hand, the weight of prejudice, the habit of hierarchical social attitudes, and the vertical structure of society are still very strong and they drag resistance down."
>
> -Dmitry Petrov, in the sixth installment of his Maidan Diary

[3] It is telling that nationalists aligned themselves with neoliberalism in Ukraine while claiming to oppose neoliberal "globalism" in France and the United States; incoherence and opportunism are practically defining characteristics of nationalism.

I. Ukrainian Diary, Day 1: Kharkiv

Published February 7, 2014

In the early morning of February 7, Kharkiv greeted me with gloomy chill, thorough but futile police inspections, and other hustle. This metropolis of a million and a half people has become a staging post on the way to the capital's Maidan, which, if all goes well tomorrow, we will report on shortly.

After sightseeing, dipping into a subway crowded just like in Moscow, we visited the local Maidan. Near the monument to [famous Ukrainian poet] Taras Shevchenko on a not too frosty but dank February evening, about 200 peaceful citizens had gathered with yellow and blue flags.

Having been here, I have to admit that I was surprised that some time ago, there were calls circulating among Moscow anarchists to go to Kharkiv, to local, supposedly promising protest actions. At the moment, things look rather dull and uneventful here, with all due respect to those who are there now, despite the bad weather and the clearly perceptible police pressure. In addition to the state flags, you can see the flag of the fascist party "Svoboda"[1] and Tymoshenko's "Batkivshchyna"[2] and, of course, the flag of the European Union. The friendly "svobodites" [members of Svodoba] handed me an issue of their newspaper… They have their own tent in which they raise funds.

The speakers cannot be heard very well and speak rather softly, in stark contrast to the expressive revolutionary monument to Shevchenko. A banner reading "Down with bloody dictatorship," in Ukrainian… One can sense the presence of the police; the city in general gives the feeling that the authorities are on guard, and it seems they're quietly monitoring those who arrive.

The Kharkiv Maidan is at an excessively respectful distance from the administrative buildings. There does not seem to be any sign of occupations yet. When we approached the reception area, we could see a patrol of the legendary "titushkas" [mercenaries who supported the Ukrainian security forces during the Yanukovych administration, often posing as street hooligans]—simply stupid and arrogant paid thugs, who even turned their attention to our modest company, but then departed. The entrance to the building is guarded by police, but not a very reinforced squad.

Tonight, our pilgrimage is supposed to continue. Hopefully without unplanned complications.

D.Ch. MPST ["Д.Ч. МПСТ"—these initials stand for Dima Chascshin, one of Dmitry's many pseudonyms, followed by the initials of the MPST union.]

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[1] Svoboda began in the 1990s as an overtly fascist party involving skinheads, but transitioned to a suit-and-tie strategy to popularize fascism after Oleh Tyahnybok took control of it in 2004. Svoboda won over 10% of the vote in the 2012 parliamentary elections; contrary to fears, however, it lost support after the 2014 elections.

[2] Yulia Tymoshenko was a leader the so-called "Orange Revolution" that took place in Ukraine between November 2004 and January 2005, as a consequence of which she became Prime Minister. She lost the 2010 Ukrainian presidential election runoff to Viktor Yanukovych by 3.5 percentage points. The Yanukovych administration imprisoned her, but she was released in the course of the 2014 revolution.

II. Ukrainian Diary, Day 2: Getting to Know Maidan

Published February 9, 2014

So the jolting of the top bunk of the train from Kharkiv is behind us. At the exit from the central subway station, Khreshchatyk, we are greeted by massive barricades, stacked with bags of something heavy. Behind them are tents of protesters, bristling with posters and flags. I was reminded of the view outside our Moscow Teatralnaya station, a similar street with a sidewalk of paving stones, a block away from the Red Square… as if it were happening there.

The eye is struck by the abundance of black and red banners—but here, these don't mean the anarcho-communist colors, but rather are meant to remind us of the activities of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists [a far-right group influenced by fascism, involving Stepan Bandera, who worked with the Nazis] half a century ago.

The scale of the "rebellious town" on Maidan is staggering. The central street and the central square of Ukraine have in fact been freed from its central authority and are occupied by the protesters (or already rebels?), controlled by their self-defense units. The camp stretches for a kilometer in length. All around are the chimneys of the field kitchens and heated living tents. There is something of a Cossack camp in this picture.

There are blue and yellow flags everywhere, and party symbols as well: mainly "Batkivschyna," "Svoboda," "Spilna Pravda"… to put it tactfully, these guys are not close to us ideologically.

Everywhere, the *sotni*—or "hundreds," the Maidan's self-defense units—are marching around combatively. People with clubs, wearing masks and sometimes gas masks or military-style clothes, make a rather intimidating and repulsive impression, but at the same time, they are pleasing to the eye, in that they create a clear sense that the state's monopoly on violence no longer applies here. Bravado and ostentatious militarism are juxtaposed here with the difficult but honorable need for direct confrontation with the repressive structures of the state.

The hustle and bustle of the "rebellious town" gives way to crowds of tourists and tense groups of volunteers closer to Grushevsky Street, where the slippery asphalt is covered with black ash and the air reeks of soot. Here stands the entrance to the Dynamo stadium, which in recent weeks has been all over the world in the news. It is covered with scorch marks.

All the passages between the barricades are blocked by vigilantes. Ordinary mortals are not allowed in, only the "certified" self-defense participants. Further on, there are two more forward barricades, and behind them, there are lines of Berkut [Ukrainian riot police]. On the front line, among Ukrainian and Bandera flags, the flags of [the separatist Chechen Republic of] Ichkeria and the European Union hang side by side—this scene brilliantly illustrates the ideological eclecticism of the Maidan.

Through our comrades, we get acquainted with local anarchists and sympathizers. We are slowly getting oriented. We fit into one of several tents occupied by anarchists.

There is now a lively discussion among our like-minded comrades about creating their own hundred as part of the self-defense of the Maidan, and about other anarchist initiatives on the Maidan. Many comrades are concerned that the creation of an "official" hundred could bind anarchists with obligations to the unelected bodies of the "Maidan government," while others, on the contrary, emphasize that this government is nominal, collegial, and more or less horizontal.

We have not yet been able to formulate our own opinion about all these "people's militias," "tax police," "ministries," and "headquarters" on the Maidan. One thing is certain: there are quite a few people who want to gain power within the movement without burdening themselves with any democratic procedures. At the same time, the predominantly spontaneous nature of everything that is going on is preventing the implementation of these plans.

But spontaneity rarely lasts, so it seems to me that either everything will shift towards the vertical and the imperious lawless power of the Maidan "security officials" and "leaders," or it will be possible to create a structured and well-ordered horizontal self-government.

Anarchists are represented on the Maidan, although much less visible than in the Moscow anti-Putin movement a year and a half ago (note that the Ukrainian protest movement is in all respects much more serious than the Russian movement; we must catch up to it and surpass it).

There are a number of problems. First, it is quite noticeable that the focus of many protesters is to "make things the way they are in Europe"; it is difficult to explain to such people anything about other ways of socio-economic organization. Second, there are a lot of nationalists here. This can be seen in everything: in the symbols, the graffiti, the costumes of many Maidan activists, and in the number of times that you will hear "Glory to Ukraine!" while walking along the Maidan.

At the same time, we must understand that apart from the aggressive supporters of the "strong hand" that is creating total Ukrainization, the broad conglomerate of Ukrainian nationalists includes people of more reasonable views, perhaps even those who do not fit the definition of a "nationalist." As my comrade rightly noted, "the worst ones here are the respectable nationalists, like Svoboda."

Despite these problems, anarchists clearly have the opportunity to prove themselves as a worthwhile force, and the spontaneous and anti-authoritarian vector of the protest movement is also created by external conditions that are not favorable, but also far from hopeless for our libertarian cause.

D.Ch. MPST

III. Ukrainian Diary, Day 3: People's Veche [Assembly] and Fascist Flexing on the Maidan

Published February 11, 2014

Yesterday (February 9) on Kyiv's Independence Square was marked first and foremost by the "People's Assembly" [*veche,* council], which is held weekly on Sundays. At the appointed hour, the square was filled with a significant number of protesters: between 100,000 and 300,000 people. This was considerably more than the number that is constantly present on the Maidan. All of them were listening to what was happening on the big stage. Getting ahead of ourselves, we note that, in fact, the *veche* was not much different from the 100,000-strong anti-Putin rallies in Russia, where the public similarly swallowed the speeches of well-promoted "opposition leaders."

I was surprised by the clerical introduction. The presenter of the rally, in a spiritual voice, said that the clerics were going to speak. Thus, the party was preceded by speeches by hierarchs of varying degrees of severity [the author is being ironic] from the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate), the Greek Catholic Church (Uniates), the Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists, and Muslims. The clerics spoke in roughly the above order.

The first three, representatives of traditional mass faiths, spoke decorously, reminding us of the approaching Lent, calling for peace, while at the same time blessing the protesters. The Pentecostalist preached a heated sermon, reminding us that sinful government had been given to the people for their sins, but now it was time, having been cleansed of their sins, to give it a reversal. The mullah even directly declared that the Muslims of Ukraine, represented primarily by the Crimean Tatars, had been standing with the Maidan since the first days of the protest.

This was followed by the chanting of the "spiritual anthem of Ukraine." At the same time that one of the speeches was taking place, a line of people with open umbrellas marched through the crowd… some of the umbrellas were not the most puritanical: they were painted with pictures of people kissing or were black with pink ribbons. For a moment, I thought that this was an anti-clerical action, and that the umbrellas were intended as a way of shielding the minds of those present from the endless stream of divine grace. It turned out that it was more prosaic than that: a demonstration of solidarity with the Russian opposition TV channel Dozhd.

Without getting into long "analytical" arguments, I will only say that seeing such an accentuated interest in the opinion of the "spiritual authorities" left little pleasant emotion in my heart; on the other hand, it strongly suggests that despite the "course towards the EU," Ukraine's political culture is still quite distant from European culture. Still, it is impossible not to note the unity of representatives of such different religious branches in the face of this struggle against the authorities. On the other side of the spiritual barricade in Ukraine is the Moscow Patriarchate of Russian Orthodox Church.

Next came a speech by the opposition establishment. There were the "Napoleons" [heavyweight boxer Vitali] Klitschko, [Svoboda leader Oleh] Tyahnybok, and [politician Arseniy] Yatsenyuk [who became prime minister only a few days later, following the revolution], as well as a number of other "celebrities" who, unfortunately, are little known to the author of these lines.

In addition to purely rhetorical passages, the speeches contained a standard set of appeals. The audience was invited to strive towards Europe (as if "European integration" would be a great victory for the Ukrainian people, and not for European capital, which wants to use these people for its own profit). Everyone was urged to join the ranks of the Maidan self-defense fighters; apparently, the honorable candidates see this formation as a bargaining chip in the forthcoming political battles—I would like to see them disappointed.

They called for obedience to the leaders. They declared that a return to the constitution of 2004 would be the best solution of the current political crisis, and, of course, they villified the "Donetsk bandit."[1] The figures of the speech about Ukraine as "an outpost of Europe in the Third Cold War" and so on sometimes produced astonishment and a bitterly ironic state of mind. Almost every speaker began and ended his or her speech with the cry "Glory to Ukraine!" which prompted the unanimous response: "Glory to Heroes!"—a slogan that has traditionally been associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

An eclectic mix of nationalism (often not at all the "respectable and civil" kind) and Westernism is a characteristic feature of the Maidan. Against this sad background, I appreciated the speech of a representative of the "Automaidan" [a self-organized group using vehicles in the protests], Volodymyr Yavorski, who refrained from making eulogies to power-hungry opposition figures and from relishing European and constitutional illusions, but simply urged people to continue to persistently struggle for their rights and interests against those who oppress and humiliate them.

Among the juicy things, we should mention the rhetoric of the nationalist Tyahnybok about the alliance of Ukraine with the Western world and the forthcoming entry of the country into the IMF… What a marvel! What would Tyahnybok's Western like-minded brothers, who burn EU flags at all their major events, have to say about this?

In general, the *veche* [assembly] left a rather depressing impression. First of all, because of the generally loyal attitude of the participants to all the bad things outlined above and to the elite figures of the opposition as such. But even more so because this is not a real "veche" at all, but the same "communist" rally akin to those at which people chanted "Glory to the CPSU!"—where only the elite can speak, and all the "pawns" are offered ready-made opinions and instructions on how to behave.

There is a clear need to organize a horizontal structure of protest self-government, a real *veche*. The well-known Moscow variant of Occupy Abay with one general assembly (involving, according to the most ambitious estimates, up to 4000 people) will not work here, among hundreds of thousands—obviously, we need a network of assemblies that coordinate their decisions and actions through delegates with instructions from the collective that nominated them. And the podium, of course, must be open to all, and obviously there should not be just one. Otherwise, we are inevitably dealing with an elitist and authoritarian way of organizing the protest movement, and the fruits of such a movement are unlikely to be sweet.

[1] The meaning of this reference is clear neither to the translators nor the editors. Dmitry may have meant Yanukovych, or Nikolay Shchur, or it may have been a more general reference to thugs from Donetsk.

I have certain hopes associated with the fact that the "leaders" have already repeatedly proven themselves to be traitors, only now undertaking to be "uncompromising" to please the mood of the Maidan. Perhaps the situation with the permanent betrayal of the self-appointed spokesmen for the people's will itself will prompt the Maidan fighters to seek other ways of fighting and fresh ideas. On the good news, the credibility of the loudmouths from the TV is not very high among the natives of Independence Square.

Svolota

[This is a world play on the name of the "Svoboda" party; *svolota* means "scum."]

As it turned out later, this was not the most emotionally charged event of the day. In the evening, for the first time, we experienced the aggression of the fascists here. The youngsters of the odious Svolota tried to show the world the wonders of Aryan valor in an organized manner, with clubs, helmets, bulletproof vests and in numerical majority. Approaching the group of anarchists, the idiots started threatening and showing off.

It got no further than a verbal confrontation, but standing unarmed in front of the clubs was not very pleasant, to put it mildly. Also surprising is the inability/unwillingness of the Maidan "security office" to stop such actions on the part of the scum, as this is not the first time it has happened. In addition, this incident was a good illustration of the "truce" between forces participating in the Maidan revolution that are hostile to each other.

Д. Ch. MPST

IV. Ukrainian Diary, Day 3: Maidan Life

Published February 11, 2014

Having interrupted the daily chronicle, I want to write a few words about the everyday life of the protesters on the Maidan. Walking behind the barricades in the center of Kyiv, you find yourself in a natural "rebel town." Everywhere there are insulated military hiking tents, equipped with stoves and gasoline-powered generators. This is where the natives of Maidan live—those who are on the watch for the struggle around the clock. In addition, many people come here every day to gawk and/or protest…

Inside the camping tents, you can see crudely made bunks, tables for meals, various nooks with stacked things, in particular clothes collected by volunteers to help the Maidan fighters. There is a lot of firewood stacked inside and around the tents, as the wood stoves consume a lot of fuel. Outside, you can see smoke billowing from the chimneys of the protestors' tents. Some of the tents are capacious, others are smaller, and sometimes there aren't enough sleeping places, so we have to put polystyrene foam or jackets on the benches and floor, which is the asphalt of Khreshchatyk [the main street of Kyiv], sometimes covered with plywood or planks, and sometimes completely bare.

During the day, Maidan is filled with shops selling souvenirs or ice cream (or, alternatively, mulled wine). Smart businessmen have already started producing magnets and badges with Euromaidan symbols. There are also many "patriotic" cups and scarves on sale, and balaclavas for self-defense fighters or simply for showing off.

There are also field kitchens. There are quite a few of them. Several teams of volunteers prepare food and tea and distribute them free of charge to everyone. True, the food is mostly meat, which for us anarchists is a significant disadvantage. Medical aid stations have also been established.

A separate topic—the local toilets. Unfortunately, the relatively small number of public toilets on Independence Square and Khreshchatyk are clearly unable to serve so many people, so they are in a deplorable condition and using them is a torture, and every day more difficult. It is a pleasure to visit the restroom at one of the nearby cafés.

Another story is the Ukraine House. Nowadays it is a real cultural center—there is a library, a hall for film screenings and lectures, many of which are very interesting (they are organized by the "Free University," and everyone can suggest their own topic of lecture or film). There is a free-of-charge buffet in the basement and an exhibition of paintings on captured Berkut [Ukrainian riot police] shields, perhaps the best thing in contemporary art at the moment. There is a phone recharging spot and much more.

In general, an atmosphere of permanent creative energy reigns in the House. Even the restroom is quite civilized here. And therefore, it's no coincidence that yesterday (February 9), when there was a conflict between representatives of various self-defense groups, false information was spread on fascist platforms that "Somebody came to take out the anarchists"—these

morons can sense that something is going on here that is the exact opposite of their entire existence.

In general, two paradoxical phenomena coexist in this "rebel town." After a long period of inactivity, the Maidan camp is slowly stewing in its own juice, "rotting" in the incessant management of everyday affairs, and gradually getting bored. Conflicts arise on this basis, too. Besides, such places like a magnet attract all sorts of outsiders and weirdos, who spoil the picture, and in general do not contribute anything good to the atmosphere.

At the same time, something completely opposite is happening here as well. People around here show their initiative in the directions they like: some cook, some build, some educate, some fight—and this is a vibrant productive life activity, as Erich Fromm would probably characterize it.

I would hope that the second tendency will always prevail over the first. But for it to do so, one must surely continue to press forward and advance toward the true goal of it all: emancipation. We must admit that there are those who see their vocation here not as productive activity, but as commanding and ruling. Unfortunately, these people are also very active and are trying to accomplish their goals, at times with some success—by the way, they differ quite a lot from those who are engaged in genuine organizing and coordinating activities. As a result, the life of the Maidan has already become covered with a fair amount of bureaucratic mold, and the newly-minted "bosses" and "security" are at times creating significant hindrance to normal existence.

In conclusion, one cannot fail to mention the memorials to those killed in the battles with the Berkut. These symbols and monuments of tragedy and selflessness can be found near one of the front barricades on Grushevsky street, as well as on the Maidan itself.

D.Ch. MPST

V. Ukrainian Diary, Days 4 and 5: The Life of the Student Assembly and the Everyday Life of the Revolution

Published February 13, 2014

The day before yesterday (February 10) passed in some confusion and bustle. We addressed organizational issues, held a meeting of the anarchists active on the Maidan, and made organizational plans (out of superstition, I will tell you about the plans only as they come to fruition). Then we settled into our new place of residence and struggle—in the liberated Ukraine House—in the Student Assembly, an island of libertarian thought and activity on the Maidan.

The guys from the Assembly are active 24 hours a day; they maintain a cell phone charging station, and organize film screenings and discussions. It is the Assembly that organizes a very important and noble initiative of standing guard in hospitals, where victims of police violence on Grushevsky Street are treated and who, as participants in the popular uprising, face the risk of arrest and, at best, government bunk beds instead of a hospital bunk. These arrests and kidnappings are carried out secretly at night, in violation of all procedural norms and laws. That is why the presence of volunteers standing guard and the direct obstruction of the actions of the cops has already saved several people from the unpredictable consequences of an illegal arrest. Life in the Student Assembly is in full swing, and we must give credit for the hospitality and cordiality of our comrades toward us.

One sad thing—there are a lot of tough guys in balaclavas and armor constantly poking around the building of the Ukraine House, keeping the place in order, so to speak. On the one hand, it is important to keep this a sober space, to drive provocateurs and troublemakers away. But on the other hand, to periodically see two tough guys in masks dragging some crying girl or a sad young man by the arms is very unpleasant. The newly-minted cops (at least, many of them) are extremely rude and boorish, and anyone who inquires as to what the person being dragged away has done will be answered, at best: "No one asked you!" or "Shut up, or you'll be next!"

These guys like to look menacing and wave around their "security" credentials, etc. It is curious and at the same time bitter to see how the long-established phenomenon "power corrupts" is playing out yet again without any noticeable resistance. It seems that many of these guys, the "people's policemen," who have a very big responsibility to keep order but not to turn into repressive beasts, are often committed to a profound sense of their own greatness and quickly get a taste for power. In the future, this will undoubtedly give rise to even greater problems.

All in all, thanks to such incidents, a rather aggressive atmosphere prevails in the House and on the Maidan as a whole. To say "the rule of force" would be an exaggeration, but it is true that force has a greater place than it should here when it comes to internal issues.

In addition to the "police," there are many other working groups operating in the Ukraine House to keep things running smoothly here and to help people on the Maidan: a medical station

and team, people on shift and cooks in the canteen, there is also a “chapel” made of cardboard strips with rather strange priests, one of whom has already been escorted out for not being who he claimed he was, and another had just tortured a puppy who entered the sacred territory, he was whining a lot—the power was taken away with a scandal—fortunately, the student assembly was just behind a cardboard ceiling. Electricians and plumbers also can be encountered here, since household malfunctions are common.

D.Ch. MPST

VI. Ukrainian Diary, Days 6 and 7: A Story from Moscow Anarchists about the Protests in Russia at the Vilna (Free) School in the Ukraine House, an Anarchist Section in the Maidan Library

Published February 13, 2014

Perhaps the most significant event for us on February 12 was our collective presentation as part of the Free School, which was set aside in the evening in the main hall of the Ukraine House. We told the audience (more than fifty people) about the mass protest campaign against United Russia (the ruling party) and Putin in 2011–2012 and the "Bolotnaya Square Case."[1]

The main idea we wanted to convey to our listeners was that the protest should be organized on a horizontal basis. Ironically, despite the differences between the Russian movement and the Ukrainian insurgency, we too have something to share with our Slavic brothers. Even the notorious "coordination council" of the opposition was elected in our country, while here many executive (security and self-defense) posts are appointed from above: either by opposition parliamentary parties, or self-appointed, according to the principle of "he who dares, eats." These quasi-officials are not accountable to the ordinary Maidan activists, including those who are constantly on the barricades, in the square, and in the Ukraine House. At the same time, their powers are much broader than those possessed by the Opposition Council in Russia. Needless to say, this situation undermines resistance to Yanukovich's authoritarianism.

Our message was as follows: the people of Ukraine, who have already shown themselves to be staunch opponents of tyranny, must not be satisfied with simply putting the boots of new oppressors on their necks in place of the old ones. We spoke about our experience of holding people's assemblies during the "standing" demonstrations on Chistye Prudy and Barrikadnaya in Moscow. We also drew attention to some curious differences in the political realities of Russia and Ukraine. In particular, there are no parties in the Russian parliament that even remotely resemble the real opposition to the party in power. Paradoxically, we are "more fortunate" in this respect, since representative institutions and political parties in Russia seem to inspire less trust. We received a warm welcome, and many fervently supported us, while others argued with our egalitarian position, voicing common misconceptions about the inevitability of social hierarchies and the "impossibility" of organizing society along different lines. There is a struggle going on inside everyone—on the one hand, the people here have come out to resist the coercion of those

[1] On May 6, 2012, the "March of Millions" ended with clashes in Bolotnaya Square in Moscow. A number of people were arrested, including the anarchist Alexei Polikhovich and the anti-fascist Alexei Gaskarov. The subsequent court case became associated with the struggle to free Russian political prisoners.

in power, but on the other hand, the weight of prejudice, the habit of hierarchical social attitudes, and the vertical structure of society are still very strong and they drag resistance down.

After several days of negotiations with the Maidan library and with our comrades in Kyiv, on February 13, we managed to organize a "free shelf" in the library of the Ukraine House. There are anarchist periodicals and theoretical pamphlets, something on ecology, and works by such leftist philosophers as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Guy Debord, and others. We would welcome any infusion of libertarian literature into our library sector. So far, there has been very little…

Life in the "rebellious town" is still stagnating; no one has gone to block the Rada [the Ukrainian parliament] today, but the expiration of Yanukovich's ultimatum on February 17 promises to bring a fresh wave.

D.Ch. MPST

VII. Ukrainian Diary: Valentine's Day on Maidan

Published February 15, 2014

Today (February 14) went by in a fairly ordinary mode: that is, it consisted of the same thousand little things as usual.

The "romantic" flair created around Valentine's Day filled the Maidan, too, with a special sound: cute girls were seen handing out Valentine's cards to boys, as well as dandies with bouquets of flowers. Valentine's cards (see above) demand to keep up with expectations. Of course, the cohabitation of many representatives of both sexes over a long period of time inevitably leads to a variety of interactions, which isn't without its anecdotes but also downright nasty stories… but then again, that's just the cultural background of our fellow countrymen. Eastern Europe style, as they say…

However, the cupids were not fluttering everywhere. Yesterday, the freaks from Svolota showed themselves again: waiting for a moment when only one person was left standing watch at the anarchist section of the barricades, they arrived in a gang, waving knives… and began to paint over the anarchist graffiti. In all likelihood, this kindergarten shows the most we can expect of the Svolota "youth."

D.Ch. MPST

VIII. Ukrainian Diary: Maidan kitchen

Published February 16, 2014

On the night of February 14–15, I decided to satisfy my civic sense and take a shift in the kitchen. It was probably one of the most interesting things I've done in my time here. The kitchen is always short of volunteers, and the vast majority of those who work there are women. During my shift, the gender ratio was about 4:1, which is more balanced than it usually is.

Feeding the awakened (in the political sense) people is, to put it bluntly, not easy. The kitchen functions on the account of ready-made food brought in as well as food allocated from the revolution's reserves, which is obviously made up of donations and/or sponsorships. Even at night there are plenty of people who want something to eat, so the whole kitchen and buffet, with a total of fifteen to twenty people on shift, is in assembly line mode.

At the same time, many representatives of the awakened people do not burden themselves—neither with gratitude, nor with basic politeness. Moreover, many of the guys in the queue simply can't think of anything better to do than to flirt insistently with the girls at the counter, which I soon got sick of, and that became an additional lesson that the revolution in consciousness should go hand in hand with the social revolution. Fortunately (or not?), the catering sorceresses themselves perceive this situation more simply. Generally speaking, as someone who has never really gone in for hyper-feminism, I can testify that the issue of discrimination against women here is real: there are problems involving rudeness, the redistribution of dirty work to women, their exclusion from participating in self-defense, and harassment.

Some time after we started our kitchen work, a disgruntled woman (some local low-ranking "boss") showed up and started demanding to be told who was using a megaphone to invite volunteers to the kitchen from the residential floor. Not that anyone there was particularly asleep at that moment, but the folks at headquarters gave her a hard time, and now she was there to take her anger further down the hierarchical ladder. However, one of the guys gave her a worthy rebuke, saying that the principle "The boss punishes you, then you punish a subordinate" is somehow inappropriate in revolutionary territory.

Soon, they began to recruit a group to carry food to the front barricades. Only the self-defense squads on duty are allowed to be there; no ordinary protesters or bystanders are allowed. Women are not allowed on the front barricades. Those handing out food are escorted through the cordons by a security guard. When I was a "mere mortal" and did not have access to the front lines, I could not have imagined that there was such an extensive system of front barricades near Dynamo Stadium—we walked around seven, each guarded by a squad on duty.

In the darkness of the night, slowly going from post to post, there was indeed an atmosphere of wartime. The inhabitants here, in turn, are not at all soccer hooligans or rebellious students, but grown men, perhaps with war experience. I can't help but appreciate that everything is organized so seriously.

However, this situation also has a drawback, perhaps more significant than its advantages. The presence of professional (or quasi-professional) military men inevitably means the collapse of any

kind of democracy in the movement, since, by decision of their commanders, these people can impose this or that order on everyone else in an organized way by force. In addition, according to my subjective feelings, these people are unlike those who came here at the call of the idea, and even if I am wrong, their values and goals most likely have little in common with mine. A thick atmosphere of the right of force, the power of a man with a gun (or club) hung there. This is a problem that requires reflection and solution. The contradiction, the conflict between the "military" and "civilian" Maidan, is very clear.

D.Ch. MPST

IX. Ukrainian Diary, February 15 and 16: Is the Troubling Calm Nearing an End?

Published February 17, 2014

After the Maidan kitchen, I woke up late. It was February 15, the situation with available places to stay over for the night was bad and it was time to take a public shower in the Ukraine House… too bad there was no public laundry or public shoe deodorant. The wifi was no better than the hygiene situation, so I hurried off in search of a network, leaving my things, as usual, in the Student Assembly.

Imagine my surprise when, on my return, I found the entrance to the House blocked off by people in helmets and armor and with batons—"self-defense" men. Everyone was told that the building was being evacuated, but that they would soon let everyone in for half an hour to pack up. The situation got very uncomfortable. Then a tough man in camouflage ordered, through a megaphone, that everyone should form a column of four people at the foot of the stairs. And then… everyone was told that it was a drill, and that our preparedness for defense is shit, and that from now on everyone must obey the orders of the men in camouflage unquestioningly and in an organized manner.

In some ways, I was relieved. We were allowed to get our belongings, and the frantic question of where to spend the night was no longer an issue. In general, the actions of some especially quick and arrogant power-hungry politicians, as well as the aggressive men, create an oppressive feeling of powerlessness and alienation from the revolutionary movement. This situation has long been in need of resolution. Rumors have been circulating everywhere that soon the Svolota will come to evict the Ukraine House, and it will be necessary to hold the defense.

For the evening film screening, the choice was "The Dictator" [presumably the 2012 film by Sacha Baron Cohen]—we laughed heartily and the audience was delighted. It's funny that the security office did not revoke the Student Assembly's right to organize screenings.

February 16 came, and with it, the Sunday "veche"—hundreds of thousands of people and politicians sloganeering. Everything is the same as last Sunday. The "peaceful offensive" on the administrative buildings, which many had discussed, did not take place. The fascist Tyahnybok was calling for everyone to carry out what had been planned for Tuesday. But that same evening, Svolota once again demonstrated its traitorous nature. The authorities demanded the release of the building of the Kyiv City Hall (the city state administration) in exchange for the release of political prisoners. Contrary to the opinion of a significant number of protesters, the opposition establishment arbitrarily decided to hand over city hall to the authorities.

And at the moment, the Svolota scum, numbering several hundred people armed with batons and shields, are blocking the entrance to the Kyiv City State Administration to the rest of the protesters. In all likelihood, the fascist traitors intend to hand over the building, which was occupied in fierce clashes, to the oppressors in the morning.

D.Ch. MPST

X. Ukrainian Diary: Culmination

Published February 20, 2014

Actually, the diary is already over. I write these lines following the fading traces of memory, sitting in a soft armchair and sipping Borjomi in Moscow. I am ashamed that I am here, and many people who have already become significant to me are there. I can only justify myself with the fact that I did not leave there out of fear. Really.

The morning of February 18, the day for which Ukraine is now in mourning, was warm and sunny like spring. It was the second day after the end of the ultimatum demanding that the seized buildings be given up and the barricades dismantled. Yeah, sure. The truce was over.

It was also the day that parliament was supposed to begin its session. Therefore, in the morning, a column of protesters headed towards the Rada building from Maidan Nezalezhnosti along Institutskaya street. The approaches to it were blocked by the Berkut and the alleys were blocked by trucks (just like at similar marches in Moscow). We in the Ukraine House were taking a lot of time to get ready. In the meantime, it entered a state of siege.

The self-defense forces said that they would only let people out before lunch, but not let anyone in. The windows of the ground floor were taken out in order to make additional barricades. Rumors were spread that Berkut and domestic troops would go on the offensive. From the porch of the Ukraine House, we had a good view of the barricade on Grushevsky street, and we could see that clouds of black smoke were beginning to rise from burning tires. Surprisingly, this was in harmony with the mood of this bright spring day.

Finally, we went to Institutskaya street. We arrived at the very moment when the crowd of protesters was emerging from their stagnation and slowly starting to move. Berkut's snipers had settled comfortably on the roof of one of the houses, and the main forces of cops, bristling with shields, formed a "turtle" [a defensive formation]. People broke up the pavement, prepared Grushevsky cocktails, pulled on their respirators and gauze bandages; those who had gas masks donned them. It has begun…

Let's try without great poetics, but in essence. This may be useful when you happen to be in a similar situation, dear reader.

It is important to use your fear: so that it helps you to avoid getting into certain troubles, but does not flow into panic and flight. Personally, I had an incessant fear that a bullet or a grenade would hit me. I have long known that I am far from being a daredevil, and I say that without a hint of coquetry. Now, for the first time, I became interested in the essence of such a feeling as courage. What is it, anyway? Fear forced me to stay closer to people, not to stick out too much, not to run out in front of the crowd. There was a petty feeling: there are a great number of us here, the chance that they will shoot at me is small. I had this childish feeling: "Wow, I am inside the riot! Just like I saw it on TV! I gotta do something crazy!"

But that was the least of it. Next to fear, there was a feeling similar to emptiness—a silent obligation to stay and act. It is almost never formulated verbally. It just is. Maybe courage is just

about that? Further, it is important to begin to act meaningfully, and not just to stand or stupidly rush back and forth.

Here, the first stones are flying, the first bullets of the cops and flash-bang grenades… Screams can be heard: the battle cry.

At that moment, the sound of bagpipes rings out: the rebel song "Ribbon by Ribbon"—one of the big hits here. At this moment, I truly understood the meaning of the war musicians of the past: the martial tune puts you in a state of warlike trance, imbues you with a sense of the greatness of the moment, the need to show courage. Isn't that why we love walking around with a music player, because the endless beautiful soundtrack gives some meaning to the gray of everyday life and routine? When great things are happening, the soundtrack is even more appropriate.

Next, let's take things point by point:

1. The stupidest thing to do is to stand there in a daze and wait for something to happen. At first, most protesters do just that. A sure way to just catch the cops' "gifts" without doing any good. In addition, the crowds prevent the rapid movement of groups of active people. The only conditional benefit is the creation of a sense of mass participation. I think that a huge crowd will reduce the cops' eagerness to go on the attack. I'm not 100% sure about that, though. So the harm from useless hanging around is concrete, and the benefit is ephemeral.

2. When throwing a rock, it's important to look behind you. There have been cases of people swinging and hitting their own comrades standing nearby. It is even more important to understand that you should throw a stone only when you are in one of the front rows. There were emotional characters who threw stones in euphoria from the very thick of the crowd. As a result, the stones landed on their own front rows. I hope none of the guys got serious head injuries.

3. Shields can protect against rubber bullets and water cannon jets. Shields can be taken from the riot police or made at home out of plywood or sheet metal. They are held by the comrades in the first row, covering the others. Shields can also be used to make sorties when a group of comrades move forward, the first three or four people cover them with shields, while they throw rocks or cocktails or push tires into the fire.

4. Speaking of burning tires. Their role is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, piling up burning tires prevents the cops from charging, and the smoke prevents the cops' snipers from aiming at precise targets. It is no coincidence that the water cannon was directed primarily against the tires. But they are not so easy to extinguish once they have burst into flames. On the other hand, the tires also prevent the demonstrators from moving forward if they have the opportunity to attack.

So the battle broke out. Soon several brave guys climbed onto the roof from which the Berkut officers were shooting and throwing grenades, and the cops had to retreat. This caused great excitement and was a major tactical victory.

Soon riot police swooped in from the opposite alley and temporarily split the crowd of protesters in two, but after a few moments they were driven away, so much so that several cops were pinned against the barricade and taken prisoner. They were taken toward Maidan, while the especially hot-headed guys who were trying to lynch them were kept away.

Several more times, the waves of the Berkut and the people crashed upon each other in turn. The first seriously wounded people appeared, and people from the volunteer medical squad helped them as much as they could.

At this point, the childishness faded away, giving way to the desire not to embarrass myself, but also not to get shot or hit by a grenade. I happened to escort one wounded man from the front line to the doctors, he turned to me: his eye was not visible and there was blood coming out of his eye socket, pouring over almost half of his face: "Oko tsilo?" ("Is the eye intact?") he asked… I told him everything would be fine, we just needed to get to the doctors. I hope I was right. "Oko" is an archaic word for us, a poetic word, whereas in Ukrainian it just means eye, and this bloody eye made me sober up.

Then there were reports of dozens of people killed. It's terrible, but I can't feel the pain of these people and their loved ones to the full extent, because I only heard about it. But those men and boys with their heads bashed in and their eyes knocked out (irretrievably, I'm afraid)—I saw them myself, empathized with them, and in parallel was afraid for my own skin. So here's to the question of safety:

1. The minimum gear you need to participate in such a confrontation is a construction helmet, gloves, and something to cover your face. Don't even bother without this. In general, it's a good idea to wear a military helmet, a bulletproof vest, and sports knee pads to protect the most vulnerable parts of the body as much as possible, while minimally restricting movement. My construction helmet was hit several times by unknown hostile things: either buckshot or fragments from flash-bang grenades. The impact wasn't very bad, but I don't want to know what would have happened to me if I hadn't been wearing that helmet.

2. As practice has shown—the eyes are very vulnerable and subject to trauma. Accordingly, you need protective goggles, obviously not the usual glass ones. Perhaps the airsoft ones would do, but more durable ones would be better. A direct hit from even a rubber bullet on an unprotected eye is a disaster.

3. Several times a grenade exploded very close by. Only on TV do stun grenades look almost harmless. In fact, when such a grenade explodes, you hear a very loud popping noise that hits your ears very hard. My ears still hurt to this day, and the ringing in them two days later has not fully subsided. Also, the grenades spray shrapnel that can burn and wound. Ear plugs are probably a bad idea, because they create a sense of vacuum, slow your reaction time, dull your ability to orient yourself, and interfere with your ability to communicate with associates. In my opinion, shooting headphones are better suited. I don't know how long human ears can withstand such blows. But I think that two or three more would have been enough to give me health problems. That's why it's worth protecting your ears.

4. It's important to stick together with your friends. Check in periodically to see how they're doing, so that if anything happens, no one will be left behind or arrested without anyone noticing.

5. The police make extensive use of tear gas, which yours truly had the displeasure of inhaling on a couple of occasions. Accordingly, a simple gauze bandage is not the best option. A real respirator or, better yet, a gas mask would be more useful. In addition, volunteers walked

through the crowd handing out lemon slices, advising people to rub them on the face and on masks. They said that this also helps with the gas.

Soon, an armored vehicle showed up, spraying some purple stuff that smelled like a cleaning liquid out of the unit that was mounted on it. Apparently, it was some kind of fancy gas.

After a while, we left Institutskaya street to get some food and change clothes. That was the moment at which the cops went on a general offensive. We were on Europe Square, a stone's throw from what has now become legendary Grushevsky street. We were going to go to the Ukraine House, which is also located nearby.

There was rumbling and shouting. A motley crowd came running from the side of the Grushevsky barricade, followed by a large crowd of guys in camouflage and helmets—self-defense fighters—pursued by an innumerable swarm of Berkut cops, like the hordes of Batu Khan [a Mongol ruler from the early 13th century, the founder of the Golden Horde]. From the outside, it all looked epic, like something out of a war movie.

The Berkut began advancing toward Maidan, leaving the Ukraine House actually in their rear, slightly to the side. Although we were nervous and panicked, this gave us the opportunity to evacuate the wounded along with medicine and some other things from the Ukraine House. We had to break the windows on the first floor in order to exit out the back, not through the front door directly to the Berkut. The defense of the House, which had been prepared and fortified for at least two weeks, collapsed instantly, before a battle had even taken place.

The breakthrough at Grushevsky took us all by surprise. We took everything we could and together made for St. Michael's Cathedral. The bells were ringing, just as they had rung a few months before during the first eviction of the Euromaidan.

And then the assault on Maidan began, but being left without a helmet, I stayed away from the first line. However, the heat of the blazing barricades and tents reached me as well. By that time, some of the tents on Maidan had already burned to the ground—Berkut had used some of the cocktails seized from the insurgents. You can read more about these events in the news.

After catching another police firework, which burned me and the people standing nearby with some crackling "Bengal fire" [pyrotechnics], I decided that it was time to go to the train station. One way or another, I had to leave that day.

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Dmitry Petrov
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