MISCOMMUNICATING SOCIAL CHANGE

LESSONS FROM RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

OLGA BAYSHA

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Miscommunicating Social Change

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Olga Baysha

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To My Beloved Mom and Dad

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Contents

Acknowledgments		ix
Introduction		xi
PART I: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS		**1**
1	Democratic Globalization or Global Coloniality? From Perestroika to the Present	3
2	The Genealogy of the Uniprogressive Imaginary	15
3	Discourse Theory by Laclau and Mouffe and Its Further Elaborations	25
PART II: THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA		**39**
4	"They Were Very Far Removed from the People . . ."	41
5	White Ribbons and the Echo in the Dark	57
6	The New Protest Generation	73
7	Antagonism without Agonism	89
PART III: THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF THE EUROMAIDAN		**101**
8	Shadows of the Past	103
9	The Uniprogressive Imagination of the Euromaidan	117

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 7 09-10-2018 14:06:10

10 The Antagonisms of the Euromaidan 131

11 The Discursive-Material Knot of the Euromaidan 143

12 In the Name of National Unity 163

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS **177**

13 Global Coloniality Instead of Democratic Globalization 179

Epilogue: Personal Reflections 187

Bibliography 193

Index 225

About the Author 229

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 8 09-10-2018 14:06:10

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Introduction

Although the criticism of Enlightenment ideas has become widespread in academic circles, the basic Enlightenment narrative—an inexorable movement of humankind toward a progressive common condition—remains an assumption widely shared (implicitly or explicitly) by many movements for social justice and democratization. As this book demonstrates by analyzing the discourses of three social movements and alternative media associated with them, it is still a dominant way of conceptualizing social change in the name of democratization in the post-Soviet terrain. The main argument of this book is that the "progressive" imaginary, which envisages progress in the unidirectional terms of catching up with the "more advanced" Western condition, is inherently anti-democratic and deeply antagonistic. Instead of fostering an inclusive democratic process in which all strata of populations holding different views are involved, it draws solid dividing frontiers between "progressive" and "retrograde" forces, deepening existing antagonisms and provoking new ones; it also naturalizes the hierarchies of the global neocolonial power of the West.

Following postcolonial thinkers, this book conceptualizes modernity as a discursive formation that presents the Western world as an embodiment of "normality," the measure of all other socio-cultural formations, and the model for imitation. To deconstruct these normalized assumptions, it draws on the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), in which "discourse" appears as a social force, shaping social relations and establishing the horizons of social imaginary. In line with Laclau and Mouffe's theorizing, this book conceptualizes historical changes as dependent on hegemonic articulations and history not as an ascendant continuum of developmental stages, but as a discontinuous mosaic of hegemonic formations or historical blocs. Any social transformation is considered progressive or regressive

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 11 09-10-2018 14:06:10

not objectively, from a vantage point of an abstract "progressive" paradigm envisaging "progress" in unidirectional terms of Westernization, but from the subject position of this or that participant of the political process.

The case studies analyzed in this volume are the "White Ribbons" social movement for fair elections in Russia (2012); the Ukrainian Euromaidan (2013–2014); and anti-corruption protests in Russia organized by Alexei Navalny (2017). Drawing on Chantal Mouffe's ideas on radical pluralist democracy (2009), the analysis presented in this book shows how "progressive" articulations by all the social movements under consideration ended up undermining the basis of the democratic public sphere through the closure of democratic space. This closure happened when Putin's supporters in Russia or the Euromaidan's opponents in Ukraine were imagined not as adversaries striving to organize the common symbolic space in a different way but as enemies existing outside of the symbolic space shared by the "progressives." The latter did not see the difference between themselves and their opponents positively, as a condition of possibility for the democratization of Russian and Ukrainian societies; rather, they treated it in exclusively negative terms—as an abnormal condition (historical sickness) in need of correction or eradication.

Informed by Nico Carpentier's (2017) model of the Discursive-Material Knot, the analysis presented in this book traces how, instead of forming coalitions with other social groups, both Russian and Ukrainian "progressives" only reinforced already-existing tensions. As a result, there was no understanding between them and "retrograde others"; what was clearly missing on the part of the "progressives" was an attempt to frame the necessity of social change in such a way as to make it resonate with the potential constituents of the social change process. In the case of Ukraine, this produced detrimental results for societal peace. Because the violence in the Ukrainian case turned out to be not only symbolic but physical as well—in other words, because the negative potentiality of the "progressive" imaginary manifested itself in this case to the full extent—it is discussed in the greatest detail; the whole of Part III of this volume is devoted to the Ukrainian crisis.

The activists whose writings and speeches I analyze speak with varying degrees of complexity, and the discourse of progressivism as reproduced by them is not totally homogeneous. However, it is possible to trace a similar implicit assumption of the progressive scale of development as the primary referent in their discursive constructions. Rather than unifying "progressives" into a homogeneous object, this study draws attention to the similar effects of the activists' progressive discourse that allowed them to define their relationship to the other in hierarchical terms. It is in this sense that the term "progressives" is used—to identify those advocating modernization and

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 12 09-10-2018 14:06:10

democratization as a unidirectional movement toward a Westernized civilizational condition. To underline this one-directional restricted imaginary and distinguish it from more inclusive projects of social progress, such as Mouffe's pluralist model, the term "uniprogressive" instead of "progressive" is also employed.

It is important to note that the criticism of the social movements presented in this book is not a critique of their democratizing efforts per se. It is difficult to argue against the claims pushed forward by activists in both the Ukrainian and Russian cases about the necessity to democratize their societies. As this book argues, the problem with the "democratizing mission" of these social movements is their conceptualization of "progressive social change" in the unidirectional terms of Westernization. As a result of this uniprogressive imaginary, the movements under consideration ended up undermining democracy rather than promoting it, as they diminished and marginalized their presumably "underdeveloped" compatriots, and colonized them by excluding their voices from deliberation on important issues of societal democratization within "progressive" public spheres.

When I use the term "democracy," I do not primarily mean the procedures and other formal aspects of the democratic process, but rather the quality of its functioning: the ability of any given democracy to include all social groups in its decision-making, and the ability of these groups to engage in deliberation about different policy options (Dingwerth 2014). The definition of colonization I refer to is a predominantly discursive one, focusing on discursive marginalizing, diminishing, and silencing of political others by relegating them to lower points on the imagined developmental scale. My emphasis on the discursive subjugation of internal "otherness" draws on John Hartley's analysis (1999) of how the "knowledge class" seizes and maintains power through colonizing otherness within the semiotic domain. Speaking on behalf of "masses" that are presumably "unable" to speak for themselves, different groups of the knowledge class deprive their compatriots of their voices and truths. The alternative discourses organized around the unfamiliar subjectivities of colonized populations—imagined as infantile, untutored, inexperienced, and unenlightened—become silenced, marginalized, or distorted.

The goal of this book is to reveal and analyze contradictions between the self-proclaimed democratizing mission of the social movements and their actual conduct and its outcomes. To achieve this end, I employ the method of immanent critique, which enables criticism of the social movements and alternative media associated with them on their own terms. Although this type of critique does not necessarily establish the "correct" or "real" truth, it allows for destabilizing "common-sense" assumptions and unmasking their contested and, thus, political nature. If the results of immanent-critique analysis show that there is a permanent discrepancy between declared ideas

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and reality, then the social movements acting in the name of democratization need to bring their principles and behaviors into alignment with one another.

This volume consists of three parts. Part I reviews theoretical foundations that inform my analysis of the social movements' discourses. Drawing on postcolonial studies, chapter 1 discusses the phenomenon of "global coloniality"—the ubiquitous penetration of the colonial imaginary into all aspects of our lives, including the ways we struggle for "democratization." It argues that global social injustice is linked to global epistemological injustice; the struggle against the former requires struggling against the latter as well. Chapter 2 explores the genealogy of the uniprogressive imaginary, the historical normalization of its assumptions, and the emergence of non-Western "others" as "abnormal" and subject to correction. Based on the work of Laclau and Mouffe, this chapter argues that, in order to be inclusively democratic, the discourse of unidirectional progress should be replaced with the discourse of a variety of historical projects articulated by a polyphony of voices. Chapter 3 reviews the basics of the discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe, its further elaboration by Laclau, Mouffe's ideas on radical pluralist democracy, and Nico Carpentier's model of the Discursive-Material Knot. Together with these authors, the chapter envisages social relations as radically unfixed and unstable, a condition that makes hegemonic/democratic practices possible. Discussing pluralistic democracy, which welcomes disagreement and presents it as legitimate, the chapter argues that if dissent is silenced or suppressed, there is danger of substituting democratic contestation with violence, symbolic as well as physical, as happened in the case of Ukraine.

Part II of the book illustrates how the inherent antagonisms of the uniprogressive imaginary manifested themselves in the uniprogressive discourses of social movements in Russia. Chapter 4 presents the historical and political contexts of the emergence of Russia's oppositional movements discussed in this book. Chapter 5 explores the discourse of uniprogressivism employed by "White Ribbons"—a movement in 2012 for fair elections and democratization of Russia, while chapter 6 analyzes uniprogressive discourse in the anti-corruption movement of 2017—protests by the so-called "new protest generation." Chapter 7 summarizes the findings: Drawing on the theory of pluralist democracy by Chantal Mouffe and using Nico Carpentier's conceptualizing of antagonistic discourse; it discusses the inability of the social movements under analysis to achieve a more inclusive democratic condition and create a broad popular front. Establishing a solid, impermeable barrier between activists pushing forward the agenda of universal globalization and "others" who oppose it, the discourse of uniprogressivism employed by the activists did not allow for a democratic exchange of opinions between the two antagonistic camps within a symbolically shared space.

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Part III of the book discusses the Ukrainian Euromaidan. Chapter 8 presents the Euromaidan's historical, social, cultural, political, and geopolitical contexts, while chapter 9 analyzes its uniprogressive discourse, which presented the agreement with the European Union as a means of achieving a more advanced civilizational condition. It traces how, instead of framing the issue of European integration in political terms, the discourse of uniprogressivism employed by Euromaidan activists appealed to religiosity and morality, constructing a dichotomy of good versus evil that left no room for a political solution. Chapter 10 discusses the nodal points of the antagonistic discourse evident in the Euromaidan's articulations. It shows how the insistence on seeing the opponents as a homogeneous entity instead of a complex web of relations characterized by contradictions and tensions prevented the proponents of the Euromaidan from discerning multiple possibilities for engaging with this complex social reality for the sake of positive social change. Informed by Carpentier's model of the Discursive-Material Knot, chapter 11 demonstrates how the possibility of different understandings of the Euromaidan by its opponents and proponents stemmed from the complex interactions of the material and the discursive, whose contingency did not naturally suggest a one-dimensional explanation of the Euromaidan. Drawing on Laclau's latest elaborations on the theory of discourse, chapter 12 analyzes how, in the course of time, the impossible totality of anti-Maidan "others" acquired the status of "terrorists," in contrast to Euromaidan armed revolutionaries who were considered heroes. The chapter argues that this discursive violence, which transformed into the brutality of the "anti-terrorist operation," was perpetrated in the name of progress equated to Westernization.

As a conclusion, chapter 13 invites consideration of alternative ways to articulate social change, conceived not in terms of unidirectional progress but as a plurality of multidirectional propositions. Its basic argument is that no global democratization in inclusive and pluralistic terms is even conceivable while the uniprogressive imaginary is taken for granted; it should be destabilized by activating and normalizing already existing alternatives and working out new ones. Otherwise, global coloniality will persist and flourish under the veil of ostensibly "democratic" struggles. My personal reflections, presented in the final section of the book, will substantiate this claim by providing some glimpses into the diversity of cultural spaces within and across post-Soviet national borders.

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Part I

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

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Chapter 1

Democratic Globalization or Global Coloniality?

From Perestroika to the Present

"DEMOCRATIC GLOBALIZATION" VERSUS "GLOBAL COLONIALITY"

Many social activists today argue that, because of the recent rise in socio-economic inequality on a global level, we need to expand the frame of reference for democratic struggle from the local to the global (Holden 2013; Khasnabish 2008; Kurasawa 2007; Routledge and Cumbers 2013; Scholte 2014; Scipes 2016; Smith 2008; Smith et al. 2015). They assert that the movement for "democratic globalization" should target the core of the global system of social injustice and mobilize otherwise isolated global resources to fight against it. The global dimension of democratic struggles is also important in another crucial aspect: The globalization of outlook should help us to stir up human imagination so that "suppressed possibilities of development can potentially be imagined" (Fuchs 2010, 181), thereby disrupting ideological closures and working to enable critical judgment. It is this potential that allows activists striving for social change to present democracy not as a closed set of canons but as a project of open possibilities: unexpected demands, unprecedented challenges, unforeseeable articulations, and audacious decisions. To realize this potential, they say, we must transcend our social contexts and subvert everyday experience by opening ourselves up to the global horizons of an unrestricted social imaginary.

It is difficult to argue against the postulates advocated by scholars and activists holding this view. Indeed, a broader frame of reference for local struggles is important if we want to reveal connections between the unprecedented growth in social inequality throughout the world and the consolidation of global financial resources into the hands of fewer and more powerful multinational players. A globalized outlook enables a focus on the lack of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 3 09-10-2018 14:06:10

public accountability and democratic surveillance over the activities of global economic and financial powers that control people's lives. It shows the nature of global transformations that undermine even further the system of democratic governance, which has always suffered from the systematic exclusion of underprivileged populations and the favoring of those who possess power (Calhoun 2013; Castells 2012; Mouffe 2009).

The arguments mentioned above are taken as common sense by today's social activists and democratic theorists. Yet, the question remains: What exactly do we mean by "democratic globalization" that would allow us to imagine "suppressed possibilities of development," as many democratically minded thinkers hope? How would this "democratic" globalization differ from "global coloniality" (Escobar 2004) if the conceptual grammar of the former is similar or even identical to that of the latter, as the omnipresent usage of such concepts as "modernization," "development," and "developing countries" suggests? The problem with these and similar terms, habitually employed by the most democratically minded activists and scholars, is that they are the key signifiers of colonizing discourses of development and modernization that reaffirm Eurocentrism and suppress non-Western knowledges and cultures (Dussel 2001; Gaonkar 2001). "Epistemicide" is the term Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) uses to describe the "immense wealth of cognitive experiences" (74) of others that has been rendered incomprehensible and radically denied (47–53).

The employment of the concept "development," long since charged with imperialism, is just one among myriad other instances when scholars and activists striving for a democratic globalization employ conceptual vocabulary that has always bolstered imperial domination by the West. It implicitly valorizes the most cherished ideas of the West through which its global domination was secured: development and uniprogressive change (Escobar 2004; Ferguson 1999; McCarthy 2010; Quijano 2000). This is not surprising, given that Enlightenment epistemologies constitute a "common sense" informing both academic sociological theorists and social justice activists. As Catherine Walsh (2007) maintains, struggles for global justice "are more complicated when one takes into account the naturalization and intransigence of this eurocentricity, or mental colonialism and blindness even amongst the Left and the proponents of so-called 'critical' theory" (226). Timothy Luchies (2015) agrees. "Our strategies and tactics, and often our modes of critique, are heavily conditioned by the[se] systems of domination," he claims (524).

The problems of "coloniality" (Quijano 2000)—the ubiquitous penetration of the colonial imaginary into all aspects of our lives, including the way we think, communicate, and act—are well recognized in contemporary scholarship (Raj 2012; Santos 2007; Seth 2009; Walsh 2007). This imaginary presupposes the division of the world into modern (civilized) and not-so-modern

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(not yet civilized and thus "developing" or "modernizing") sociocultural formations. The expansion of Western modernity, incorporating more and more "premodern" peoples and regions, is still a common-sense assumption shared not only by those who manage the contemporary imperial system of global power, including bureaucrats of developmental agencies, but also by many of the activists and scholars who attempt to struggle against its abuses. With the best intentions to liberate the world from tyranny, we often only reaffirm global imperialism by employing the uniprogressive discourses of development and modernization—the conceptual building blocks from which the imperial edifice arises. In doing so, we naturalize the hierarchies of global neo-colonial power by "dissolving epistemic violence into apparent conceptual neutrality and terminological transparency," as Gennaro Ascione (2016, 319) argues.

If, following post-colonial thinkers, we understand modernity as a discursive formation through which the non-Western world was constructed as a barbarian "other" (Jameson 2012; Said 2003), the conceptual tools used to dismantle the hegemony of Eurocentrism matter. When the genealogies of the concepts employed by activists to challenge the abuses of power "go deep into the intellectual and even the theological traditions of Europe" (Chakrabarty 2009, 4), one can hardly expect that the coloniality of power will be dismantled. Rather, the uncritical continuation of Eurocentric conceptual grammars will allow the coloniality to persist under the veil of ostensibly liberating narratives of development and modernization.

As in colonial times, the colonial imaginary manifests itself in the discourse of the unidirectional unfolding of human history with its presentation of the West as an avant-garde of the uniprogressive movement. Denying the complexities of historical contexts, this vision of the Western world also presents it as an embodiment of "normality," the measure of all other sociocultural formations. Whole societies are judged along the imagined uniprogressive scale, where the highest point is always occupied by the "progressive avant-garde" whose modernity is imagined as "the privileged historical site where something like absolute knowledge finally becomes possible" (Seth 2016, 392). Meanwhile, at the lowest point are "barbarians" whose numerous shortcomings (psychological, mental, cultural, etc.) preclude them from "'coming to see' certain kernel truths about the human condition" (Taylor 1999, 170). In contrast to colonial times, however, the split between "the civilized" and "the barbarian" currently runs not along territorial boundaries but across all kinds of borders, separating "progressive" and "backward" forces within once unified cultural formations. As a result of this cleavage, internal otherness (with labels such as "barbarian" and "ignoramus") comes to life—a paradoxical development given the democratic aspirations of those struggling for the cause of a democratic global world.

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As I argue in this book, social movements striving for democratization need to deconstruct common assumptions sustaining the hegemony of global imperial power resting on the coloniality of imagination. One of the most important of these common-sense beliefs is the narrative of progress with all its derivatives: development, modernization, democratization, and the like, modeled on Western experiences. More often than not, the discourses linking these signifiers in hegemonic chains reproduce the same dynamic between the West and the rest: the former being active (developing, modernizing, and democratizing) and the latter passive (developed, modernized, and democratized). As Anibal Quijano (2000) puts it, "the foundational myth of the Eurocentric version of modernity is the idea of the state of nature as the point of departure for the civilized course of history whose culmination is European or Western civilization" (551). It is this uniprogressive mythology that dispossesses peoples and cultures, relegating them to "the state of nature" or "the past." Global social injustice draws on global epistemological injustice; the struggle against the former requires struggling against the latter as well.

THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF SOVIET PERESTROIKA

In 2011, as part of my research on the discourses of perestroika, I analyzed the letters to editors and opinion pieces published by two local Ukrainian newspapers from the beginning of 1989 until the end of 1991. This was the most crucial period of Gorbachev's perestroika, a movement for democratization and modernization, when heated debates on the country's future took place within the Soviet public sphere (Baysha 2014). A considerable part of my research dealt with articles and interviews by such well-known perestroika activists as Yegor Gaidar, Grigory Yavlinsky, Anatoly Sobchak, Valeriya Novodvorskaya, Vitaly Korotich, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko. An interesting discovery came out of my investigation: These and other activists striving for democratization systematically disparaged Soviet working people who did not share their views on the reforms. It was especially shocking to realize that this disparagement was perpetuated in the name of democratization and social progress.

As perestroika activists imagined it, the main hindrance against the transition to a democratic, prosperous, and civilized future was the presence of "retrograde forces" and "agents of the past" who opposed the reforms. Mainly, these retrograde forces were imagined to be the working people who wanted to see in perestroika not an embrace of capitalization and marketization but rather an "updated" socialism, in line with what Gorbachev promised at the beginning of the transformations. Indeed, as my analysis of workers'

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letters to the editors showed, many of them imagined these transformations in egalitarian and collectivist socialist terms: "We . . . want to take over our enterprise as a collective property"[1] (Logvinenko 1991, 1). They believed it would make them real owners of their enterprises: "The workers have a right . . . to become shareholders of their enterprises, to get an income out of what they produce" (Berdnik 1991, 1). In collective privatization, many of the workers saw an opportunity to enhance egalitarianism; they wanted to undermine the power of *nomenklatura,*[2] not socialism.

Perestroika activists most presented people's unwillingness to move toward Western capitalist modernity as ignorance, backwardness, and a lack of desire to work. They imagined people working at state enterprises as "the horde of honest toilers" (Kirsch 1990, 8) unable to produce anything useful at all. The judgment was based on the comparison of Soviet workers with their American counterparts. In the eyes of perestroika activists, the Soviet "toilers" could only "count money in somebody else's pocket" (Kirsch 1990, 8), while Americans were the models of perseverance and diligence: "They [immigrants to the United States] . . . tasted difficulties, failures, and despair. But they didn't give up" (Oxford 1991, 9). Against the image of hard-working, efficient, and, therefore, prosperous citizens of the United States, the Soviet people appeared stupid, lazy, envious, and—not surprisingly—poor.

In the view of many perestroika activists whose opinions I analyzed, the "crowd-ness," or collectivism, of Soviet popular culture was a soil in which "the most dreadful and ugly things in history have grown" (Mitrokhin 1990, 13). In order to achieve a more "civilized" intellectual condition, this culture of "crowd-ness" needed to be destroyed. Valeria Novodvorskaya, the leader of the Democratic Union, expressed this sentiment in the clearest way possible:

> Bolshevism is the prolongation of the autocratic history of Russia. Faithful. Servile. Collectivist. In order to transform to democracy . . . we need to change our consciousness . . . . To become different and to scramble out of our skins . . . we need to kill dragons in ourselves. (Novodvorskaya 1990, 3)

Novodvorskaya recognized that the "dragon" derived its strength not from the "command administrative system" but from people who gave this system its strength: "Totalitarianism is not a dragon that tortures unfortunate people; totalitarianism is such a social state when the dragon has the same number of heads as it has people" (Novodvorskaya 1990, 3). She was ready to fight those dragon heads even though they were in fact human: "It is cool to fight with them. It is not a boring enterprise. In principle, it is fun" (Novodvorskaya 1990, 3).

Why was it such fun for perestroika activists like Novodvorskaya to fight their own compatriots? Because they revered Western modernity piously.

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Anything that went against their whole-hearted faith had to be uprooted like a weed: *nomenklatura*, people's culture, even people themselves. Novodvorskaya boasted that her Democratic Union had, as its backbone, activists "who are ready to sacrifice their lives for democracy" (Novodvorskaya 1990, 3). In the views of many perestroika activists whose opinions I analyzed, it was not the democratic system of government that served people's needs; on the contrary, people should serve "democracy" by sacrificing their lives or, at least, their ways of life.

THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF THE MOVEMENT FOR FAIR ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA

On March 4, 2012, Russia held presidential elections. By the end of the day, as the preliminary results of voting were released, it became clear not only that Vladimir Putin would remain the president of Russia but also that he would be an absolute winner in the first round of the elections. In the immediate aftermath of the elections, two topics of discussion were most popular among the Russian intellectuals who openly challenged the results of the vote: suspicions of election fraud and the human condition of voters who supported Putin. Focusing my attention on the latter, I analyzed the opinions that were expressed by anti-Putin activists in various programs on *Echo of Moscow* (hereafter, *Echo*)—a Russian independent radio station that serves as an important node in the network of communication among those who struggle for democracy against Putin's authoritarianism (Baysha 2016a).

My analysis showed that 95 percent of the participants in these discussions addressed Putin's supporters in the hierarchical terms of uniprogressive imagination—as people who were not developed enough yet to understand and support the democratic aspirations of the opposition. The speakers imagined Putin's supporters as "yesterday's people": "Today's people do not vote for Putin. Yesterday's people support him" (Muratov 2012). The latter appeared as a mob lacking the ability to think critically and act independently, a mass of dupes easily manipulated by means of different fears: "Fears were mobilized. Soviet people have specific painful points that can be pressed: the enemy, the internal enemy, the external enemy" (Mlechin 2012a).

It was commonplace to refer to Putin's supporters as "Soviet," because in the view of *Echo*'s commentators, these people had stopped developing somewhere in the middle of Soviet history, in Stalin's times: "My neighbors are modest and obedient state employees . . . . They have always voted for whoever is in power. This is a Soviet habit" (Larina 2012). These "Soviet" people occupied the lowest point on the uniprogressive scale of development and signified backwardness, darkness, and retrograde thinking. To construct

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this scale, *Echo*'s speakers frequently employed the metaphor of "hibernation": "The colossal mass of our people are still dozing. For them, the state doesn't exist. They don't even know . . . . 'Leave us alone,' and that is it" (Konchalovsky 2012).

In contrast, Putin's opponents were presented as educated, modern, and having control over the circumstances of their lives—the people of "today." *Echo*'s speakers depicted anti-Putin protesters as the models of "honesty and integrity" who were "exclusively nice, benevolent and attractive" and "respectable." They turned out to be "normal people" "knowing the truth." Against the image of morally degraded Putin supporters, Putin's opponents were presented as agents of progress and embodied all the positive qualities of modernity: mobility, intelligence, and a capacity for independent, critical thinking. These people were not scared; they were ready to struggle for the recognition of their dignity and the freedom of their spirit.

Dissociating themselves from the general population of Russia, the authors of these and similar statements explicitly allied themselves with Western civilization, which they presented as a higher level of the human condition: "Russia is a country of serfs. It doesn't have this [European] mentality" (Konchalovsky 2012). Some of the speakers went as far as questioning the humanity of Putin's supporters by comparing them to dumb animals unaware of their rights and true interests: "The motives of those people who are treated like cattle are unclear to me because these motives have nothing to do with the activity of such formations as the brain cortex" (Latynina 2012). To be sure, such open and offensive prejudice as demonstrated in this excerpt was not the rule; rather, it was an exception. However, this exception only confirmed "common-sense" assumptions shared by *Echo*'s speakers: Putin's followers were not full-fledged citizens with independent, informed opinions. Their underdeveloped intellectual condition did not allow them to resist Putin's propaganda and make informed judgments (more on this in chapter 5).

THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF THE EUROMAIDAN

In late 2013, as soon as the Euromaidan broke out, I analyzed the discourse of its activists in their blogs on *Ukrayinska Pravda* (*UP*), selecting for study the posts in the "Maidan" group from November 26, 2013—the day the group was formed—until January 21, 2014, which denoted the beginning of a murderous stage of the Euromaidan protest (Baysha 2015, 2016b). I intentionally focused on this period to show how the discourse of anti-Maidan otherness was formed before the bloody stage of the confrontation started.

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My analysis showed that the bloggers of *UP* tended to discuss the agreement with the European Union not in terms of its profitability or losses for Ukraine but as a means of achieving a more advanced civilizational condition—to "rush ahead," "never go back to Sovok"[3] and to achieve a state of "civilization" and "normality." Not only did the constructions of *UP* bloggers imply that Westernization is the sole possible direction of development, but they also suggested the possibility of regression or "returns" back into history (the return to the USSR, equated to the "Dark Ages"). Deprived of the complexities of historical contexts, the USSR was judged along the imagined uniprogressive scale where the modern West occupied the highest point—the point of reference, stimulus, and desire.

In the presentation of the Euromaidan activists whose blogs I analyzed, the EU in particular and the West in general emerged as an undeniable moral force with the right to judge, pass verdicts and impose punishment: "Victoria Nuland[4] . . . is warning—in the event of a forceful dispersal of the Euromaidan, the same methods will be applied not only against bureaucrats but the political leaders of the Party of Regions"[5] (Leshchenko 2013). Aligning themselves with the "civilized" West, the bloggers—Euromaidan activists—presented themselves as "educated people," "people who stand for their dignity," who were "very motivated," "goal-seeking," "smart," and "responsible." In the presentation of the bloggers, the Euromaidan was a protest of conscious citizens against the "feudal-oligarchic" or "neo-feudal" system. In other words, the Euromaidan was imagined as an attempt to jump out of the dark medieval ages—the premodern state of human development—to the era of the Enlightenment. The social condition of the contemporary West was presented to be a norm against which those who were thought unfit could be judged. From this perspective, the Euromaidan was conceived as an attempt to breach the new iron curtain that separated Ukraine from the condition of the highest modernity as represented by the West.

My analysis of the bloggers' writings suggests that "Middle Ages" was not just a convenient metaphor employed as a rhetorical device for mobilization purposes. The metaphor of medieval darkness used by the bloggers seems to reveal their inherent tendency to see the history of mankind as an inevitable triumph of enlightened modernity as signified by the West. In order to achieve this condition, one needed to topple the medieval fortress separating Ukraine from real civilization, to liberate the country from the forces of darkness and to clear the way to the radiant future of humankind. The motif of the fight between the forces of good and evil was popular among some of *UP*'s bloggers. "Ukraine is occupied by the Golden Horde"—this is how one of them imagined those holding power in Ukraine (Okara 2013).

Informed by a mythological imaginary, this discourse presented the EU not as a subject of rational discussion but as a magic key to a fortified

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gate separating the past from the future, the obsolete from the modern, and the tyrannical from the enlightened forms of government. Not one blogger under my analysis offered a multi-dimensional, non-mythological discussion of the European integration rejected by Ukraine's government, which was presented as a group of "bandits," "criminals," or just "immoral" people. This grand simplification of social and political realities, which are always much more complicated than the simple duality of "good vs. evil," developed into a tendency among *UP* bloggers to see all opponents—not only those in power—as "jackals," "the bootlickers of the regime," "traitors," or just "weak and demoralized people."

Because of their "inadequacy," or "abnormality," to put it in Michel Foucault's terms, the opponents of the Euromaidan were not seen as human beings or citizens whose opinions deserved to be taken into account: They were "provokers," "idiots," or "serfs." The latter, in the opinion of some bloggers, had a chance "to become human beings"—they just needed to take the Euromaidan's side. The human condition was defined by the bloggers exclusively in terms of understanding the uniprogressive potential of European integration (more on this in chapter 9).

THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF AN ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT IN RUSSIA

In the spring of 2017, I examined the discourse of Russian alternative media in the aftermath of anti-corruption rallies organized by Alexei Navalny, during which hundreds of the protesters were detained by police. This time, I analyzed two Russian media known for their critical anti-Putin stances: *Echo of Moscow* and *Novaya Gazeta*. I analyzed qualitatively the content published by these outlets between March 26 and April 3, 2017—the week immediately following the protests initiated by Navalny, a span likely to contain the most emotional discussions of the manifestations.

As my analysis revealed, similar to the cases discussed above, uniprogressive discourse was organized around several nodal points known from the previous cases of perestroika, the Euromaidan, and the movement for fair elections in Russia in 2012. First, "Russia" was presented as an underdeveloped and backward cultural formation in need of a historical correction envisioned in terms of modernization, which was equated to Westernization. In the representations of the writers and speakers whose opinions I analyzed, Russia appeared not as a modern state but as a "remnant of the past" that had lost its historical orientation. Putin's system of power was compared to a monarchy dragging the country backwards into history. The whole of Russia was imagined to be a "senile" social organism in need of a blood transfusion.

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Second, the human condition of "Putin's supporters" was seen to be "abnormal," which found its reflection in the linking of this nodal point to signifiers related to social diseases. Russian people were imagined to live in a "swamp of absenteeism" and in a state of "social paralysis"; they existed in the brainless manner of "anchovies" or "mushrooms"—nonhumans or degenerates. From the speeches and writings of the anti-Putin activists, the general population of Russia (Putin's supporters) appeared as "declassed masses" of "spineless shit" that did not support emancipatory social movements out of fear. According to this vision, widely shared by the speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed, people supported Putin because they were "dependent on the state in this or that way" and were scared to lose this miserable security.

Third, in contrast to the general population of Russia refusing to support the protests out of fear, the protesters themselves were imagined to be active and ready to carry out their historical mission of modernizing Russia. They were imagined as "not indifferent," "successful" "self-confident," "educated," "honest," and so forth. They were everything that Putin's supporters were not. It was widely believed that "the audience attending protest actions does not watch TV" (Kashin 2017); that the protesters had been "formed as personalities in the Internet" (Chizh 2017) and, therefore, "propaganda does not influence them" (Shulika 2017). In the presentation of the speakers and writers whose articulations I analyzed, TV consumption signified degradation, conformism, and, generally, a lack of intellectual freedom. In contrast, the refusal to watch TV was seen as an act of intellectual liberation, the emancipation of the spirit of free citizens, to whom "the future belongs quite naturally" (Remchukov 2017).

Fourth, any project of a more "civilized" future was imagined as unquestionably Western. The "West" appeared for the activists as a model of economic, political, and cultural development; the Western condition served as an ideal, compared to which Russia's backwardness and barbarism were apparent. Against Western Europe and the United States, which "produced civilization, science, and law" (Nevzorov 2017), Russia seemed to be "a raw material appendage"; the survival of Russia "depend[ed] only on economic, financial, and technological resources of the West" (Shevtsova 2017). The West was also imagined to serve as a model of high morality whose approval should be sought by all "progressive" forces (more on this in chapter 6).

TOTALITARIANISM IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY AND PROGRESS

To sum up, there are four nodal points in the uniprogressive discourse that I have identified through my case studies. First, a non-Western society (or

several societies) under consideration is/are presented not as unique sociocultural formation(s) that should be judged on its/their own terms but as part(s) of a universal project of globalization that should be modeled on liberal Western institutions. Second, the people of the non-Western society or societies who oppose Westernization are presented either as intellectually underdeveloped "barbarians" unable to fathom the value of uniprogressive propositions or cowered masses too scared to embrace the march of history. Third, those pushing the agenda of universal globalization are presented as an avant-garde force of history whose mission is to bring their societies up to a civilizational "norm" equated with the "Western condition." Fourth, "the West" (imagined as a homogeneous unity) is always presented as a model of economic, political, and cultural development; the Western condition is presented as an ideal compared to which the backwardness and barbarism of non-Western peoples and societies appear obvious.

The problem with the modernizing mission of the social movements with a uniprogressive imaginary is that all of them ended up undermining democracy rather than promoting it, as they had diminished and marginalized their presumably underdeveloped compatriots, and colonized them by excluding their voices from deliberation on important issues of societal transformations within "progressive" public spheres. As I show in next chapters, the discourse of uniprogressivism is internally antagonistic. Establishing a solid, impermeable barrier between activists pushing forward the agenda of universal globalization and "others" who oppose it, it creates the conditions for a "maximum separation," when "no element in the system of equivalences enters into relations other than those of opposition to the elements of the other system" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 129). It does not allow for a democratic exchange of opinions between the two antagonistic camps within a symbolically shared space.

The inherent logic of this uniprogressive discourse is organized in line with a mythological construction well known from colonial times: struggle between "moderns" and "barbarians" whose stigmatized identity is ascribed to them by modernizers. My analysis shows that just as European colonizers imagined themselves at a higher point of civilization as compared to colonized "barbarians," famous Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian activists for democratization constructed their "progressiveness" by juxtaposing themselves against those opposing their modernizing endeavors—the "masses" of people of the Soviet Union, Russia, and Ukraine. In the presentations of the former, the latter appeared as miserable folk who were incapable of speaking or even thinking for themselves; they needed to be enlightened and civilized (developed).

The narrative of unidirectional progress, employed by all the social movements under my consideration, clearly presents the West as the avant-garde

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leading humanity toward the "normal" modern condition in which no cultural or historical differences matter, and where all societies ultimately look the same. Whether in Gorbachev's USSR, Putin's Russia, or Yanukovych's Ukraine, the discourse of unidirectional progress always presumes an inexorable movement of humankind toward an advanced condition where the ultimate truth, hitherto obscured, can finally be unveiled. It is this uniprogressive discourse that unites all the cases I discuss in this book with countless other instances of "democratic" projects that attempt social engineering in the name of unidirectional progress. The essence of this version of globalization is Western domination; the basic tool of this domination is the hegemony of its unidirectional progressive ideological constructions.

As I have already pointed out, the division of the world along a uniprogressive scale of development is not territorial any longer. The split now goes across territorial borders, allowing all the world's "progressive" forces to unite against all "retrograde" ones. But does this division bring about a more just globalization? As my case studies suggest, the result is far from "democratic," since huge portions of each population find themselves excluded from the ranks of "deserving" publics. In two of the cases I have discussed—perestroika and the Euromaidan—this dynamic is especially evident. As a result of perestroika, the working people of the USSR lost all the collective property they possessed before the reforms (see chapter 4); as a result of the Euromaidan, whole regions protesting against the "coup d'etat," as they imagined the revolution, lost their political power (chapter 12). These are quite logical outcomes of grand transformations in the name of unidirectional progress when the notion of "progress" is defined by a local intellectual "avant-garde" aligning itself with the West, not with its "backward" compatriots—in other words, when the process known as "internal colonization" (Mignolo 2001) happens to local populations by domestic colonizers through the mythologies of a universal history. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter in greater detail.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations to English are my own.
2. High-ranking officials within the Soviet Union appointed to their posts by the Communist Party.
3. Sovok—a derogatory term to denote the Soviet Union.
4. Victoria Nuland, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs at the US State Department (2013–2016), actively supported the revolution, visiting the Maidan several times and encouraging the protests by distributing cookies among protesters.
5. Party of Regions: a leading party of Ukraine from 2006 to 2014.

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Chapter 2

The Genealogy of the Uniprogressive Imaginary

THE LEGACY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Since the advent of modern times in Europe, it has been common sense to ascribe to the modern identity such attributes as individuality, mobility, competitiveness, inventiveness, and reflexivity.[1] With the constant revolutionizing of production, continual shaking up of all social relations, and everlasting uncertainty and agitation, these qualities helped the nascent European bourgeoisie to sweep away everything that had been fixed and frozen in the venerable medieval tradition. As Dilip Gaonkar (2001) put it, "the term modern generally designates the consciousness of an age that imagines itself as having made the transition from the old to the new" (6). In this sense, to be progressive means being on the edge of changes: open to new propositions, capable of self-reflection, and generating unconventional visions.

Historically, the emergence of the progressive social imaginary was associated with the Reformation, the development of capitalism in the West, the formation of the bourgeoisie as a political class and the spread of Enlightenment philosophy. As Charles Taylor (1992) explains, in the course of these grand cultural transformations, historical changes acquired the meaning of moral growth and higher consciousness. As a result, the myth of the avant-garde came to life—a mythology based on the construction of oppositions: between "the blind" and "the visionary," "traditional" and "progressive," "philistine" and "unconventional" and so forth. The implication of this vision is that "some are destined to move ahead of the huge advancing column," (Taylor 1992, 424) leading the way for the rest.

The values enshrined as "progressive" and "modern" have been freedom, independence, dignity, self-discipline, responsibility, rationality, and so on—qualities indispensable for the "modern agent" who is "free, independent,

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 15 09-10-2018 14:06:11

lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave, the hero of so many novels and books of moral philosophy," as Iris Murdoch (1971, 80) sarcastically notes. The modern described by Murdoch comes to life with the deep transformations of Western society articulated by its philosophers. Relocating the sources of moral strength from the cosmic order to the consciousness of a rational being, they make rationality an internal property of subjective thinking. God's existence is now only a stage in the course of unstoppable human progress, as measured by emancipation and freedom. As Taylor (1992) explains:

> Adopting the stance of disengagement towards oneself . . . defines a new understanding of human agency and its characteristic powers. And along with this come new conceptions of the good and new locations of moral sources: an ideal of self-responsibility, with the new definitions of freedom and reason which accompany it, and the connected sense of dignity.
>
> To come to live by this definition—as we cannot fail to do, since it penetrates and rationalizes so many of the ways and practices of modern life—is to be transformed: to the point where we see this way of being as normal, as anchored in perennial human nature in the way our physical organs are. (177)

Once normalized, the ideas of Western modernity—liberated from tradition and traditional faith—established new limits of the thinkable, to put it in Michel Foucault's (1977) terms. Everything not in line with the new "normal" came to be seen as "abnormal otherness"—something to be marginalized, silenced, and excluded, or subjected to correction, discipline, modernization. Constructed against the norm of the modern condition, the abnormal otherness is now conceived as a state of underdevelopment in need of correction. It is at this point that the unidirectional progressive vision of historic development and the mechanism of normalized judgment described by Foucault converge.

Modernity, as is well known, escapes a fixed definition. It is "'the new,' which is always in a state of disappearance, destined to be overcome and made obsolete through the novelty of the next fashion" (Gaonkar 2001, 6). What was modern yesterday may be obsolete today. Since the collapse of the global colonial system and the demise of the Soviet empire, attempts to revive colonialism or Bolshevism have been associated with political regression and moral degradation. Even the Enlightenment itself has stopped serving as an intellectual authority on human emancipation: Accused of harboring an inherent mythological irrationality and subjugating potential (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002), it was dethroned from the pedestal of progressive wisdom to make room for the postmodern mode of thinking. The latter denied unidirectional Enlightening endeavors and greeted the schizophrenic freedom of rhizomes (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

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Although the criticism of Enlightenment ideas has become widespread, the basic Enlightenment narrative—an inexorable movement of humankind toward a progressive common condition—still remains a dominant paradigm of thinking within the political discourses of modernization, development, and democratization according to Western standards. Presenting progress as a struggle between "moderns" (democratically minded progressive publics) and "barbarians" (those who oppose progressive transformations), these discourses reproduce Manichean social cleavages that have been well known since colonial times (Fanon 2004). In the age of globalization, however, as I have mentioned, the dividing line runs not along civilizational boundaries but across all kinds of borders, even if these borders are within once unified cultural formations.

The subjugating potential of the Enlightenment narrative, recognized by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, has been well elaborated within postcolonial studies. Many postcolonial scholars believe that the concepts of "civilization" and "progress" acquired a universal status once Europe began to expand over the globe, ruthlessly repressing all preexisting forms of social organization. Civilization, as Walter D. Mignolo (2001) notes, "became a trademark of Christian Europe and a yardstick by which to measure other societies" (32–33). In the view of Thomas McCarthy (2010), the ideologies of racial inequality spread across the world through the works of modern European philosophers such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant. From this point of view, the political values of liberal justice, which the philosophers of the Enlightenment exalted, were inseparable from justifications of inequality and subjugation made by the same philosophers: While opposing the state of slavery for Europeans, Kant, Hegel, and other outstanding figures of the Enlightenment supported it for "savages." Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, which relocated people in chronological hierarchy rather than in geographical places, became an important philosophical justification for unfolding the Western colonizing enterprise on a global stage. By ascribing barbarian status to the non-Western world, Western scientists and intellectuals constructed a need for the "barbarians" to modernize.

The colonizing discourses of modernization have always been formed through the opposition between "the West" and "the Rest"—the "progressive" and "modern" West against "barbarian" and "pre-modern" others (Said 2003, 7). Enlightenment philosophy provided intellectual justification to political and economic changes not only within Europe but also across the world—by propagating faith in the unlimited emancipatory potential of human reason and the inevitability of progress in both the material and moral condition of mankind. Discussing Orientalism as a style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinctions made between "the orient" and

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 17 09-10-2018 14:06:11

"the occident," Edward Said famously argues that Europe gained its identity by setting itself apart from the Orient: "The major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (2003, 7). Said also points out that, in order to understand the hegemony of European ideas over the Orient, one needs to analyze the implicit connection between European philosophical doctrines, racial theories, and justifications of slavery and colonial exploitation.

The legacy of the Enlightenment charged the term "progressive" positively, associating it with attempts to bring about liberation from tyranny and, to put it in Hegelian terms, the emancipation of the human spirit. If scrutinized more closely, however, the term is not so easily cast as wholly positive. It was resolute faith in progress that marked the consciousness of Western colonizers who believed in their civilizational mission and moral right to modernize non-Western "others." The belief in progressive development guided both French Jacobins and Russian Bolsheviks exterminating everything and everyone in opposition to their revolutionary zeal; it motivated the "Great Leap Forward" plan for massive industrialization in China, during which millions of Chinese perished; it also inspired the Young Turks who violently oppressed other social groups of Turkish society that rejected modernization (Conversi 2010). A list of examples of social engineering in the name of "emancipation" and "progress" would be extensive. What unites these inhumane modernizing enterprises is their common legitimizing ideology "anchored in the notion of 'unlimited progress,' which included the eradication of various opponents and minorities" (Conversi 2010, 724).

"Modernizing" reforms following" Gorbachev's perestroika can also be judged as an attempt at modernization at the expense of the working class that was excluded from deliberation and robbed. The "bandit privatization" of working people's property (Castells 2010, 188) was perpetrated under the veil of uniprogressive discourses that signified the reforms with the meaning of achieving a "normal" civilizational condition (Baysha 2014). These normalizing discourses were constructed by the members of Soviet intelligentsia or the "knowledge class," to use John Frow's (1995) term, whose conduct has traditionally been "derived from a faith that it was in the vanguard of history" (Pipes 1960, 496). In presentation of John Hartley, the composition of this "vanguard" is diverse: "from media professionals to intellectuals, computer software firms to government scientists, educators to archivists, journalists to activists" (Hartley 1999, 216). As Hartley explains:

> During the twentieth century, increasing social power was exercised around control of information, knowledge, symbol and communication . . . . A "class"

> has arisen of those who produce knowledge (broadly defined), who are neither "owner" nor "worker" in traditional terms, who have great collective social sway but little individual power, who are not internally organized into class-conscious parties or movements, but who nevertheless represent the most advanced and cutting-edge aspect of socio-commercial development outside the finance industry. (1999, 216)

Fighting with each other for the right "to speak on behalf of an increasingly unknowable audience" (Hartley 1996, 26), different groups of the knowledge class colonize "others," depriving them of their voices and truths. As a result, alternative discourses organized around different subjectivities—that of Aborigines, nuclear disarmers, trade-unionists, workers, and so forth—become inadmissible and capable of being reported only as "the wild ravings of clowns and idiots on the lunatic fringe" (Hartley 1992a, 62).

At the end of the day, it is not actually the opinions of "minorities" that are oppressed but the preferences of the general population—the "mass," which is preconceived as vulnerable, impressionable, infantile, untutored, inexperienced, and unenlightened. Imagined as "helpless, disordered, pathologized body," in the presentation of the "progressive avant-garde," this "mass" appears in need of "counselling, therapy or a good-telling off (for their own good, of course) by the caring professions of social and political science" (Hartley 1996, 243). The semiotic effect of these snobby colonizing discourses is not the solution of people's problems but the production of victimized populations for the interventions of progressive experts.

Differentiating between "external" and "internal" colonization, Walter Mignolo argues that the latter is carried out by intellectuals assuming that the local culture has "to be improved by the growing and expanding European civilization" (2001, 34). Hartley (1996) agrees; only, in his view, in times of "virtualization of communities and deterritorialization of imperial power . . . the concept of internal colonialism can be extended from territorial and ethnic minorities to demographic others" (101), even if these demographic "others" are the majority of people—the *theydom* of popular culture as opposed to the *wedom* of the knowledge class. Seeking to gain power for their own point of view and "naturalizing as public opinion the passions of the knowledge class" (Hartley 1999, 98), the members of the knowledge class marginalize, diminish, and silence their own compatriots in the name of historical "progress" imagined as Westernization. The edifice of global neocolonial power is bolstered by "a chorus of willing intellectuals" who always have "calming words about benign and altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice*" (Said 2003, xxi). "Even the most draconian of IMF restructuring programmes," David Harvey (2005) argues, "is unlikely to

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 19 09-10-2018 14:06:11

go forward without a modicum of internal support from someone. It sometimes seems as if the IMF merely takes the responsibility from doing what some internal class forces want to do anyway" (117). What is important to recognize with respect to the subject of this book, is that the local support for global neocolonialism/neoliberalism is always provided the name of progress conceived in unidirectional terms.

One of the basic problems with this unidirectional progressive discourse, as James Ferguson (1999) notes, is that it tells people nothing about the inherent logic of neoliberalism. Its narrative is always about "progress, according to which the native population was moving rapidly along the avenue leading to 'civilization,' later styled 'Westernization' or 'modernization'" (34). Ferguson (1999) argues that the discourses of "globalization," "democratization," "civil society" and "economic growth" are just contemporary invocations of the old mythological narratives of social evolution "that reduce a complex and differentiated global political economy to a race for economic and political 'advance'" (16). He insists that it is this simple evolutionary dualism, prescribed by the mythological progressive imagination, that ruins local systems of self-government in the name of progress and a "normal" modernity.

BREAKING THE LINK BETWEEN UNIPROGRESSIVISM AND DEMOCRATIC THEORIZING

As long ago as 1985, Laclau and Mouffe theorized that "the era of normative epistemologies has come to an end, so too has the era of universal discourses" (3) and that a truly democratic condition can be achieved only if the link between the evolutionist (uniprogressive) paradigm and democratic theorization is broken. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), it is only through this radical break that any totalizing ideology, which transforms a conjunctural state of affairs into a historical necessity, can be deconstructed. This break will make it possible to see that any given historical conjuncture is not the natural order of things but rather the expression of certain power configurations; it will also enable the imagining of alternative ways to organize the social, which can foreground unexpected historical turns.

To open up the imagination toward new democratic possibilities, we need to "withdraw the category of 'necessity' to the horizon of the social" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 13) because neither a fixed path of linear development nor the application of "inexorable laws" for social transformation are compatible with open democratic imagination. The logic of necessity operates through fixed meanings and limitations that restrain the work of the symbolic; it creates "totalizing contexts which fix a priori the meaning of every event" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 34). To avoid totalization, therefore, we need to

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 20 09-10-2018 14:06:11

avoid thinking in terms of "normal" stages of historical development and "normal" models of historical change.

In Laclau and Mouffe's view, authoritarian methods of government are intrinsically connected to the evolutionary/uniprogressive imagination that presents historical conjuncture as inevitable historical necessity. Considering Leninism as an example of such an authoritarian rule, the authors argue that

> Leninism evidently makes no attempt to construct, through struggle, a mass identity not predetermined by any necessary law of history. On the contrary, it maintains that there is a "for itself" of the class accessible only to the enlightened vanguard—whose attitude towards the working class is therefore purely pedagogical. (1985, 59)

As I described earlier, the "pedagogical methods" of not only Bolsheviks but many other social engineers in the name of "progress" have been anything but peaceful and tolerant toward the "non-enlightened" "backward" masses.

Anti-democratic and totalitarian tendencies inherent in uniprogressive endeavors stem from "essentialist apriorism, the conviction that the social is sutured at some point, from which it is possible to fix the meaning of any event independently of any articulatory practice" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 176). It is this "essentialist apriorism" that, in view of Laclau and Mouffe, "galvanized the political imagination of the Left: the classic concept of 'revolution,' cast in the Jacobin mould" (1985, 177):

> In many cases the violent overthrow of a repressive regime is the condition of any democratic advance. But the classic concept of revolution implied much more than this: it implied the foundational character of the revolutionary act, the institution of a point of concentration of power. (1985, 177–78)

In Laclau and Mouffe's view, this Jacobin revolutionary imaginary is incompatible with democracy that requires the opening of discursive space:

> Sticking to the evolutionary paradigm of democratic theorizing will inevitably lead to polarizing political effects since the progressive imaginary presupposes the existence of strict dividing lines between "progressive" and "regressive" forces of history with "military relations" between them. (70)

In Laclau and Mouffe's view, non-military relations—that is, inclusive/pluralist democratic politics—can only come to life if no rigid boundaries between identities are established and if the category of "objective interest" from a predetermined historical agent is abandoned, since it only holds meaning within an eschatological conception of history.

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But if there is no predetermined path of development dependent on historical laws, then how can we understand history and social change? Laclau and Mouffe argue that all historic changes should be understood as dependent on hegemonic articulations, and history should be regarded not as an ascendant continuum of developmental stages, but as a discontinuous mosaic of hegemonic formations or historical blocs. Any historical social change, therefore, should be considered progressive or regressive not objectively, from a vantage point of an abstract evolutionist paradigm, but from the subject position of this or that participant of the political process.

What is stemming from this conceptualization of history and historical change is the necessity to acknowledge that no social movement can be conceived as a "progressive movement" a priori, if "progress" is understood not in closed unidirectional terms of moving forward along a pre-established Westernized route, but in open terms of imagining different ways of achieving a better and more just societal condition. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) put it, "The political meaning of a local community movement, of an ecological struggle, of a sexual minority movement, is not given from the beginning; it crucially depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands" (87). In other words, it is an error to think that new social movements have any "objective" interests or historical missions and that their meanings can be conceived independently of their articulations. Any given struggle can be articulated in any number of very different discourses; it is this articulation that determines its character, not the predetermined historical position from which it appears: "That the forms of resistance to new forms of subordination are polysemic and can perfectly well be articulated into an antidemocratic discourse, is clearly demonstrated by the advances of the 'new right' in recent years," Laclau and Mouffe suggest (1985, 169).

The basic precondition for a radically libertarian conception of politics is the refusal to dominate—intellectually or politically. It is this precondition that is unachievable if the project of liberation is conceived in unidirectional evolutionary terms, as a movement toward a "more advanced" societal condition under the domination of self-proclaimed "progressive forces of history." In Laclau and Mouffe's view, "This point is decisive: there is no radical and plural democracy without renouncing the discourse of the universal and its implicit assumption of a privileged point of access to 'the truth,' which can be reached only by a limited number of subjects" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 191–192). In order to be inclusively democratic, the discourse of a universal history should be replaced by the discourse of a variety of historical projects articulated by "a polyphony of voices, each of which constructs its own irreducible discursive identity," Laclau and Mouffe assert (1985, 191).

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In the next chapter, I present Laclau and Mouffe's ideas in more detail and explain some other theoretical positions on which I draw in my analysis of how social change may be miscommunicated through uniprogressive discourses.

NOTE

1. This part of the chapter is a modified version of the articles "Ukrainian Euromaidan: The Exclusion of Otherness in the Name of Progress" (published in European Journal of Cultural Studies, 2015, Volume 18, no. 1, pp. 1–18) and "On the Progressive Identity and Internal Colonization: A Case Study from Russia" (published in International Journal of Cultural Studies, 2016, Volume 19, no. 2, pp. 121–137).

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Chapter 3

Discourse Theory by Laclau and Mouffe and Its Further Elaborations

DISCOURSE THEORY BY ERNESTO LACLAU AND CHANTAL MOUFFE

Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (*HSS*) appeared in 1985 in response to the quick proliferation of new social movements and their challenge to the whole conception of socialism resting upon the ontological centrality of a working class conceived as "perfectly unitary and homogeneous" (1985, 2). Drawing on French post-structuralism and psychoanalysis, Laclau and Mouffe offered an alternative proposition. According to them, social objectivity is only possible on the condition of "discursivity" where "discourse" is understood as a "social fabric" (1985, xiii) on which "social actors occupy differential positions" (1985, xiii). Articulated through both "linguistic and non-linguistic elements" (1985, 108), discourse appears to be "a real force which contributes to the moulding and constitutions of social relations" (1985, 110).

In Laclau and Mouffe's view, social totalities (identities) are not pre-given; they emerge through articulatory practices as "attempts to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a center" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 112). However, no ultimate fixation of meaning is possible since any totality is "subverted by a field of discursivity which overflows it" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 113). These formulations are always precarious and unstable given the discord between the attempts to construct society-as-totality and the discursive impossibility of such total closures. It is this new conceptualization of social relations as radically unfixed and unstable that makes hegemonic practices possible. Politics become hegemonic if two main

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conditions are met: "the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 136).

Since social relations are seen as discursively constructed, the classical "thought/reality" dichotomy no longer appears relevant, and "the categories which have until now been considered exclusively of one or another" are reconsidered (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 110). Synonymy, metonymy, metaphor, and other rhetorical devices are understood not as "forms of thought that add a second sense to a primary" but as "part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constructed" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 110).

Laclau's Post-*HSS* Theorizing

The engagement with rhetoric, motivated by opening a post-totalizing path for leftist politics, became a trademark of Laclau's post-*HSS* political theorizing in which totalities are paradoxically seen as both impossible and necessary: "Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity" (Laclau 2005, 70). A totality emerges when a particular democratic demand assumes a hegemonic representation of the impossible whole of all other demands united equivalentially. By assuming this hegemonic function, however, this particularity loses much of its specificity and "becomes something on the order of an empty signifier, its own particularity embodying an unachievable fullness" (Laclau 2005, 71). It is here that rhetoric comes into view to occupy a central place in Laclau's theorizing: "If the empty signifier arises from the need to name an object which is both impossible and necessary . . . the hegemonic operation will be catachrestical through and through" (Laclau 2005, 72).

One of the most famous examples Laclau uses to illustrate his point is *Solidarność*—a broad anti-bureaucratic social movement in communist Poland of the 1980s that took its name from a Gdansk-based trade union. In Laclau's presentation, the signifier *Solidarność* became empty (lost its specificity) as soon as it stopped representing a particular demand of Gdansk workers and "came to signify a much wider popular camp against an oppressive regime" (2005, 81). In other words, *Solidarność* came to signify what, strictly speaking, it was not: an impossible totality of various anti-governmental struggles united equivalentially; it became a figural term of the totality that could not be substituted by any literal name.

Laclau argues:

> In classical rhetoric, a figural term which cannot be substituted by a literal one was called a catachresis (for instance, when we talk about "the leg of a chair").

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> This argument can be generalized if we face the fact that any distortion of meaning has, at its root, the need to express something that the literal term would simply not transmit. In that sense, catachresis is more than a particular figure: it is the common denominator of rhetoricity as such. (2005, 71)

Catachresis thus becomes a hallmark of Laclau's "ontological rhetoricity" that reduces "rhetoric to trope, trope to metaphor, and, by extension . . . metaphor to catachresis" (Kaplan 2010, 267). Insisting on the ontological generality of rhetoric and on the tropological character of any articulation, Laclau asserts that "hegemony means the passage from metonymy to metaphor, from a 'contiguous' starting point to its consolidation in 'analogy'" (2014, 22). The culmination of this tropological movement is the moment of synecdoche, when the demands of one particular sector are accepted by the new collective identity—when a part comes to represent the whole. In Laclau's construction of hegemony, the moment of synecdoche appears to be decisive.

This moment also turns out to be decisive in terms of the divergence in theoretical positions of Laclau and Mouffe after the publication of *HSS*. In Laclau's later works, the moment of hegemony proper comes when there is a widespread acceptance of a particular democratic demand by different social sectors equivalentially united; for Mouffe, the condition of the possibility of hegemony is understood in terms of the political good and the lack of an attempt by any self-interested social sector to stand in for the whole:

> For Laclau, hegemony is *intrinsically* a threefold process of symbolic representation that moves from an initial movement of metonymy to metaphoric substitution and then to a decisive (although necessarily incomplete) synecdoche: the part standing in for the whole. Whereas for Mouffe the *sina qua non* of radical democratic hegemony is the exclusion of synecdoche: the exclusion of any part standing in for, or attempting to stand in for, the whole. (Wenman 2003, 584)

Mouffe's radical democratic community must resist the temptation of synecdochic representation of a "demos" that is incompatible with the principle of pluralism.

Although in his latest works Laclau insists that his theory of hegemony is not "a neutral description of what is going on in the world" (Laclau 2000, 80), "his tendency to privilege the universal over the particular is in sharp contrast to the ethico-political direction of Mouffe's work" (Wenman 2003, 584). While Mouffe's hegemony is about the political good whose content is identified explicitly in terms of a radical democratic imaginary, in Laclau's representation it appears as a structural necessity. Laclau's treatment of hegemony as a political game, where the struggle between the universal and the particular is played out, allows his critics to claim that his theory can serve

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"as a neutral conceptual tool for accounting for every ideological formation, including Fascist populism" (Žižek 2000, 229) and can "be used to describe any concrete social formation regardless of political content, but the form will always be the same: the (impossible) struggle for totality" (Wenman 2003, 591). Although Laclau himself rigorously rejects these "accusations," in my view, it is precisely this structural elusiveness regarding the ethico-political dimension of Laclau's theorizing that makes it more suitable for the analysis of hegemonic constructions with anti-democratic tendencies.

In the third part of this book, I refer to Laclau's ideas on how hegemony is established to analyze the totalitarian discursive closures of the Ukrainian Euromaidan. At the same time, as I analyze both Russian and Ukrainian case studies throughout the second and third parts, I also refer to Chantal Mouffe's (2005, 2009, 2013) post-*HSS* theory of radical/agonistic democracy, using it as a normative guide to judge the anti-democratic tendencies of the uniprogressive discourses of modernization/Westernization as employed by social activists in Russia and Ukraine.

Mouffe's Agonistic Model

Emphasizing the importance for democracy of "a vibrant clash of democratic political positions" (2009, 104), Mouffe warns against what she calls the "closure of the democratic space" (2009, 77) and advocates for its radical openness. "One should realize," Mouffe (2009) argues, "that a lack of democratic contestation over real political alternatives leads to antagonisms manifesting themselves under forms that undermine the very basis of the democratic public sphere" (114–115). In contrast, the radical openness of democratic space will lead to recognizing unknown or suppressed possibilities, such as the existence of "other just political forms of society" (62).

According to Mouffe (2009), the political process is inconceivable without antagonism; since it can never be eliminated, one of the major tasks of democratic politics is to transform antagonism into *agonism*, which she describes as

> a different mode of manifestation of antagonism because it involves a relation not between enemies but between "adversaries," adversaries being defined in a paradoxical way as "friendly enemies," that is, persons who are friends because they share a common symbolic space but also enemies because they want to organize this common symbolic space in a different way. (Mouffe 2009, 12)

The necessity of such a transformation stems from the acceptance of pluralism as a foundational principle of modern liberal democracy, understood not merely as a form of government but as a form of organizing human

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 28 09-10-2018 14:06:12

co-existence in political terms. According to this vision, difference (in views, subject positions, identities, etc.) acquires a positive status: It should not be suppressed, but rather acknowledged and greeted as a condition that makes radical democratic projects possible.

In Mouffe's view, the relations between the members of a community become more democratic when they acknowledge and accept the particularity and limitations of their claims. Since drawing frontiers of "us versus them" is necessary for identity construction, the frontiers/discursive closures are unavoidable; it is crucial to acknowledge, however, that all the moments of closure required for constituting such identifications can be negotiated in a variety of ways. The conflict between exclusion and inclusion (who belong to "us" and "them") is permanent, and "no final resolution or equilibrium between those two conflicting logics is ever possible, and there can be only temporary, pragmatic, unstable and precarious negotiations of the tension between them" (Mouffe 2009, 45).

According to Mouffe (2009), the stabilization of closures through the establishment of solid dividing frontiers leads to antagonism and the totalitarian tendencies of government. This may happen when the frontiers are presented not as contingent and temporary but as essential and natural—dictated out of the considerations of rationality or morality, for example. Without a plurality of competing forces attempting to define the common good differently, pluralist democracy is impossible; to achieve a democratic condition, a break with the tradition of universalization and homogenization of both the other and the self is required.

This is true regarding not only the identity of people but also political projects, which have to be seen as a product of a particular society, with all its specificity: historical, cultural, geographical, and so forth. As Mouffe puts it, "We should stop presenting the institutions of liberal western societies as the solution that other people will necessarily adopt when they cease to be 'irrational' and become 'modern.'" (2009, 65). Pluralist democracy should recognize that there cannot be one single project suitable for governing different societies: This question cannot be conceived in singular and universal terms. The world should be conceived as a "pluri-verse," which acknowledges "a plurality of regional poles, organized according to different economic and political models without a central authority" (2013, 22) and a multiplicity of interpretations of "democracy."

In Mouffe's (2013) view, democracy, understood as a rule of people, "can take a variety of forms, according to the different modes of inscription of the democratic ideal in the variety of contexts" (29). The possibility of interpreting "democracy" in a variety of ways stems from the pluralism of cultures, forms of life, and different understandings of "human dignity." Rather than insisting on the path followed by the West as the only possible and legitimate

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 29 09-10-2018 14:06:12

one, we should acknowledge that "non-Western societies can follow different trajectories according to the specificity of their cultural traditions and religions," as Mouffe claims (2013, 35). Any political project on a global scale should be conceived with an open-ended horizon that allows for unrestricted possibilities of hegemonic articulations.

Only through this radicalization of the global democratic imaginary can we challenge the "there is no alternative" dogma of neocolonialism/neoliberalism, which transforms a contingent historical articulation from a specific cultural context into a historical necessity. To subvert the neocolonial/neoliberal hegemony that arrests imagination, one needs to "question the dominant narrative about the superiority of the Western form of development" (Mouffe 2013, 36), "challenge the dangerous thesis that democratization requires Westernization" (Mouffe 2013, 40), and deconstruct the "naturalness" of the universality of the Western developmental path:

> Such a hegemony is the result of a discursive construction that articulates in a very specific manner a manifold of practices, discourses and language games of a very diverse nature. If it can be perceived as the natural consequence of technological progress, it is because, through a process of sedimentation, the political origin of these contingent practices has been erased; they have become naturalized, and the forms of identification that they have produced have crystallized in identities which are taken for granted. This is why neo-liberal practices and institutions appear as the outcome of natural processes, as a fate that we have to accept because "there is no alternative." (Mouffe 2013, 89)

Because the "common sense" of the "naturalness" and "inevitability" of the neoliberal historical stage has been formed discursively, it is also through articulations—counter-hegemonic ones—that this "common sense" can be transformed.

With respect to the subject of this book, the claim of Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian activists that their "correct" understanding of historical development should be accepted by any "rational" person is inherently non-democratic: It pathologizes those holding alternative views and excludes them from democratic deliberation. The tendency to erase diversity, which is inherently present in the discourse of uniprogressivism, is incompatible with all-inclusive pluralist democratic projects and is laden with societal antagonism—which, in the absence of mechanisms for peaceful, political resolutions, can lead to violence. To prevent the radicalization of a conflict, participants in the political process should draw frontiers such that "they" are no longer perceived "as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an 'adversary,' that is, somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question," as Mouffe (2009, 102) argues. In other words, to avoid antagonism, the

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 30 09-10-2018 14:06:12

activists for democratization should avoid thinking of their hopes for positive social change in terms of universally prescribed models.

As I previously noted, the problem with the modernizing missions of the social movements that I had analyzed is that they end up undermining democracy rather than promoting it, because they diminish and marginalize their presumably underdeveloped compatriots and colonize them by excluding their voices from deliberation on important issues of democratization. As I attempt to show in this book, this is not only anti-democratic but also counter-productive when it comes to mass mobilization for the sake of fighting against totalitarian regimes. Instead of forming coalitions with other social groups, activists with a uniprogressive imaginary only reinforce antagonisms between them, preventing the formation of a popular front for the sake of democratization.

NICO CARPENTIER'S *DISCURSIVE-MATERIAL KNOT*

Three Nodal Points of Antagonistic Discourse

To analyze how exactly the discourse of uniprogressivism deepens old societal divisions and creates new ones, I refer to Nico Carpentier's (2017) work *The Discursive-Material Knot: Cyprus in Conflict and Community Media Participation*. Drawing on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and conceptual frameworks from a variety of other fields (conflict theory, conflict resolution/transformation theory, participatory theory, etc.), Carpentier (2017) identifies three nodal points that, in his view, constitute antagonistic discourse: (1) the need for destruction of the enemy, (2) the radical difference of the enemy, and (3) homogenization of the self as opposed to the enemy (172).

The radical difference between self and enemy, as presupposed by antagonistic discourse, appears when there is no symbolic space that the self and other can be imagined to share, as the two are thought to be irreconcilably at odds. As Carpentier (2017) puts it:

> The construction of this radical other is supported by the logic of dichotomy, whereas the idea of the absence of a common space produces distance. In the more extreme cases, this radical othering leads to a dehumanization and demonization of the other, denying even the most basic features of humanity to that other, which makes its destruction easier and even necessary. (172)

Because those opposing uniprogressive modernizing endeavors are imagined by them to be backward and outdated—the forces of the past—their

annihilation through the approximation and hastening of a civilized/Westernized future looks only "natural."

As Carpentier (2017) argues, in antagonistic discourse, "The dichotomy that defines the enemy and the self is not considered neutral, but it supports a hierarchy that positions the enemy as inferior, and the self as superior" (172). This is exactly what we observe in the discourse of uniprogressivism, where the opponents of Westernization are positioned at the lowest points on the scale of unidirectional development as imagined by modernizers.

Homogenization, another nodal point of antagonistic discourse, manifests itself in the solidification of the chain of equivalence among those united in their struggle against the common enemy (Carpentier 2017, 173). In other words, the diversity of the participants of a social movement is made invisible; the difference between them is obliterated to the extent that anybody who dares problematize total homogenization is branded a "traitor." This is what is often referred to as a "Jacobin imaginary," juxtaposing the imagined homogeneity of "us" against "them."

According to Carpentier (2017), the construction of the self and enemy-other is also "supported by, and combined with, a series of interconnected processes: essentialization, universalization, normalization, moralization, and dehistoricization" (174). In the discourse of uniprogressivism, *essentialization*—the attribution of natural, essential characteristics to members of specific sociocultural groups—manifests itself when the status of "underdevelopment" and "intellectual inferiority" are ascribed to those sociocultural groups that are deemed unable, by some ostensibly "natural" order of things, to understand the alleged historical inevitability of unidirectional modernizing endeavors.

Universalization—"the idea that a dominant social order is not particular, but given and universally applicable (at least within the frontiers that demarcate the self from the outside)" (Carpentier 2017, 174)—becomes apparent in the equation of development and Westernization. This happens when Western institutions of power and the Western ways of governing society are discussed not as specifically Western but as universal—the ones that need to be established and implemented in other societies in order to make them "modern."

Normalization—"the imposition of particular social norms, which renders particular articulations as normal, neutral, and/or natural" (Carpentier 2017, 174)—is closely related to universalization. For activists with a uniprogressive imaginary, it is so "normal" to valorize the West and denigrate non-Western societies (including their own) that everything outside this "norm" is imagined by them as a pathological deviation.

Moralization—the construction of an "us/them" opposition not in political but in moral terms—finds its expressions in the imagining of non-Western

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 32 09-10-2018 14:06:12

societies as "morally outdated" in contrast to Western ones. The evilness of those opposing Westernization is recognized in their ostensible desire to "turn back the clock of history," "return the country to the past," "deprive the future," and so on. Deeply mythological, these and similar discursive constructions present the opposition between power and the protesters not in political terms, but as a fight of good against the forces of evil.

Dehistorization—an elimination of the historical context—is evident in references to history in which contemporary systems of power are imagined in terms of kingdoms, empires, or other power structures that existed in the past and are in no way capable of explaining the modern historical conjunctions of corresponding societies. Leaving aside all the specificities that make up the historical contexts of both the current moment and the past, these constructions create "homogeneous empty times" dealing not with historical developments in realistic terms, but only impoverished mythologies lacking any complexity.

According to Carpentier (2017), to transform antagonism into agonism—that is, to stop seeing opponents as enemies and instead begin seeing them as adversaries whose difference matters—it is necessary to re-articulate the nodal points of antagonistic discourse and re-create a common symbolic space among the conflicting participants in a political process. To re-establish "conflictual togetherness," as Carpentier (2017, 178) puts it, the structural balance needs to be restored so that the involved actors are no longer positioned hierarchically. It is also necessary to move away from dichotomization, making the solid, impermeable frontiers between the self and the opponent more porous, in order to activate a diversity of positions and allow pluralism to flourish—a precondition for agonism to emerge.

Introducing greater permeability between the identities of self and other as well as pluralizing the positions within each camp enables connections between former enemies, which can lead to alliances across borders and the creation of symbolic spaces of sharing. "If adversaries belong to the same political space, and do not attempt to destroy (or annihilate) each other, then the reflection on the nature of this interaction becomes unavoidable" (Carpentier 2017, 179), paving a way to work out mutually acceptable terms of co-existence and reducing the chance of violence—physical, material, structural, or symbolic.

The transformation of antagonism into agonism is important for preserving societal peace. This task requires establishing political mechanisms through which collective passions over the issue at stake are channeled and expressed without opponents being seen as enemies, but rather as "friendly adversaries." Pluralistic democracy presupposes the clash of different political positions and makes room for dissent; disagreement is considered legitimate and welcome. If this is missing, there is danger of replacing democratic

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 33 09-10-2018 14:06:12

contestation with violence, as ultimately happened in Ukraine (see chapters 9–12). Moreover, an all-inclusive democratic project cannot be successful without incorporating into the political process a wide variety of social groups. An unwillingness and/or inability to make alliances with "others" will have detrimental results for democratic struggles: The revolutionary minority either cannot succeed or it grasps power by violent means and keeps it through totalitarian methods of government, repressing "underdeveloped" compatriots who oppose the reforms.

The Interplay of the Material and the Discursive

As I pointed out while introducing their theory of discourse, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argued that discourse—"a real force which contributes to the moulding and constitutions of social relations"—is articulated through both "linguistic and non-linguistic elements" (108). However, they did not elaborate on this interrelation of the material and the symbolic either in *HSS* or in their later separate works. Despite traces of the material in both Laclau and Mouffe's joint work (1985) and especially in Laclau's latest elaborations (2005), both thinkers pay significantly more attention to the discursive rather than material components of the social. In order to disprivilege the discursive and recognize the significance of the material, Nico Carpentier (2017) expands the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe by bringing the discursive and the material closer together in his *discursive-material knot* (*DMK*) composed of four elements—the discursive, the material, structure, and agency. None of these four components, in Carpentier's view, "ever manages to dominate the others, but they relate to each other in non-hierarchical and overdetermined ways" (67); they co-exist in a complex, never-ending interplay.

In Carpentier's view, the expansion of discourse theory to include the material makes analysis of the social much richer: It allows "not merely focusing on media talk, for instance, but also on the contextualized processes of discursive-ideological production and their material components" (Carpentier 2017, 5). This expansion also allows otherwise invisible forces to be recognized, adding contingency to established meanings by destabilizing existing sedimentations. As Carpentier puts it, "When each component [of the *DMK*] is intrinsically contingent, and contingency is enhanced by the interactions between two components, then contingency can only be seen as incrementally increased by the interplay of all components" (68). It is this ongoing contingency of all the *DMK* components that prevents discourses from becoming hermetically closed, allowing for discursive struggles and the freedom to identify with some discourses but not with others.

While the need to expand theoretical reflection on the interrelation of the material and the discursive was acknowledged by numerous thinkers before

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Carpentier (Barad 2007; Dolphijn, and van der Tuin 2012; Hardy and Thomas 2015), many of them ended up privileging either the material or the discursive. Carpentier tries to avoid this pitfall by conceptualizing his *DMK* as a "non-hierarchical ontology that theorizes the knotted interactions of the discursive and the material as restless and contingent, sometimes incessantly changing shapes and sometimes deeply sedimented" (2017, 4). By moving away from the discursive-material dualism and making the material more visible without privileging it over the discursive—as he puts it, "The knot is seen as constitutive for the discursive, the material, and for the social" (Carpentier 2017, 14)—Carpentier offers a more balanced and non-hierarchical approach to the analysis of complex discursive and material interactions.

Since the *DMK* is situated at the ontological level, Carpentier "translates" it into the ontic realm by using the concept of *assemblage*. It is at this ontic level that the knotted interaction of the discursive and the material can structure not only large-scale assemblages (state apparatuses, armies, markets, etc.) but also the micro-processes of the everyday. In Carpentier's model, the material appears as both constructive and destructive: It structures the social by providing or denying access to spaces, by allowing or refusing to allow bodies to move, by encouraging or discouraging particular actions and significations, by creating or ruining material and non-material (discursive) structures, and so forth. One of the simplest examples of the material's constructive potentiality is when objects such as royal insignia and fashion details are used to add symbolic value to human agency through the meaning allocated to the material. The destructive potentiality of the material is most visible during wars or collective violence, when matter destroys matter, human flesh, social/discursive order, and human agency.

The spatiality of assemblages is important to Carpentier's theorizing because all assemblages are located in particular spaces, integrating their physical and chemical properties (natural resources) and because all their elements are connected spatially in one way or another. It is in space that the material and the discursive interact. By the logic of *invitation* and *dislocation*, the material participates in discursive struggles over the meanings of places, suggesting this or that particular articulation. Objects enter the social not only by assuming the role of intermediaries or mediators, but also by acting as social agents of their own and/or as the instruments of power. Any *event*—a material change—can dislocate discourse because of the inability of the latter to attribute meaning to the former; in such cases, escaping representation, the material destabilizes discourses by pointing to their internal contradictions and their limited capacity to represent the material world.

To increase "the theoretical visibility of the material in the interactions between the discursive and the material" (38), Carpentier employs Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *machine* conceptualized as "a system of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 35 09-10-2018 14:06:12

interruptions or breaks" "related to a continual material flow . . . that it cuts into" (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, 36). At the same time, the machine is a production of a flow itself; in this sense, "every machine is the machine of a machine" (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, 36) or in other words, all machines are intermingling. Following Guattari (1993) but "without being completely faithful to Guattari's framework" (Carpentier 2017, 39), Carpentier presents machines not only as material but also as functional assemblages, associating them with humankind through multiple components—material, semiotic, social, representational, and so forth—where the simplest and the most basic material components are called *proto-machines*. Carpentier uses the concept of machine to articulate both organizations and bodies.

As a machine, the body is seen as an open system connected with both the discursive and the material; it is the site of various inscriptions—political, cultural, geographical, and so on. All body practices are material, cultural, and discursive at the same time. Bodies are engaged in signifying practices that allow for the attribution of meaning: "Human bodies remain crucial in the acts of meaning production, through their speaking, writing, thinking, broadcasting, publishing . . . which combines the body as communicational tool with the body as operator of other communicational tools" (Carpentier 2017, 55). Embodied signifying practices have a potential to engage in the production, maintenance, or challenging of discourses; however, there is no guarantee this potentiality will be realized.

In Carpentier's presentation, all signifying practices are part of the *DMK*, though not all of them are incorporated into discourses:

> The translation of signifying practices into discourse is an act of power, highly dependent on the context of the speaker, the signifying practice itself, the medium and the audience, and not an automatism that is to be taken for granted. In other words, the construction of discourses is a social process that moves beyond language and thus escapes the control of the individual speaker. (32)

However, both discourses and signifying practices can be *entextualized*—condensed linguistically into text—and the materiality of this process is also incorporated into the *DMK*. Reworking traditional Saussurian semiotics, which defines the sign as a combination of the signifier and the signified (S/S), Carpentier (2017) re-defines it as M/M, Matter and Meaning, "to bring out the materiality of language" (56).

The material invites particular discourses to become part of the assemblage, while frustrating others or assisting them to be produced. But the material is also always invested with meaning. Hegemonic orders provide contextual frameworks of intelligibility that intervene in these assemblages. This also implies that discourses impact the production of materials, not only

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 36 09-10-2018 14:06:12

to give meaning to them, but also to co-determine their materiality. The material can disrupt or strengthen discursive orders; however, its invitation may be ignored, and an alternative meaning can be attached to it. To capture the interaction between the material and the discursive—the process of engraining meaning—Carpentier uses the concept of *investment*.

To further enrich the combination of the discursive and the material, Carpentier adds to his model the "structure-agency" dimension, which offers a more nuanced perspective on the structural capacities of the social, both empowering and disabling in terms of agency and human freedom. On the one hand, discourses are seen as structuring the conceptual and material world by offering ways of thinking about economic, political, social, and cultural matters. In a similar fashion, as mentioned earlier, the material also structures the social by inviting specific orderings and interpretations afforded by its materiality. The overdetermination of both the discursive and the material and the presence of discursive struggles prevent the process of structuration from resulting in hermetically closed structures of meaning.

Because hegemonies operate in specific sociocultural contexts existing in space and time, they are also contingent with respect to other circumstances where the same discourse may not be hegemonic. This contingency (together with all other contingencies outlined above) provides subjects with an opportunity to identify themselves with different discourses in different ways; however, the freedom of identification is not absolute, since "the process of identification is dependent on how an individual is embedded in other discursive fields and one could also argue that individuals will tend to (try to) avoid (too heavy forms of) discursive dissonance" (Carpentier 2017, 30). Subjectivity emerges at the crossroads of various identifications whose multiplicity provides the opportunity for agency. The exercise of agency disables discursive closures and enables material and social (re)production.

Although discursive innovations—institutionalized and contextualized—rarely emerge as the outcome of an individual signification, this does not totally exclude the role of individuals in triggering discursive production. The signifying practices of a charismatic leader may be translated into discourse and have a significant societal impact. However, it is necessary to acknowledge as well that societal contexts are required for the transformation of these individual signifying practices into discourse. The signifying practices of other subjects and institutions, as well as specific material conditions, are necessary for the discourse to gain strength and acquire a hegemonic status.

In the third part of this book, while discussing the negative consequences of the uniprogressive discourse of the Euromaidan, I refer to Carpentier's ideas to deconstruct the "naturalness" of this discourse and show how the contingency of meanings hegemonized through it was co-determined by the interplay of the material and the discursive.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 37 09-10-2018 14:06:12

Part II

THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA

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Chapter 4

"They Were Very Far Removed from the People . . ."*

2006–2008: DISSENTERS' MARCHES

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Russia witnessed two big waves of mass protest movements. One of them was a series of marches against the authoritarianism of Putin's "vertical of power"—a patronage network of government bureaucracy dependent on the Kremlin (Monaghan 2017).[1] The goal of the coalition that organized these rallies was to link together all of the country's anti-Putin forces, which had been "marginalized, persecuted, and betrayed by Putin's plan to hold on to power for life" (Kasparov 2015, XIV). In these "marches of dissenters," as the opposition called them,[2] the representatives of far-left, right-wing, and centrist political parties, grassroots, and advocacy groups were marching shoulder-to-shoulder, expressing their shared dissatisfaction with the "suppression of the opposition, stifling freedom of speech, and eroding democratic institutions by abolishing direct elections of provincial governors and creating an obedient parliament" (Anti-Kremlin Protesters 2007). Despite the ideological diversity of the movement, "liberal opposition figures were instrumental in creating these new alliances" (Gabowitsch 2017, 120), and the agenda of the protests was liberal. The protesters used slogans like "Shame!", "Russia Without Putin!", "Down with KGB power!", "Give the Elections Back!", "Long Live a Different Russia!", and so forth (Illarionov 2017).

Hundreds of protesters were detained by police (Lenta.ru 2006); some were expelled from educational institutions or fired as a result (Lenta.ru 2007c).

* The title of this chapter is a famous phrase of Vladimir Lenin about the Decembrist revolt of 1825—an uprising of noble army officers striving for liberal reformation of Russian society: the abolition of serfdom and reorganization of the state. Although the Decembrists sincerely desired to improve peasants' lives, actual collaboration with peasants was unthinkable even to the most radical of them.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 41 09-10-2018 14:06:12

The organizers of the marches—Eduard Limonov and Garry Kasparov—were interrogated by the Federal Security Service (Lenta.ru 2007a, 2007b). The Kremlin-controlled media portrayed the members of the opposition as "dangerous extremists" and "traitors to the motherland" (Kasparov 2015, 3), a narrative that state propaganda had been employing with greater frequency since 2000, when oligarchs Boris Berezovsky[3] and Vladimir Gusinsky[4] were forced into exile and their television channels (ORT and NTV, respectively) fell under Kremlin control (Volkov 2000). The narrative of internal "enemies" only solidified after the tragedies of Dubrovka[5] and Beslan,[6] a pair of horrific hostage sieges in which hundreds of Russians were killed (Volk 2004); it grew even more intractable after the "color" revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, claimed by the Kremlin to be US-staged "coups" (Russia's Security Council 2005). Since that time, opponents of the Kremlin's policies have increasingly been considered "enemies of the people" (Krishtanovskaya 2004) or the "fifth column" (Surkov 2004). From 2000 to 2008—the first two terms of Putin's presidency—sixteen journalists were killed in civilian life (i.e., not while covering combat or other inherently dangerous situations) (CPJ n/d). Although it was never clear who committed the murders, critical voices have linked them to the common practice in Russia of intimidating the opposition.

The dissenters' marches of 2006–2008 gathered thousands in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Pictures of crowds overflowing central city squares and protesters perched in trees and shouting "We exist!" made a strong impression (Barry 2011). However, on the scale of the whole country, the oppositional gatherings were only tiny drops in a sea of Russian regions unaffected by the protests[7]. As Ben Judah (2013) put it, "The opposition still failed to be heard outside the Garden Ring [Moscow central district]. . . . Opposition leaders were still unattractive and uninspiring to normal Russians" (209). In terms of mass mobilization, the situation paled in comparison to that of a year earlier, when a wave of anti-monetarization manifestations swept across the whole of Russia. At that time, all its regions joined the protests against a government attempt to end a vestige of the Soviet system of non-monetarized privileges that various social groups had been receiving directly from the state (News.ru 2004; News.ru 2005).

2004–2005: THE ANTI-MONETARIZATION UPRISING

In St. Petersburg, anti-monetarization protesters blocked the city's main boulevard; in Khimki, they blocked the main highway to St. Petersburg; in Perm, the main highway to Moscow (Komsomolskaya Pravda 2005) and in Samara, the main city road (Ivashov 2005)—a comprehensive list of similar blockages

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 42 09-10-2018 14:06:12

across the country would be lengthy. In Novosibirsk (Siberia) "a dozen pensioners mailed their cash payments for transit—the equivalent of a little more than $3—to Boris V. Gryzlov, the leader of United Russia"[8] (Myers 2005). The intensity of the protests and the scale of the rebellion could easily be explained by the fact that before 2004, "about 70% of the population had rights for [non-monetarized] privileges" (Shenberg 2005). In other words, the reform affected the majority of the people living in the country, and the protests were a genuine manifestation of their outrage: "It was the first time since the early 1990s that demonstrations took place in every part of Russia" (Gabowitsch 2016, 129). The instigators of the movement were pensioners, joined by veterans, disabled people and other affected groups (Papp 2005). Unlike the anti-authoritarian protests of 2006–2008 that attracted predominantly the middle-class dwellers of several big cities, the anti-monetarization unrest in 2005 swept the whole country, from its eastern to western frontiers, and involved many social groups.

There is another important difference between the marches of dissenters in 2006–2008 and the anti-monetarization rebellion of 2004–2005: while the former sought liberalization (broadly conceived), the latter predominantly opposed it. As Judah (2013) put it, the anti-monetarization protests "were about post-Soviet injustice and the miserable conditions that the generation who had won the 'great patriotic war' had been reduced to" (87). Some of the meetings were held under slogans advocating the restoration of the USSR with its system of social welfare; calls for the execution of liberal reformers were also heard (Regnum 2005). As the resolution from one of the anti-monetarization meetings stated, "Those who had been working for all their lives had earned their rights for benefits. The state does not have any right to insult them" (Amurskaya Pravda 2004). For many of those accustomed to receiving direct, non-monetarized benefits, it was a "natural" and "normal" part of the unwritten contract with the state that had existed during Soviet times, and thus the whole idea of monetarization was absurd and even insulting. As Mischa Gabowitsch (2017) put it, "the anti-monetarization protests resulted not from a cost-benefit calculation, but from outrage" that people's worth "would be reduced to a point of a monetary scale" (130).

Given the nationwide character of the 2004–2005 protests, all political parties within Russia saw it as their duty to support the manifestations. The pro-Soviet sentiments of the anti-monetarization fighters resonated most naturally with the Communist Party; in many aspects, they also matched the agenda of the National Bolshevik Party, which even occupied the building of the Ministry of Health to express solidarity with the protesters (NTV 2004). The position of Russian liberals, however, was ambivalent: "Many Muscovite liberals dismissed the protests as a conservative response to economic modernization" (Gabowitsch 2016, 129). As Grigory Yavlinsky, the head of the

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 43 09-10-2018 14:06:12

liberal "Yabloko" party, put it, "The monetarization of benefits is like a fork: you can either eat a meatball with it, or use it to stab your neighbor. The benefits of a federal minister are worth about 100,000 dollars. Why would he start with himself?" (Yavlinsky 2005). Boris Nemtsov, another leader of the liberal opposition, expressed a similar view:

> Natural benefits, at least, the majority of them, are hardly commensurable with the market economy. A structural reform whose essence is the buyout of privileges from the population for fair prices is necessary. However, the way they carry out the monetarization leaves no doubt about the incompetence and cynicism of Putin's power. (Nemtsov 2004)

In other words, Russian liberals were not against monetarization per se—they just wanted the process to be administered more efficiently and fairly. Unlike millions of outraged Russians who took monetarization as an unnatural and insulting arrangement, Russian liberals considered it perfectly normal. What the liberals did not like was the role played by Putin's corrupted system of power, which had been removing all democratic checks and balances from below through the suppression of opposition and intimidation of journalists.

The difference between those arguing for the necessity of monetarization/liberalization and the beliefs of the Russians challenging the whole idea of market "normality" is important for understanding why, since perestroika, the liberal opposition in Russia has remained "a small micro-society of its own," as Judah (2013, 195) put it. Numerous polls conducted in Russia since the demise of the USSR have come to the same finding: most Russians still view the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 as "a bad thing" (Masci 2017). The ideas and protest activities of opposition forces calling for liberalization, marketization, and Westernization have remained largely unappreciated by the majority of Russian citizens. In 2007, when answering the Levada-Center[9] (2007b) poll question, "What is your attitude toward the Dissenters' Marches?" the majority of respondents who knew about the protests[10] chose "indifferently" or "negatively"; their attitude toward the leaders of the "Other Russia" democratic coalition was the same. Although 75 percent of the respondents believed that the opposition had a right to hold mass meetings and manifestations, and 65 percent felt that these meetings should not be dispersed by force (Levada-Center 2007a), 68 percent did not even consider the possibility of joining the protests themselves (Levada-Center 2007b).

SOVIET NOSTALGIA

As is well known, Soviet nostalgia and people's indifference or even hostility to the opposition's attempts to liberalize and Westernize Russia trace their

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 44 09-10-2018 14:06:12

origin to the first decade of post-Soviet history, the "wild 1990s." Yeltsin's years of radical market reforms, valorized by Russian liberals because of the "freedom" brought to Russian society, are remembered by many people of Russia predominantly for soaring inflation, skyrocketing prices, massive unemployment, and rampant crime. Through the privatization of state property conducted with no transparency, scarcely any regulation, and unreliable accounting, "all valuable assets in Russia were sold for ridiculous prices for whoever had the money and the power to control the transaction" (Castells 2010, 193). The "whoever" in this case consisted of party *nomenklatura*, red directors, and other members of the Soviet establishment who accumulated wealth during the era of Brezhnev's stagnation by profiting from systemic shortages and during perestroika by depositing state funds into personal bank accounts abroad.

Many of the newly rich who later became victims of Putin's consolidation of authority in the "power vertical" were among those few who had amassed fortunes through the mass impoverishment of Russian people during Yeltsin's presidency, when "the Russian state was being picked clean by those who ran it and had privileged access to it" (Lynch 2011, 41):

> To give just one shocking but typical example, in 1995–1996 the Russian government in effect auctioned off nearly 60 percent of Russia's industrial assets to a small group of private financiers at fire-sale prices through a device known as the loans-for-shares scheme. Through this policy, the government borrowed some $5 billion to $6 billion from a dozen or so financial barons, or oligarchs, who in return obtained collateral rights in invaluable government economic assets. The Russian government used these funds mainly to finance Boris Yeltsin's reelection campaign and pay off pressing short-term obligations . . . . When the government predictably failed to pay back the loans, a handful of businessmen became predictably rich. In other cases, assets were auctioned off to government insiders in patently rigged bids. In one example, which later became notorious but at that time was utterly routine, oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky obtained ownership rights in what would become Russia's largest privately owned energy company, Yukos Oil Company, for $309 million. At the time of Khodorkovsky's arrest in 2003, Yukos was valued at $25 billion. (Lynch 2011, 41)

After the loss of Russia's industrial assets—all of which were created during Soviet times by Soviet people, only to be snatched up during the 1990s through bandit privatization—the vast majority of Russians had no sympathy for Khodorkovsky[11] or any other oligarch now prosecuted by Putin (Burrett 2013).

Neither did the majority of Russia's population have positive sentiments toward liberal parties and politicians financed by these new riches; both "the oligarchs and the liberal politicians had not only come to be seen as heartless,

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 45 09-10-2018 14:06:12

but incompetent too" (Judah 2013, 62). It was them who, in the eyes of millions of Russians, were responsible for the devastating consequences of the post-Soviet liberalizing reforms:

> The devastation—the loss in GDP—was greater than Russia had suffered in World War II. In the period 1940–46 the Soviet Union industrial production fell 24 percent. In the period 1990–98, Russian industrial production fell 42.9 percent—almost equal to the fall of GDP. (Stiglitz 2003, 143)

> In 1989, only 2 percent of those living in Russia were in poverty. By late 1998, that number had soared to 23.8 percent, using the $2 a day standard. More than 40 percent of the country had less than $4 a day, according to a survey conducted by the World Bank. (Stiglitz 2003, 153)

> The decline in GDP was strongly associated with the "mortality crisis" and "suicide epidemic explained by the macroeconomic instability." (Brainerd 2001, 1007)

A steep decline in life expectancy was observed in 1992—the year immediately after the USSR ceased to exist. In 2009, the *Lancet*, a British medical journal, published an article arguing that the clear culprit for the "drop, of fully five years in male life expectancy between 1991 and 1994" was the "shock therapy" of market reforms. It argued that the "advocates of free-market economics . . . ignored the human costs of the policies they were promoting. These included unemployment and human misery, leading to early death. In effect, mass privatisation was mass murder" (Mass Murder 2009).

As a result of the chaotic transformations of the 1990s, Russians came to associate "democracy" and "freedom" not only with "poverty" and "degradation" (MacKinnon 2007), but with lawlessness as well. As Timothy Snyder (2018) put it, "Wild privatization was not at all the same thing as a market economy, at least as conventionally understood. Markets require the rule of law, which was the most demanding aspect of the post-Soviet transformation" (43). Russian people would be unlikely to forget that the Russian parliament, which wanted to stop disastrous "liberalization," was stormed with tanks on Yeltsin's order and shelled until in ruins. The declaration of a state of emergency allowed a rapid shutting up of any oppositional voices that challenged the "reforms":

> Under a decree following the state of emergency that Mr Yeltsin imposed on Sunday, the National Salvation Front, the Russian Communist Party, the United Front of Workers and the Union of Officers were banned, while Pravda, the former organ of the Soviet Communist Party, and a number of other papers were told to cease publication. An overnight curfew was also imposed throughout Moscow. (Steele and Hearst 1993)

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 46 09-10-2018 14:06:12

Having used the conflict with parliament as a justification for strengthening presidential power, Yeltsin's team was in position to compromise the 1996 election to hand him another presidential term, during which millions of Russians lost all their savings due to state default. A particular source of outrage was that "The millions about to lose their deposits were given no warning and no scheme was thought up to insure them"; Yeltsin's "reformers" warned only oligarchs, inviting them one by one, to alert (Judah 2013, 25). The morning after the default, the "ordinary" people of Russia woke up completely destitute and without hope for a better future.

As many members of the anti-Putin opposition of the 2000s were associated with Yeltsin's rule in the 1990s, it is no wonder that many Russian people took Putin's side over the opposition. Although Putin's ascendance to power was sanctioned by Yeltsin, who approved him as a successor, the Russian people did not associate their president with Yeltsin's liberal economic reforms. During his first term in office, Putin enjoyed genuine popularity among the majority of Russians who were grateful for economic stabilization, increasing salaries and pensions, and simply for the fact that wages were paid on time again—something that had not happened since perestroika times. When Putin came to power, the country was on the brink of war and regional disintegration; the majority of Russians believe it was Putin who stopped the country from falling apart and ensured its revival. Russia's population generally welcomed the politics of nationalizing the oil industry not only because it allowed more resources to be allocated for healthcare, education, and essential public services, but also because "it was considered criminal, even absurd, that a bunch of businessmen could have been handed over control of the country's natural resources" (Judah 2013, 43). Although critical voices were persistent in arguing that, through nationalization, one set of oligarchs would simply replace another as the nationalized resources were used to enrich Putin's "inner circle of friends" (Dawisha 2014), their view never gained traction. Part of the issue was the image of the opposition in the eyes of millions of Russians: no matter how correctly it might have pointed to the deficiencies of Putin's system of power, the reputation that Russia's liberal reformers had gained during the 1990s worked against them.

2011–2013: RUSSIA WITHOUT PUTIN!

In terms of the lack of mass support, the situation had not changed much by the advent of the next decade, when another huge wave of anti-Putin protests—"For Fair Elections!"—rose up in Russia. The manifestations were against the flawed Duma elections of 2011, which were "supposed to have delivered a resounding victory for United Russia in order to pave the way

for Putin's return in the March 2012 presidential vote" (Judah 2013, 232). According to oppositional sources of information, to ensure victory for the party in power, local authorities across the country resorted to extreme measures: students in state dormitories and state employees were "stimulated" to "vote correctly" through the promises of various social privileges or the threats of losing them (URA.ru). The refusal of Russian authorities to register oppositional parties, the banning of election ads by opponents (Kazan 2011), cyberattacks against independent media (Voting. Russian Style 2011), misuse of absentee slips, and massive ballot stuffing became the hallmarks of this campaign (Russia Election 2011). Despite all these "measures," however, United Russia claimed only 49 percent of the ballots from the Duma vote, down from 64 percent in 2007 (Ria News 2011). In disputing the official results, independent observers argued that the real figure could be as low as 28 percent (Khodorkovsky 2011).

According to a national opinion poll conducted in the aftermath of the elections, up to 37 percent of respondents agreed with the opposition that the results had been unfair (Levada-Center 2012a). Answering the question "Do you agree that 'United Russia is a party of crooks and thieves' [an oppositional slogan]?", 38 percent of Levada-Center respondents answered positively, and 22 percent were not sure (Levada-Center 2012e). Up to 43 percent of the respondents supported the actions of the protesters. However, only 28 percent believed the protests could bring any positive result, as 58 percent did not trust any of the protest leaders, (26 percent had difficulty answering this question) and 57 percent believed the opposition had no well-elaborated program of action (23 percent were not sure) (Levada-Center 2012f). At least partially, this lack of trust in the opposition can explain why, when the harassment and prosecution of its activists reached full strength, only 27 percent of Levada-Center (2012b, 2012c) respondents considered these actions "political repression" and only 14 percent believed that political prosecution could affect them personally (Levada-Center 2012e).

Remarkably, despite broadening skepticism regarding the reliability of election results and the trustworthiness of the party in power, Putin's personal approval rating remained high—61 percent. Although much lower than his 83 percent approval in 2008 following the war in Georgia (Barry 2011), it still towered above the standing of any other political figure or party in the country. Nonetheless, the opposition fiercely challenged Putin's decision to "return" to the presidential chair.[12] For some of the oppositional activists, his new term signified the advent of "long years of Brezhnev-style stagnation" (Matthews 2011); others claimed that the results of the presidential elections were "a fakery" that had produced "a fictional majority" necessary for a symbolic victory in the first round (Snyder 2018, 49). The day before Putin's inauguration on May 7, 2012, Moscow was the site of a 20,000-strong

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 48 09-10-2018 14:06:13

manifestation that turned violent as protesters hurled bottles and smoke bombs at the police just outside the Kremlin walls; the police reported that twenty officers had been injured (Barry and Schwirtz 2012). More than 250 people were detained, including the main figures of the protests—Alexei Navalny, Sergei Udaltsov, and Boris Nemtsov (Elder 2012).

The opposition held protests under the slogan "Russia without Putin" until 2013, when it finally became clear that this call was unable to gain popular support. The results of a national poll conducted in September 2012 showed that "only 19% [of respondents] support the slogan 'Putin needs to go'; 61% do not like it (this figure has not changed since December [2011])" (Levada-Center 2012d). The Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine of 2013–2014 and the war in the Donbas that followed only deepened the gulf between the opposition and the majority of Russians supporting the president. In the spring of 2014, after Crimea was annexed by Russia, Putin's rating "skyrocketed," reaching 82 percent (Sokolov 2014). It climbed even higher from there, hitting 87 percent in August 2014 (BBC 2014). Putin's approval rating was rising despite the sanctions of the West accusing Russia of playing a central role in stirring the crisis in Ukraine. Despite ever-increasing economic consequences, the sanctions did not negatively affect the attitude of Russians toward their president.

At the same time, in July 2014, the Levada-Center registered a record low in the desire to protest: "Only 9% of Russian citizens would participate in protests with political demands; 15% with economic ones. Accordingly, 83% and 78% would not" (Levada-Center 2014b). One-third of respondents approved of the state's campaign against the "fifth column"—those criticizing the Kremlin's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis as it supported Ukrainian separatists and provided them with weapons and qualified personnel (This is How Russia's Intervention 2014). Experts explained this public mood as the effect of state propaganda: "The effect of the besieged fortress, the image of which propaganda creates. 'Enemies are everywhere; we must unite with the leader'" (Germonenko and Gorbachev 2014). For those who had accepted this propagandistic narrative, protesting against the government while it was "under siege" may indeed have felt like treason. However, a revolution transforming into a civil conflict (albeit one supported by Russia) could well be alarming for people even without propaganda: one should not forget that millions of Russians have relatives in Ukraine (especially in its eastern part) and receive information from them directly.

Failing to mobilize nationwide popular support, the protests waned. The arrest in July 2013 of Navalny, first sentenced to five years in prison for embezzlement (Elder 2013) but later placed under house arrest (Russia Opposition Leader 2014), denoted the beginning of a prolonged period of apathy and demoralization. Oppositional meetings against the war in Ukraine

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 49 09-10-2018 14:06:13

and in memory of Boris Nemtsov, assassinated on February 27, 2015, did not lead to the formation of mass protest movements. This period of relative calm lasted until the spring of 2017, when "Russia's new protest generation" led by Navalny came to the national stage (Dobrokhotov 2017).

2017: NEW PROTESTS, OLD PROBLEMS

In March 2017, Navalny and his Anti-Corruption Foundation launched the campaign "He Is Not Dimon to You," accusing Dmitry Medvedev, the prime minister and former president of Russia, of amassing a property empire through various forms of corruption. The video, "which alleges that Medvedev has amassed a collection of luxury mansions, yachts and vineyards, has been watched on YouTube more than 11 million times" (Walker and Luhn 2017). On March 26, Navalny organized a series of marches demanding from authorities an answer to the facts presented in the film; over 60,000 people in more than eighty cities joined the rallies (Volkov 2017). Local authorities allowed many of the manifestations, but in seventeen cities they were prohibited (Higgins 2017). In Moscow, the police department released a statement warning that the rally was illegal and urging people not to attend, but several thousand showed up anyway: "Police said about 7,000 people attended the Moscow rally on Sunday, though the real number may have been much higher" (Walker and Luhn 2017). More than a thousand protesters were detained in Moscow and St. Petersburg, with Navalny among those taken into custody (Volkov 2017).

Although the overall turnout for Navalny's anti-corruption marches could not match the numbers of demonstrators in 2011–2013 (Barisheva 2017), the new protests had at least one important advantage compared to the previous marches in the name of liberalization: for the first time in years, the oppositional rallies were nationwide.

> Navalny visits regions actively, meets supporters, answers questions, and demonstrates openness and proximity to people. For those who are used to seeing federal politicians only on TV, these meetings are interesting. People who hold democratic views, especially in the regions, are hungry for the attention of political leaders, and the active campaign of Navalny fills this vacuum. (Volkov 2017)

In comparison to previous years, this was a breakthrough. But in terms of mass mobilization, the outlook was no better than that of 2006–2007 or 2011–2013. According to a national poll conducted by the Levada-Center in the aftermath of Navalny's protests of March 2017, only 38 percent of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 50 09-10-2018 14:06:13

respondents approved of the actions of Navalny's followers, while 39 percent disapproved and 23 percent were not sure. Moreover, 28 percent believed Navalny had been acting in the interests of the West, and only 12 percent assumed his struggles were in Russia's own interests (Levada-Center 2017). In other words, despite his emphasis not on political freedoms but on corruption—a persistent concern for all the citizens of Russia—Navalny still failed to command the support of the majority of the country's population.

The primary explanation put forward by the opposition was familiar: propaganda. Indeed, starting from the dissenters' marches of 2006–2008, the state propaganda machine has habitually portrayed the protesters striving for social justice as "criminals," "deviants," and "agents of the West" (Volkov 2015b); later, in 2011–2013, they came to be labeled "mink coats,"[13] "creacli[14] detached from people's needs, and "the agents of the [US] State Department" (Volkov 2018). Suffice it to recall that Putin dubbed protesters wearing white ribbons—the symbol of the movement for fair elections—"as agents of the west, attending useless demonstrations with condoms pinned to their chests as they sought the downfall of the motherland" (Elder 2011). Since the majority of Russia's population was getting news from television controlled by the state, members of the opposition assumed that Putin's supporters, unwilling or unable to access alternative sources of information, were receiving exclusively a distorted picture of reality, which prevented them from recognizing the truth.

However, as Levada-Center expert Denis Volkov claims, propaganda is only part of the issue. In his view, "People do not see an alternative to the Russian power not because this alternative is not shown on TV but because nobody has formulated it so far" (Volkov 2016). Volkov is not alone in his criticism of the opposition. As one of the NGO activists interviewed by Gabowitsch (2017) put it,

> Navalny more or less succeeds in capturing his audience's attention, but that is a purely local phenomenon. When he shouts: "Who is going to take power?" . . . that is totally ludicrous, because, as we have seen, nobody is willing to go and take power; this is a populist rhetoric that only works there [at mass rallies]. It works precisely because, it seems to me, Navalny has very serious difficulties with his real platform. (112)

Some of Gabowitsch's (2017) interviewees called Navalny a "political clown" engaged in "pure political populism" (113), while others "refuse[d] to go public with their criticism" because "doing so publicly would provide the Kremlin with additional arguments" (113). In other words, even without state propaganda, Navalny's image fails to inspire trust among many whose politics might otherwise have led to support for him. His self-identification

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 51 09-10-2018 14:06:13

as *both* liberal democrat *and* ethnic Russian nationalist does not help. By participating regularly in Russian marches and other nationalistic activities, Navalny makes it difficult for many even in the liberal camp—let alone the broader population—to rally behind him.

While laying the blame exclusively on propaganda, oppositional leaders fail to acknowledge their own failures to address the internal contradictions of the opposition and work out a program of post-protest actions that would appeal to the general population of Russia:

> Today, the majority of the population hardly understand the motives of the oppositional public and its leaders. According to polls, the strikes of truckers, teachers, doctors, and workers generate sympathy among the majority of Russian citizens (70% of those who knew about these protest actions were ready to support them), while oppositional protests in support of Ukraine, marches in the memory of Nemtsov, and Navalny's actions do not. (Volkov 2018)

This observation makes even more sense given that the government, in at least some cases, has proven responsive to people's basic demands, as it was following the anti-monetarization outcry. The protests "were not entirely unsuccessful. . . . Parts of the reforms were reworked, and eventually many beneficiaries were given the option of choosing between monetary and material benefits" (Gabowitsch 2017, 129). If the government already makes accommodations in such matters, why join an opposition movement against it?

Judah (2013) agrees. In his view, what the opposition has systematically failed to acknowledge is their distance from the people whose interests they ostensibly represent:

> The Moscow elites today are as different from Russians as the tsarist elites of St. Petersburg, who spoke in a pretentious pidgin French, took the waters in Baden-Baden and tried to marry into the English aristocracy. This has revived a nineteenth-century dialectic between the intelligentsia and the masses. They speak in the name of the people they are cut off from and do not know; they claim to know what is the best for them but actually unnerve these same classes. This leaves them powerless and anguished. (251)
>
> You get a sense from their blogs and conversations that what these "creative classes" really want is to turn the whole of Moscow into an ersatz London (or Shoreditch), with bicycle lanes and pedestrianized streets, which has sprung up in the cafes they frequent (Bar John Donne, Café Jan-Jak). They do not want to go out like the Bolsheviks, to convert the people. (252)
>
> They couldn't overcome the class and regional gulfs . . . . These mean broken links between classes, which each distrust the other as "backward" or

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 52 09-10-2018 14:06:13

> "treacherous." The workers of the tank factories in the Urals disdain the e-workers of Moscow, just as much as the latter look down on these grubby factory hands. (253)

According to this view, the liberal opposition striving for political freedom and reform instead of Putin's "stagnation" had little to offer the millions of their compatriots for whom the "stagnation" of Brezhnev's times signified much more pleasant things than the "democratic reforms" of the 1990s.

However, the lack of a well-elaborated program is only one side of the problem. Another is that many supporters of oppositional movements not only are poorly equipped to find common language with a bigger Russia, but also have been unwilling to try because they consider Putin's supporters to be "backward" people whose opinions do not really matter: "The opposition counter-elite reacted to defeat childishly. They simply insisted that all those who supported Putin were the least dynamic, most backward and ill-informed parts of society" (Judah 2013, 254). Refusing to understand why the majority supports those in power, opposition activists have come to treat these people with contempt: "In the oppositional milieu, it is normal to call contemptuously the majority supporting Putin as 'koloradi,'[15] 'vatniki,' or 'vata'"[16] (Volkov 2015b). As Volkov put it,

> When it turns out that the activists' ideas about "people" are disconnected from reality, it is much easier to take offense at the population, and to announce opinion polls fake. But, refusing to accept the real state of affairs, the opposition will always lose to those in power, who are so good at manipulating popular opinion exactly because they study it. Similar attitudes toward the majority of the population already proved their bankruptcy in the second part of the 19th century, when the Narodniki movement[17] failed because of its inadequate ideas about the interests of Russian peasants. (Volkov 2015b)

In Volkov's view (2015a), if the opposition does not overcome this contempt for the majority, it will always remain marginal. It is difficult not to agree with this observation. Moreover, the problem with the liberal opposition's scornful attitude toward Russia's population goes beyond political strategy and effective mass mobilization against state abuses of power; it is also deeply anti-democratic and detrimental to societal peace. I elaborate on this in more detail in the chapters that follow.

Two centuries after the Decembrist uprising, Russian revolutionaries striving for liberalization are still "a narrow group" that is "very far removed from the people" (Lenin 1955, 11) but nonetheless holds out hope that its efforts are not in vain. As the Decembrists were believed to have "awakened Herzen,"[18] the participants of the marches of millions believe they have awakened what many observers call today "Russia's new protest generation" (Dobrokhotov

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 53 09-10-2018 14:06:13

2017). But is this generation really "new"? Will the representatives of this generation form a qualitatively new protest attractive for the majority of people living in the Russian state? Will they be able to break out of their marginal position? My analysis of the oppositional discourse presented in the following chapters reveals substantial grounds for doubt on such questions.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, I focus only on the biggest and most popular protest movements in the first decades of this century, leaving out numerous other protests in Russia during these years.

2. In using the umbrella term "opposition," I am referring to the collective identity of all the protesters gathered within the movement: all political, grassroots, and advocacy groups. Despite numerous internal differences, tensions, and contradictions, they were united equivalentially as "dissenters" for the purposes of these marches. The liberal camp (uniting different liberal politicians) and its leader, Garry Kasparov—the organizers of the coalition—came to represent the "impossible but necessary totality" of this movement, to invoke Laclau's phrase. I use the signifier "opposition" in a similar way throughout the chapter.

3. Boris Berezovsky was a Russian oligarch who made his fortune in the 1990s. Maintaining control over the main Russian television channel, Channel One, he was at the height of his power in the later Yeltsin years. Following the presidential elections of 2000, Berezovsky joined the opposition to Putin and soon had to immigrate to the United Kingdom. On March 23, 2013, he was found dead at his Sunninghill home.

4. Vladimir Gusinsky is a media tycoon who made his fortune during perestroika and the 1990s, when he built his media empire "Media-Most," which criticized Russia's politics in Chechnya and opposed Putin's presidency. Accused of fraud and briefly jailed, Gusinsky left Russia in 2000.

5. "Dubrovka" refers to the Moscow theater hostage crisis. On October 23, 2002, armed militants, demanding the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya, seized the crowded Dubrovka Theatre. As a result of the siege and the storming of the building by Russian security forces, 204 of the 850 people taken as hostages were killed.

6. On September 1, 2004, a group of armed militants demanding the recognition of the independence of Chechnya occupied a school in the town of Beslan, North Ossetia. Some 1,100 people including 777 children were taken as hostages. The siege and ensuing battle with Russian security forces claimed 334 lives, including 186 children.

7. Some other Russian cities also held dissenters' marches, but they did not attract large numbers of participants.

8. United Russia is the ruling political party of the Russian Federation, the backbone of Putin's "power vertical." All state bureaucrats are members of UR.

9. The Levada-Center is an independent sociological and polling organization. As a beneficiary of research funding from abroad, the center was required in 2016 to register as a foreign agent, which prevented it from doing work related to any election campaign.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 54 09-10-2018 14:06:13

10. Many people did not know about the manifestations, as state-controlled television either ignored them completely or only mentioned them briefly.

11. Mikhail Khodorkovsky is a former oligarch and once the wealthiest man in Russia. In the mid-1990s, he accumulated wealth by obtaining, through privatization of state assets, control of a number of Siberian oil fields unified under the name Yukos. In October 2003, he was arrested, charged with fraud, and later imprisoned. Following his release on December 20, 2013, Khodorkovsky left Russia.

12. Putin ruled as president from 2000 to 2008 before handing the presidency to his chosen successor, Dmitry Medvedev, in order to observe a law banning a third consecutive term. In 2012, Putin was free to run again for a newly extended term of six years.

13. State propaganda put excessive focus on the expensive clothes of well-to-do protesters to highlight the gulf between the interests of their participants and the ordinary people of Russia.

14. "Creacli" (креаклы), an abbreviation for the "creative-class," was how many anti-Putin activists labeled themselves. However, in the representation of state propaganda, this term acquired a negative meaning.

15. "Kolorad" (колорад) is a word originally denoting Colorado potato-eating insects distinctive for their bright orange-and-black stripes. Because their colors are reminiscent of the orange-and-black St. George ribbon, a symbol of Russian military glory, the term came to denote Putin's supporters.

16. The original meaning of "vatnik" (ватник) is a warm Russian jacket filled with cotton ("vata"—вата). In liberal discourse, the term came to denote Putin's supporters because their heads were imagined to be "filled with cotton."

17. *Narodniki* was a political movement against tsarism in the second part of the nineteenth century. The term "narodniki" is derived from "narod" (people). The members of the movement, whose idea was to liberate Russia from autocracy, were predominantly wealthy people.

18. Alexander Herzen (1812–1870) was a Russian revolutionary writer, the "father of Russian socialism," known for his struggle against the political oppression under Nicholas I.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 55 09-10-2018 14:06:13

Chapter 5

White Ribbons and the Echo in the Dark*

ECHO OF MOSCOW

As I mentioned in chapter 1, in the aftermath of Russia's 2012 presidential elections, I analyzed the discourse of anti-Putin activists through their speeches on *Echo of Moscow*—a Russian independent radio station that serves as an important node in the network of communication among those who struggle for democracy against Vladimir Putin's authoritarianism. Since Gorbachev's perestroika, the radio station *Echo of Moscow* (hereafter, *Echo*) has been seen as a flagship of independent quality journalism in Russia. "Echo in the dark"—this is how David Remnick from the *New Yorker* refers to *Echo*, pointing out that "in the authoritarian ecosystem of Vladimir Putin, *Echo of Moscow* is one of the last of an endangered species, a dodo that still roams the earth" (2008). What makes *Echo*, in the eyes of Remnick and numerous other observers, "the last of an endangered species" is its editorial independence and history of antagonistic relations with the Kremlin.

One of the most famous conflicts happened in 2011, when *Echo* provided extensive coverage of mass anti-Putin protests that came as a result of "massive fraud and ballot box stuffing" during Russia's parliamentary elections (Loiko 2012). The tension between the radio station and the Kremlin culminated at one of Putin's regular meetings with editors-in-chief of leading media, where the president of Russia told Alexei Venediktov, chief editor of *Echo*: "You pour diarrhoea over me day and night" (Putin Accuses 2012). Putin also accused *Echo* of serving the interests of foreign states.

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* The first section of this chapter is a modified version of the article "On the Dichotomy of Corporate vs. Alternative Journalism: OWS as Constructed by Echo of Moscow," published in *International Journal of Communication*, 2014, Volume 8, pp. 1–20.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 57 09-10-2018 14:06:13

Benjamin Bidder, a *Spiegel* correspondent, says there are at least two major explanations for *Echo*'s editorial independence, which is unique for Putin's Russia: "The Kremlin can point to *Echo* whenever countries in the West criticize press freedoms in Russia. Second, even as the station is held in high regard by the country's intelligentsia, it has little influence over the voting masses" (Bidder 2012). Scott Shane (2012) from the *New York Times* agrees: "Mr. Putin devised a new model of media management . . . providing a steam valve to the intelligentsia and a display of tolerance to foreign critics." This outlook is also supported by academics: "Some media outlets [in Russia] may be more critical, as they have a news agenda that differs from that of the official media. Such media serve the informational needs of a very narrow group of socially active people" (Kiria 2012, 456). According to the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, Russian bloggers—one of the most politically active populations within Russian society—"demonstrate a slight preference for more independent, foreign, and even oppositional news sources than Russian news sources overall. Echo Mosckvy [Echo of Moscow] for instance is ranked 6th among bloggers and 20th among Internet users" (Etling et al. 2010, 29).

As evidenced in this brief review, *Echo* enjoys the reputation of a medium that acts as an important node in a network of communication among socially active publics striving for the democratization of Russian society: *Echo of Moscow* is, in the words of Venediktov when speaking to the *New Yorker*, "a radio of influence, rather than a mass radio station" (Remnick 2008). *Echo* prides itself on being an alternative news outlet that frames reality for selective, non-mass, and thinking publics who are interested in the democratization of Russian society.

Echo is a closed joint-stock company. The controlling interest is held by Gazprom state corporation, but Alexei Venediktov argues that state ownership does not affect the radio station's editorial policy (Venediktov 2018).

"US" VS. "THEM": *ECHO*'S FRAMING OF PUTIN SUPPORTERS

I analyzed qualitatively *Echo*'s programming about the presidential election that aired between March 5 and March 12, 2012—the week immediately following the election, during which the most emotional discussions of the voting results took place. Within this time frame, *Echo* broadcast forty-seven programs on the election results. Of these, nine programs focused predominantly on technologies of election manipulation, while thirty-eight also discussed Putin's supporters as a factor of his victory. I qualitatively analyzed the content of these thirty-eight programs, in which seventy-four people—fifty-five

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 58 09-10-2018 14:06:13

Echo guests and nineteen hosts—expressed opinions. For the purposes of this analysis, I treated both the guests and hosts of *Echo* as opinion leaders whose articulations had potential to influence *Echo*'s democratically minded audience. My analysis showed that seventy of seventy-four participants of these discussions addressed Putin's supporters in the hierarchical terms of uniprogressive imagination—as people who were not yet developed enough to understand and support the "progressive" aspirations of the opposition.

Although, as I mentioned earlier, *Echo*'s hosts and guests spoke with varying degrees of complexity, and the discourse produced by them was not totally homogeneous, it was possible to trace a similar implicit assumption of the uniprogressive scale of development as the primary referent in their discursive constructions. I would like to underline once again: Rather than unifying activists with a uniprogressive imaginary into a homogeneous force, I try to draw attention to the similar effects of their discourse stemming from the choice to define their relationship to others in hierarchical terms. It is in this sense that I use the umbrella term "activists with a uniprogressive imaginary/agenda" to denote advocates for a universal global project under the leadership of the West, in which modernization and democratization are equated with Westernization. This is a very important point that applies to all the case studies I discuss in this book.

Underdeveloped "Theydom"

John Hartley (1996) used the terms *wedom* and *theydom* when analyzing discourses from the French Revolution. Radical journalists of the period, Hartley found, had lumped together into a *theydom* "anyone or any group which seeks to control, corrupt, thwart or interfere with the people" (Hartley 1996, 89). As is seen from the examples on *Echo*, its speakers imagined a *theydom* comprising not only those who control and corrupt people but also the "controlled" and "corrupted" (as they imagined it) general population of Russia.

One of the nodal points of uniprogressive discourse, as mentioned earlier, is the presentation of people opposing Westernization as intellectually underdeveloped "barbarians" unable to grasp the value of uniprogressive historical propositions—envisioned as a universalized global process of development with no alternative paths—or as cowed masses scared of "progressive" changes. As my analysis of *Echo*'s discussions of the protests shows, the idea of intellectual underdevelopment was expressed in different ways (through the activation of different links between different signifiers), but consistent throughout was the presentation of those opposing Westernization (Putin's supporters) as inferior to their opponents.

Often, the idea of inferiority was expressed through activating links between "Putin's supporters" and signifiers such as "yesterday," "past,"

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 59 09-10-2018 14:06:13

"old," and "Soviet." United equivalentially, these terms came to denote the "backwardness" of Putin's followers and the "outdatedness" of their beliefs. At the same time, another equivalential chain uniting such signs as "young," "progressive," "modern," "European," "Western," and "liberal," were linked to anti-Putin "activists" striving for unidirectional historical change. Excerpts from an interview with Dmitry Muratov, the editor-in-chief of *Novaya Gazeta,* provide a good illustration of this Manichean division:

> I strongly object to the denigration of the people who are in the majority today [Putin's supporters]. However, we have two nations, indeed. There is a nation that is, in the best possible sense, yesterday's, older, nation. And there is a nation of today. Today's people do not vote for Putin. Yesterday's people support him. Soviet people . . . support Vladimir Vladimirovich. Modern people, European people of our country, do not vote for him. The nation of TV votes for Putin. The nation of the Internet does not vote for him. (Muratov 2012)

As is evident from this quote, Muratov drew a strict dividing line between Putin's supporters and his opponents. The former was imagined as "the nation" of the obsolete, with the latter being "the nation" of the modern; the former as Soviet, the latter as European (where European is equated to the modern); the former as "the nation of TV," and the latter as "the nation of the Internet." Putin's supporters were signified with the meaning of backwardness and conservatism; those opposing him were presented as open to new propositions, capable of self-reflection and generating unconventional visions.

What is especially interesting in Muratov's articulation is the combination of his "strong objection" against the "denigration" of Putin's supporters with his presentation of them as "yesterday's people" in "the best possible sense." The "best possible sense" of this construction has a direct connection to the limits of the uniprogressive imagination, as discussed in previous chapters. According to its logic, the "outdated" forms of human organization are destined to sink into oblivion together with the people "of the past"—there is no offense and no denigration in this "natural order of things." This is just "normal," and this is the "objectivity" of "history": How can one be offended by "the objective" and "the natural"? Within the limits of the possible, as prescribed by the uniprogressive imaginary, those supporting Putin (and thus opposing Westernization) look so "naturally" backward and outdated that the construction "yesterday's people in the best possible sense" appears quite reasonable.

The possibility of imagining Putin's supporters not as "yesterday's people" but people "of today" holding alternative views was beyond the limits of the thinkable as set by the unidirectional vision of historical development in universal terms. Within this frame of reference for the social, it is not feasible

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 60 09-10-2018 14:06:13

to imagine modern individuals (let alone intellectuals) supporting "the obsolete." This is why Muratov was so confident that the best representatives of Russian society were among those protesting against Putin, as implied by another of his statements: "Putin will need to take into consideration the voices of the intellectual, real, smart, and educated estate" (Muratov 2012). In Muratov's view, not only do those opposing Putin represent "the people of today" and "the people of the Internet," they also stand for all the people of Russia who are educated, smart, intelligent, and, thus, "real."

According to many of *Echo*'s speakers, the basic motive behind support for Putin by his followers was their fear of changes, which was especially highlighted with respect to elderly people. This is how the writer Sergei Shargunov (2012) presented the issue: "The majority of pensioners voted [for Putin] out of fear, because they had lived through miserable times in the past. Now, they have their kopecks. Thank God, there is electricity and water. They just don't want anything worse to happen." It is unclear how Shargunov had come to his conclusion about the "majority of pensioners" voting "out of fear," but it is obvious that he lumped together millions of Russian elderly people of varying ages, social and educational backgrounds, ethnic origins, and so on for the convenience of making an argument through the extreme simplification of the social. What united these millions, in Shargunov's view, was nothing but fear, the fear of losing "kopecks" and other material components of their miserable security like electricity and water.

But why were they afraid of losing these basic, everyday comforts? The only reason, in Shargunov's view, was state propaganda disseminating "horror stories" through TV: "Putin's voters, whose numbers were really large and whom *I respect as all other fellow citizens*, often voted not for Putin himself but because they succumbed to the horror stories that had been launched primarily through TV" (2012, emphasis added). What this and numerous similar constructions implied was that Putin's voters, in contrast to those opposing him, were unable to apply any sort of critical thinking to Russian state propaganda. In line with mass-media theories of the 1930s, propagandistic messages were imagined by *Echo*'s speakers as "magic bullets" shot from "media guns" directly into the heads of Putin's supporters, killing rational thought (Sproule 1989). For reasons left undiscussed by *Echo*'s speakers, the magic bullets of Russian propaganda somehow posed no threat to the anti-Putin opposition.

It is also noteworthy that, despite Shargunov's belief that the majority of voters supported Putin out of fear, he nevertheless "respected" them "as all other fellow citizens." As in the previous case with Muratov, who argued against the denigration of Putin's followers while actually denigrating them, it is difficult to take the implied combination of "respect for voting out of fear" as reasonable, if "respect" is defined as "a feeling of deep admiration for

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 61 09-10-2018 14:06:13

someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements" (Oxford Dictionary n.d.). Obviously, Shargunov's "respect" toward Putin's adherents is of a different nature; it only makes sense if defined as "due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of *others*" (Oxford Dictionary n.d, emphasis added). Indeed, it is possible to have due regard for the "fears" of Putin's followers by "understanding" them—similar to how moderns "understand" the religious rituals of "primitive" tribesmen trying to appease their gods. However, there is a significant difference between the two kinds of "respect" that Shargunov expressed toward Putin's proponents and opponents. "These people [Putin's opponents] are not afraid . . . . They understand and value the word 'freedom,'"—this is how Shargunov assesses activists for democratization. What we observe in this construction is admiration for their sense of freedom and their readiness to stand for human and civil rights. This "respect" differs radically from the "respect" Shargunov expressed toward Putin's supporters, which was constructed in terms of "lacking"—they were imagined as lacking freedom, dignity, self-respect, and other highly cherished values of Western modernity defined in its own terms.

A totally different kind of respect toward their political opponents would have been demonstrated if Muratov, Shargunov, and other *Echo*'s speakers had tried to imagine Putin's supporters not as a homogeneous mass of scared and demoralized creatures but as thinking individuals with autonomy in their judgments and justifications for their political choices. This option was not even considered, which is not surprising given that Putin's ordinary supporters (by "ordinary" I mean not the members of "knowledge class"—see chapter 2) never spoke on *Echo* for themselves. At best, *Echo*'s commentators presented the positions of their "neighbors" or occasional acquaintances from the ranks of "ordinary" people: "My neighbors are modest and obedient state employees" (Larina 2012). However, these "neighbors" were never present in *Echo*'s studio. Their opinions were always represented by *Echo*'s guests who spoke on their behalf from the privileged position of a well-paid, well-fed intellectual, "a wise elder for the whole community," as Hartley (1992b, 209) sarcastically put it. Because the *Echo*'s speakers did not make attempts to understand the reasoning behind the political behavior of pro-Putin "others," the result was predictable: "Dammit, we *ought* to have won . . . but we didn't, so *they* must've manipulated the masses" (Hartley 1992b, 26).

Of the millions casting their ballots in Putin's favor, only those who were scared, intimidated, and corrupted were on the radars of *Echo*'s speakers; all others were out of sight. In their representations, Putin's supporters looked always the same: They were afraid to lose their miserable salaries or pensions, they were totally dependent on the state system of trusteeship, and they could not risk losing their petty security. Socially worthless, they simply could not provide themselves with any other means of survival. According

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 62 09-10-2018 14:06:13

to *Echo*'s commentators, many of these poor people tried to earn "kopecks" by participating in electoral forgeries organized by those in power. This is how Yevgeny Kiselyov and Ksenia Sobchak, two famous TV personalities, described people they believed guilty of taking part in election fraud:

> It turned out that these were miserable destitute muzhiks from a plant where they are not even paid. Such a dead local industrial enterprise . . . . For these people, any chance to earn several hundred rubles is an opportunity. (Kiselyov 2012)

> I saw that they were ashamed, that they realized they participated in a disgraceful affair. When journalists left, she [an electoral observer] looked at me angrily and said: "What should I have done? Don't you understand that I am a working mother, I have two children?" . . . People are scared. (Sobchak 2012)

By focusing their attention on intimidated, scared, and corrupted voters, the authors of these and similar statements systematically omitted other Russians: those who were not scared, who did not receive money for their electoral support, who were not affected by the "magic bullet" of Russian propaganda, and who had informed judgments on why they supported Putin rather than his opponents. As a result of this systematic omission, the camp of Putin's supporters appeared as a homogeneous mass of amoral and/or scared people who were willing to trade their civil rights for a paltry measure of material comfort.

Some of *Echo*'s speakers especially emphasized the idea that Putin supporters had been bought for ridiculously small sums of money, highlighting the cheapness of those who sold their political rights and dignity for kopecks. Indeed, an offer of several hundred rubles is far from big money, especially for such well-to-do public figures as Kiselyov, Sobchak, or Yevgenia Albats—the chief editor of the *New Times*, who reported her impressions of a Putin rally in the following way:

> There were many people there, and there were many women there who seemed not to have any reason to rush home . . . . Some of them were paid 400 rubles, others 500 or 750 . . . . And then they went to Manezhnaya to celebrate for 400 rubles the victory of the beloved comrade Putin. (Albats 2012)

In addition to elements I have mentioned earlier—the exclusive focus on those among Putin's adherents who were paid for their support (I take this claim at face value, assuming that some people could really do this), the emphasis on small sums of money, and the disparaging reference to Soviet times (it was customary to address CPSU party leaders as "beloved comrades")—Albats' articulation is interesting in another respect as well. Her comment on

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 63 09-10-2018 14:06:13

rallying women "who seemed not to have any reason to rush home" clearly contrasted these women against Albats herself, as she too was a woman in the same place at the same time, seemingly without any reason to rush home. The meaning of the constructed difference was suggestive: Albats positioned herself as a free individual following her own choice, while the women under her progressive gaze, against whom Albats' "progressiveness" was actually constructed, belonged to an unthinking mob and should not be in squares but in kitchens (more on this in the next chapter).

Backward Russia

Russia's "backwardness," as measured on the uniprogressive scale of historical development, was discursively constructed through linking the signifier "Russia" with signs related to its historical "past": "empire," "Stalin," "USSR," and so on. United equivalentially in the articulations of *Echo*'s hosts and guests, these signifiers came to denote Russia's lagging development and inability to catch up with modernity and civilization (understood in strictly Westernized terms). This is how journalist Leonid Mlechin (2012) articulated the linkage: "In a sense, Stalin's heritage—Soviet heritage—exists in our life. . . . Basically, Soviet institutions have been preserved . . . . In a sense, the Soviet person has survived and is reproduced—a specific worldview with its norms, morality, and mentality." If taken as real, multi-dimensional social and historical constructs existing in time and space, "Soviet institutions" can hardly be imagined to had been preserved in the Russia of 2012 given that, since perestroika, the country had undergone profound political and economic transformations. Suffice it to say that the massive privatization of hitherto collective property and the capitalization of all aspects of Russian life had taken place. The economic transformations had been intertwined with major transmutations of Russia's general "structure of feeling" (Williams 2001)—its social, cultural, and political norms. Linking contemporary Russia to the USSR could only be part of an ongoing attempt to construct Russia's abnormal historical "backwardness" and the necessity of "normalizing" it—that is, bringing it up to the "norm."

In Mlechin's view, the state of Russia's social "pathology" was about its ahistorical "sovok" condition, which manifested itself not only in "norms, morality, and mentality," but also in people's ostensible belief that "they exist to serve power" and "power comes from God" (Mlechin 2012). The latter assumption can hardly be logically united with the "Soviet condition," since, as is well known, religion in the USSR was not held in high esteem. The linkage between "Russia" and a popular notion that "power comes from God" obviously refers to Russia's pre-Soviet imperial condition. As mentioned in chapter 2, Europeans abandoned the idea of power coming from God in

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 64 09-10-2018 14:06:13

the course of the deep transformation of Western society articulated by the philosophy of Enlightenment, which relocated the sources of moral strength from the cosmic order to the consciousness of a rational being. With this profound cultural shift, the ideas of self-responsibility, dignity, and reason were normalized to such an extent that they became the basis for judging as "abnormal" anything that does not fit the normative picture of the progressing modern world. This is evident in Mlechin's construction: Putin's supporters are dismissed on the premise they do not fit into the Western modernity sanctioned by the Enlightenment.

I will leave aside the important point that it is impossible to judge the validity of Mlechin's claim about pro-Putin Russians (imagined as a homogeneous mass) believing that power comes from God. On the one hand, as I mentioned earlier, Putin's followers were never invited to *Echo*'s studio to speak for themselves. On the other hand, the accuracy of the claim is not central to its importance: Whether it reflects what Putin supporters (or at least part of them) truly believe or not, this claim is crucial for the maintenance of uniprogressive discourse. Because Putin's followers were imagined as falling outside modernity, the need for correction and curing was articulated as well. Even speakers who complicated the issue by offering not-so-one-dimensional theories as to why the people of Russia had voted for Putin fell into this trap. Here is one such telling example.

Andrei Konchalovsky, a film director of international stature, acknowledged that Russia's history differed from that of Europe and, therefore, one could not expect the emergence of European institutions of power and European political culture in Russia. At the same time, however, he saw this difference not neutrally but as a shortcoming or lacking and, contemplating how to deal with it, suggested the metaphor of disease and the necessity of treatment:

> Russia has not passed the civilizational route of Europe, where democracy originated. It never had bourgeoisie, and Bolsheviks crushed its rudiments . . . . We have not passed [the West's] evolution, we have not had this historical period, and we arrived at a different point . . . . I believe in Russia. Who said that I don't believe in it? I just say: cure is possible, but we need to understand first to what extent the patient is sick . . . . What if it is "cancer"? Is it possible to cure it? Yes. But this is cancer. What does this mean? We need to change blood. (Konchalovsky 2012)

What does this "changing of blood" metaphor suggest as applied to the people of Russia? Konchalovsky did not answer this question, and I am far from willing to accuse him of any genocidal intentions, but the metaphorical suggestion is very provocative, given the history of "curing" enterprises toward "sick" populations, which I discussed in chapter 2. The biggest problem of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 65 09-10-2018 14:06:13

the uniprogressive imagination, as I strive to argue within this book, is that it is impregnated with the idea of "correcting" people in the name of "progress," understood in unidirectional terms, and "civilization," equated with "Westernization." Efforts to follow through on this idea may come in different forms—from educational campaigns to psychiatric intrusions to labor camps and so forth—but its essence remains unaltered: It is always about the "correction" of "barbarians" by the self-proclaimed enlightened avant-garde. The possibility of seeing "barbarians" as people holding alternative opinions worthy of respect is not even considered.

Progressive "Wedom"

In the imaginations of *Echo*'s speakers, Putin's opponents were everything that his supporters were not. While Putin supporters always appeared as victims—of state oppression, of historical circumstances, and of their own weaknesses, including cowardice and inability to develop, think, or act independently, as individuals—Putin's opponents were successful, modern, full of dignity, and firmly in control of the circumstances of their lives. In contrast to "Sveta from Ivanovo" (a participant of a pro-Putin rally whose image became a generalized caricature of Putin supporters in Russian oppositional media), anti-Putin activists "could not be pulled to meetings, and they were free enough to be are able to recognize that they are humiliated and insulted," as Yulia Latynina (2012), an *Echo* host, put it. This was a common-sense assumption shared by the *Echo*'s guests and hosts whose speeches I analyzed: In contrast to Putin's supporters, they imagined themselves as fearless and ready to "fight for dignity," as Konstantin Remchukov (2012), the editor-in-chief of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, asserted. Konstantin Bogomolov (2012), a theater director, agreed: "There is a feeling that *people* are not scared any longer: to raise their voices in defense of something, to go into the streets, to express their positions" (emphasis added). It is noteworthy that the signifier "people" in Bogomolov's construction is linked exclusively to those protesting against Putin; the pro-Putin majority of Russia was not linked to the "progressive" equivalential chain.

In the views of *Echo*'s speakers, it was not only the lack of fear that distinguished Putin's opponents from his supporters. In contrast to the latter, who were imagined to be unable to survive without social security provided to them by the state, the former were articulated as totally independent and free from state trusteeship. They were presented as successful and well-to-do, and their talents were imagined to be always in demand, not only in Russia but also abroad:

> Suddenly, a milieu appeared, which is uncompromising and is not bound vertically with anybody in the pyramid [of power], which is bound horizontally and

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 66 09-10-2018 14:06:13

> receives the ideas on good and evil and values without filters. This milieu felt humiliated and resented. This is the fight for dignity . . . . This is the middle class that jumped out of the snuffbox and turned out to be a responsible citizen . . . . The strength of this [protest] milieu is that it can live without the help of the state, in any part of the world. Here is the threat: that these people will emigrate, while other people will stay—those who ended their struggle for recognition long ago. (Remchukov 2012)

Again and again, in contrast to Putin's supporters who represented the lowest depths of Russian society—uneducated, docile, fearful, amoral masses that "ended their struggle for recognition long ago"—their opponents were presented as responsible citizens who recognized their rights and fought for dignity. Individuals of the new progressive milieu could emigrate from Russia at any time, and it was here that Remchukov's biggest concern was located. What is noteworthy, however, is that the concern was not so much about the immigration of the "responsible" "middle-class" milieu of Russia but rather the non-immigration of their counterparts who "ended their struggle for recognition long ago." Putin's supporters (that is, the majority of the population of Russia) were paradoxically imagined as Russia's biggest threat.

The theme of immigration of the best people of Russian society—the way the *Echo*'s speakers imagined themselves—was one of the most popular topics of *Echo*'s discussions. This is how Marina Korolyova (2012), an *Echo* host, presented the issue:

> The talks about the forthcoming mass exodus flow-out from Russia of the most intelligent, smart, creative people—those who have recently become the most politically active part of society—have intensified . . . . I read the *Guardian* article by Yevgeny Chichvarkin . . . . "The best-educated, most creative and most active people in Russia will be heading here . . . people whose senses are very well developed, including their intuition, which tells them to leave Russia now." (Korolyova 2012)

The idea that the anti-Putin protesters represented the best, most progressive layers of Russian society was taken by *Echo*'s speakers without reservation—this was part of the "common sense" established within the uniprogressive limits of the thinkable, which equates modernity with the Western condition and grants the status of an "avant-garde" to those striving for modernization, conceived as Westernization.

Situating themselves at a higher point on their imagined civilizational scale of development, some *Echo* speakers believed it was their duty to awaken the consciousness of "miserable destitute muzhiks." With the best intentions, Maxim Vitorgan, a well-known Russian actor, suggested helping "weaker" compatriots through attempts at persuasion:

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 67 09-10-2018 14:06:13

> They are not our enemies. They are our compatriots. They have got into trouble. It happens that they appear to be weaker than we. They are weaker in their desire to know truth, in their ability to confront evil, and in their self-respect. We appear to be stronger. Strong people need to help the weak. We need to be patient and stubborn. We need to tell and persuade. (Vitorgan 2012)

What this articulation implied was the universality of the uniprogressive version of "truth" and the impossibility of alternative visions. The possibility that Putin supporters may have valid truths of their own was excluded. Their "otherness" was conceived as abnormality—a debilitated condition that kept them from "'coming to see' certain kernel truths about the human condition" (Taylor 1999, 170). In the eyes of the speaker, the supporter of Putin looked the same as the African in the eyes of progressive colonizers—"half-devil and half-child." The "white man's burden"—to a "progressive" intellectual whose *wedom* is an imagined global community of civilized people—is always to modernize and enlighten, to cure and nurture.

It is worth noting, however, that Vitorgan's noble call for enlightening the wayward masses of Putin followers was an exception rather than the rule—the majority of *Echo*'s speakers did not even consider the possibility of communicating with pro-Putin "others," even for the purpose of their "treatment." Another extreme was to dehumanize those supporting Putin by comparing them to dumb animals, as Latynina (2012) did:

> These stories are of an older biological character. In a chicken flock, for example, there are several cocks, and there is an iron mechanism that makes one cock the alpha male . . . . Then imagine the process of voting in a chimpanzee troop—there is an alpha male there as well. Imagine an election if two or three other males ganged up against the alpha male and voted against him. All others would vote "pro" and say "we are for stability."

Developing her evolutionary theory of the "underdevelopment" of Putin's supporters, Latynina explicitly referred to them as "inferior voters" and argued that "the more they are humiliated by power, the more they support it." She added: "I have noticed that a free man, when he is insulted and humiliated, acknowledges that humiliation took place. In contrast, humiliated slaves, humiliated cattle, embrace the grandeur of those who have humiliated them." To be sure, Latynina demonstrated such open and offensive prejudice not only toward the pro-Putin "mass" of Russian citizens; she was against "masses" in general, and not only in Russia. In Latynina's view, it was "masses" that generated Nazism, Communism, and Islamism. "These ideologies are professed by masses, not by intellectuals who sit in a glass tower," she claimed. What Latynina suggested was to deprive the "masses," which

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 68 09-10-2018 14:06:14

she equated to "the poor," of their voting rights. In all times, she maintained, "from antique poleis to Chicago slums, the poor voter is an irresponsible voter. This is Sharikov[1] who adores chiefs and dividing others' wealth." In order to be allowed to vote, Latynina believed, people needed "to pay taxes at least one cent more . . . than they receive in subsidies."

It is worth noting that Latynina's "progressive" idea of depriving the poor of their voting rights is actually centuries old. In 1776, John Adams, who would become the second president of the United States, held a similar view:

> Adams argued that men (let alone women) "who are wholly destitute of Property" were "too dependent upon other Men to have a Will of their own." In 1800, only three states allowed property-less white men to vote. For most of the 20th century, southern states imposed "poll taxes" that effectively barred not only African Americans from voting but some poor whites as well. (Beinart 2014)

As is well known, even today, the idea of depriving the poor of voting rights reappears from time to time in the speeches of well-known right-wing politicians in Europe and the United States. This example only underlines the one-sidedness of the "progressiveness" of Russia's activists for modernization whose opinions I analyzed. It is not about social progress conceptualized in terms of political equality, plurality, and inclusiveness, but an inexorable movement to a "civilized" Western condition, even if this construction of "civilization" is flagrantly reactionary in terms of equality and sociopolitical inclusion.

As stated earlier, Latynina's articulations look extreme against the constructions of other *Echo*'s speakers whose opinions I analyzed. However, at least in one important respect, the logic of her speeches is similar to that of other *Echo* speakers: The self-proclaimed "rational," "smart," "educated," "talented," "independent," and "brave" modernizers juxtaposed themselves against the "mass" of Putin supporters imagined as intellectually underdeveloped or morally degraded people whose opinions were not worth taking into account. The only difference is that Latynina, unlike other *Echo*'s speakers, developed the theme all the way to its logical conclusion: While Vitorgan suggested getting rid of this "mass otherness" through their patient persuasive reformation and Konchalovsky through gradual replacement compared to a "blood transfusion," Latynina offered to solve the problem in one fell swoop through depriving the "masses" of their civil rights. In general, there was nothing new in what *Echo*'s hosts and guests prescribed for their "sick" society—all of the suggested methods of "correction" are well known from the history of globalization conceived in universal norms (see chapter 2).

Of particular interest to me in the "progressive" articulations I analyzed was their resemblance to nineteenth-century discussions of mass psychology

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 69 09-10-2018 14:06:14

imagined in pathological terms (as opposed to the "norm" of the rational forms of social organization), where "the distinction between rationality and irrationality would largely overlap with the distinction between the individual and the group" (Laclau 2005, 29). This is an excerpt from Le Bon's famous book *The Crowd*, published in 1895:

> By the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian—that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images. (Le Bon 1995, 52)

Paradoxically, while arguing for "progress," *Echo* reproduced the discourses of previous centuries: the theories of mass society (including that of the "magic bullet") and the idea of "poll taxes." As is well known, the history of post-Le Bon social theorizing is the history of abandoning the assumption that the rational/the individual/the normal is necessarily opposed to the irrational/the mass/the pathological. This transformation paved the way for much more sophisticated and nuanced approaches to the problems of mass society (Laclau 2005). Judging from their articulations, *Echo*'s speakers seemed for the most part unaware of this intellectual history, which was ironic given the "progressive" status they claimed for themselves.

Another interesting observation I made while analyzing *Echo*'s uniprogressive discourse was that many of *Echo*'s guests seemed to believe it was exclusively Putin and his system of power that divided the people of Russia into antagonistic camps:

> This is what it [power] is doing: it divides people between "ours" and "aliens." (Albats 2012)

> There is a rhetoric of war, the rhetoric of a split, the rhetoric of civil war. (Shenderovich 2012)

> Power did a lot to divide—I don't know—working people and those who go to Bolotnaya square to protest in mink coats. (Sorokina 2012)

> Why doesn't Putin want to be the President for all the residents of Russia? . . . He splits the country. (Dimarsky 2012)

Only once did a guest speaking in *Echo*'s studio suggest that the anti-Putin opposition employed no less divisive rhetoric than those in power:

Konchalovsky: Unfortunately, this is the Russian mentality. Leskov[2] explained brilliantly the liberals' slogan, and he was ostracized because of this: "Who is not

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 70 09-10-2018 14:06:14

with us is a scoundrel sneaker." But this is not right to live in such a way: "Who is not with us is a scoundrel."
Sorokina: But power lives exactly in line with this principle. This is exactly how it lives.
Konchalovsky: But don't dissidents also live in line with it?

But, again, what is evident in this excerpt is Konchalovsky's belief that it is merely the "Russian mentality" to divide. In his view, even liberals—the most "progressive" portion of Russian society—suffered from this cultural malfunction. In one way or another, *Echo*'s speakers always blamed Russia—its people, culture, and system of power—but never discussed their own contribution to the societal split stemming from their uniprogressive assumptions, which they never problematized.

The West: A Model for Imitation

While talking about the "Russian mentality," which was always defined in terms of what it lacked, *Echo*'s guests—implicitly or explicitly—always referred to the West as a "norm of development" and a model for imitation.

> If people make a right decision and vote correctly—which they are unable to do yet—we'll have a *normal* alternative, an American model of development or an English model. (Novodvorskaya 2012; emphasis added)

> I am proud of France for its decision to recognize same-sex marriages . . . . I think, this is wonderful, this is an advance in mentality. Homophobia is a sign of a *caveman* way of thinking. (Pozner 2012; emphasis added)

> I don't even know in which century we are. Because even in the nineteenth century, many progressive countries were more tolerant. In general, we are behind [the West] by about two centuries. (Shenderovich 2012)

Again and again, the difference between Russia and the West was imagined in terms of juxtaposition between the "normal," "modern," "progressive," and "superior" (equated to the Western) versus "abnormal," "prehistorical," "backward," and "inferior" (linked to the Russian). As the construction "we are behind by about two centuries" implies, the triumph of Western modernity was seen as inevitable even in Russia because historical development was inexorably unfolding in one direction, and there were no alternative routes; achieving the Western condition was just a matter of time. As this historical imaginary suggests, since the unidirectional progressive change would happen inevitably in accordance with historical law, there was no need to create coalitions with "backward" Russia—very soon, it would fall into the dustbin of history. It is this logic that may explain an otherwise incomprehensible lack of willingness on the part of the Russian opposition to listen to "other"

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 71 09-10-2018 14:06:14

voices in Russia, to contemplate their alternative rationalities, or to work out a pluralist and inclusive project for Russia's democratization that would not simply imitate Western institutions of power, but become a product of a creative synthesis of various worldviews existing within contemporary Russia and its centuries-old unique traditions.

What are the implications of the *uni*versal historical imaginary shared by the Russian liberal opposition? I will consider this question in chapter 6 after discussing another social movement of Russia formed five years after the presidential elections of 2012: the anti-corruption protests organized by Alexei Navalny in the spring of 2017.

NOTES

1. Sharikov is a character in the novel *Heart of a Dog* by Mikhail Bulgakov, a famous Russian-Ukrainian writer. The plot involves a well-known surgeon transplanting the pituitary gland and testicles of a recently deceased alcoholic and petty criminal into a dog named Sharik, who is then given the full name Poligraf Poligrafovich Sharikov. Having inherited all the negative traits of the donor (bad manners, aggressiveness, profanity, and drinking), Sharikov, in Bulgakov's representation, symbolizes the revolutionary mass of Bolsheviks transforming good old Russia.
2. Nikolai Leskov is a well-known Russian writer of the nineteenth century.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 72 09-10-2018 14:06:14

Chapter 6

The New Protest Generation

NOVAYA GAZETA

As mentioned in chapter 1, while analyzing the discourse of uniprogressivism related to this case, I did not confine myself to *Echo*; along with it, I analyzed another famous Russian medium known for its irreconcilable oppositional stance—*Novaya Gazeta* (*Novaya*). The history of this newspaper and its service as a public platform for alternative opinions in Russia is no less remarkable than that of *Echo of Moscow* discussed in the previous chapter. Whenever independent media of today's Russia are under discussion, these two news outlets are the first to come to mind. As Aleksandr Zhelenin (2017) put it, "despite a certain change for worse with media freedom in Russia, there are still some independent (free and unbiased) media outlets offering balanced and objective reporting. Naturally, the list of such outlets was not too long and included the well-known names such as *Novaya Gazeta* [and] *Ekho Moskvy* [*Echo of Moscow*] radio."

Novaya was established in 1993 by a group of journalists with the goal of creating an independent mass medium free of financial and political control; its first issue came out on April 1, 1993, with assistance from Mikhail Gorbachev, the former president of the USSR, who purchased *Novaya*'s first computers using the money from his Nobel Peace Prize. Since that time, *Novaya* has established itself as a medium known for its critical coverage of Russian political and social affairs: It is one of the few media in today's Russia that still does investigative reporting. In a country rated one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists (Frej 2016), this vocation can be quite perilous: "Its reporting has earned international accolades but has also put its reporters in considerable danger. No publication in Russia has had as many of its journalists killed as 'Novaya gazeta'" (Bigg 2013). Since

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 73 09-10-2018 14:06:14

1991, several of its journalists have been murdered or died under suspicious circumstances. Among them were Anna Politkovskaya, "a vocal Kremlin critic who earned fame for her reporting from Chechnya" (Weir 2017), Yuri Shchekochikhin, who "had also reported on corruption in the Moscow municipal administration, the defence ministry, the prosecutor-general's office, and the Russian military forces in Chechnya" (Corley 2003), and Anastasia Baburova, who investigated the activities of neo-Nazi groups (Anastasia Baburova 2009).

The website of *Novaya* has been hit by a series of cyber attacks. In 2010 and 2011, it experienced massive denial-of-service attacks; the latter, according to Dmitry Muratov, the chief editor of the newspaper, was linked to State Duma and presidential elections: "Novaya Gazeta's web site typically receives 70,000 to 120,000 unique visitors every day . . . . But the attack was so strong that at one point the web site got 70,000 visit requests every 14 seconds" (Cyber Attack Paralizes 2011). In 2017, the website of *Novaya* was shut down again, this time "shortly after the independent newspaper announced . . . that specific journalists and the staff as a whole have been directly threatened by members of Chechnya's political elite" (Newspaper Staff 2017). As many believe, the threats came in connection with the paper's investigation on the persecution of gay men in Chechnya.

Neither the murders of its journalists nor the attacks or other forms of intimidation have forced *Novaya* to stop its critical reporting. It is still conducting investigations on organized crime and corruption within the political system of Russia, and in "digging to find out more. . . [it has] pieced together the assets of some of President Putin's friends, family, and inner circle" (OCCRP n/d). It also maintains its active oppositional stance criticizing the domestic and international policy of the Kremlin. On July 25, 2014, after Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17), crashed in a conflict-hit region of eastern Ukraine controlled by rebels who are supported by Russia, the paper opened with "Vergeef ons, Nederland" ("Forgive us, Netherlands"). This audacious action of protest earned broad international resonance—many people throughout the world supported *Novaya* in its effort to challenge the Kremlin's position (*Novaya Gazeta*, 2014).

The collective of the newspaper holds a controlling share of its ownership (51 percent); the other 49 percent belongs to Mikhail Gorbachev and Alexander Lebedev, a former spy under diplomatic cover working in London (1987–1992), then a businessman and a politician. From 2004 to 2007, Lebedev was a State Duma Deputy. In 2011, *Forbes* magazine listed him as one of the richest Russians with an estimated fortune of $2.1 billion; in 2015, his position among the richest Russians was 158th with a net worth of $400 million. Together with his son Evgeniy, Lebedev owns two UK newspapers, the *London Evening Standard* and the *Independent* (Forbes n/d).

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 74 09-10-2018 14:06:14

I analyzed qualitatively the content published by this outlet between March 26 and April 3, 2017—the week immediately following the protests initiated by Navalny, a span likely to contain the most emotional discussions of the manifestations. Within this time frame, the two outlets I analyzed—*Echo* and *Novaya*—published forty-four feature articles and opinion pieces regarding the protests, in which fifty-seven people expressed their points of view. As my analysis has shown, all of these opinions contained traces of the uniprogressive imaginary.

The speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed greeted the protests enthusiastically. According to their constructions, protesters went out into the streets because of "the abyss separating *the people* and power" (Yavlinsky 2017; emphasis added); "*Society* is unsatisfied and strives for changes" (Prokhorova 2017; emphasis added); "*The people* want a change of faces [in power] and agendas" (Albats 2017a; emphasis added); "The *people*'s patience is ending" (Solovey 2017; emphasis added), and so on. Although coming from different opponents of Putin's system of power, these and similar statements were indistinguishable in one important aspect: all of them presented the protesters as "society" and "the people," while none of them questioned the legitimacy of this construction over its exclusion of other Russians—those who did not support the demonstrations.

Apparently, the fervent conviction that "this power needs to be changed" (Albats 2017a) made it difficult for those pushing their "democratizing" agenda to account for "others" who did not feel the same way. As my analysis suggests, this disregarding of millions of Russian citizens had become a logical outcome of the uniprogressive vision of history, as discussed in previous chapters: the activists for Russia's modernization saw their opponents as signifying "the past" and therefore destined to give way to "the future."

PUTIN'S RUSSIA AND ITS BARBARIANS

To start with, many speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed presented the system of power in Russia as an "aging regime" with a "virus of senility in its blood" (Bykov 2017) that wanted to "turn the clock back" and pull the country "into the past" (Glukhovsky 2017b). Some imagined Putin's Russia as "Brezhnev's USSR" (Shevchenko 2017) where it was "sickening" to live (Klebanov 2017). Others equated it with the Russian Empire where "nobody could challenge the power of the Tsar" (Glukhovsky 2017a) and where protests could have "crushing consequences" for "*samoderzhaviy*e"[1] (Shevtsova 2017). Some of the authors went as far as linking contemporary Russia with Byzantium—"the Third Rome"—where symbolic gestures meant more than words (Svanidze 2017). Similar to what I observed in the previous case study,

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 75 09-10-2018 14:06:14

the linkage of the system of government in Russia with such signifiers as "Tsarism," "monarchy," and "Zastoi," terms united in a hegemonic chain of equivalence, served to emphasize the idea that contemporary Russia is not a "modern" state but a remnant of the past that had lost its historical orientation.

In any case—whether as Russian, Soviet, or any other empire—Putin's Russia was presented as a "remnant of the past" that deviated from the historical norm of "moving forward" (Glukhovsky 2017a). Some speakers and writers expressed the idea of the "abnormality" of Russia by linking it to various diseases: People supporting the corrupted system of power within contemporary Russia were imagined as living in a state of "social paralysis" (Shevtsova 2017). Others expressed the same idea by creating another chain of equivalence stressing the inferiority of those who did not support the protests: They appeared as "declassed masses" (Krasovsky 2017) of "spineless shit" (Varlamov 2017) remaining silent out of fear, or as brainless "anchovies" (Latynina 2017) or "mushrooms" (Vitaly cited in Pashina 2017)—non-humans and degenerates.

As one of Russia's most popular bloggers, Ilya Varlamov (2017[2]), described the non-protesting Russians, "some live until old age fearing to raise their heads so as not to be punished with the missing plate of gruel." In his view, in order to modernize and civilize Russia, "children need to be brought up in such a way so that they would be citizens—not slaves." The metaphor of "gruel" as employed by the blogger suggested that those opposing the protests were living like prisoners, in total submission, as if they wanted nothing but to stay behind bars rather than come out into the free world. Seen this way, the non-protesters could hardly elicit any feeling but contempt. Refusing to liberate themselves, scared and desperate to hang on to their pitiful subsistence, they amounted to nothing but slaves, a population without dignity, self-respect, or internal freedom. According to this vision, shared by the speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed, the main reason people chose not to support Navalny was because they "were dependent on the state in this or that way" (Remchukov 2017) and were afraid to jeopardize this miserable security.

Apparently, for those who never questioned the normality of the uniprogressive social imaginary, which equates modernization and Westernization with moral growth and higher consciousness, it was difficult to find any explanation for not protesting and thus lending support to the "anti-modern" "Putin regime" other than personal and collective degradation, degeneration, underdevelopment, sickness, and so forth. According to the speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed, the whole system of Putin's power was "built on very simple, practically animal, instincts: fear, greed, and stupidity" (Solovey 2017). This system, in their view, had "two legs. One is corruption and theft; the other one is fear"—and in order to function "it shifts from

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 76 09-10-2018 14:06:14

one foot to the other," as the famous Russian writer Victor Yerofeev (2017) maintained.

According to the progressive voices whose articulations I analyzed, in Russia—where people are "destined to catch hell" any time they break their silence and voice discontent (Glukhovsky 2017a)—it is "normal" to be afraid in Russia and "not normal" not to be afraid. This is how Albats expressed the idea:

> They [ordinary Russians] chop cabbage, cook borsch, and listen to TV . . . . Then, they are called by telephone and asked: "Will you vote for Putin?" Only idiots or crazy people like us . . . who work at the *Echo of Moscow* and *The New Times* will say "No, I won't." A normal person will think: "Well, I tell them I will not vote for Putin now, and tomorrow chekists[3] will visit me." (Albats 2017a)

In Albats' view, for those who were afraid, it was also normal to "listen to TV" while chopping cabbage and cooking borsch—this is how Albats imagined her compatriots whose backward "normality," signified by cooking traditional meals at home, she sarcastically contrasted to her progressive "abnormality" of not being scared and, implicitly, not chopping cabbage. The Russians imagined by Albats did not even *watch* TV—they *listened* to it. The lives of "viripotent anchovies," as Latynina (2017) called the general population of Russia, were penetrated by a miasma of propaganda, and they were so brainless they did not even realize it. Because Putin's supporters, as many "democratically-minded" writers and speakers imagined it, were predominantly "conservative and old" (Remchukov 2017)—just like the regime they supported—it was very easy to manipulate their perceptions.

As for the young people of Russia who were not so TV-addicted, they were imagined to be brainwashed in schools by teachers "telling students . . . that everything is fine with Russia and refusing to discuss problems with them" (Martinov 2017). In the view of the speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed, the reason teachers supported Putin's power was simple: the notorious system of trusteeship allowing the Kremlin to control anybody who was on state funding. As the writer Dmitry Glukhovsky (2017a) maintained, it was easy to buy teachers' loyalty because they "receive beggarly salaries, and are totally dependent on the state." What appeared as a result of this linkage between the "aging regime" and the submissive schooling system—one of the state's most important ideological apparatuses—was the conservation of the "past" and the creation of conditions for "the virus of senility" to be preserved in the social body of Russia:

> This way of managing, this indoctrination of consciousness, which children face, is perpetrated by people morally outdated, regardless of their real age . . . .

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 77 09-10-2018 14:06:14

> The language by which they teach and try to communicate with young people is the language of the Soviet way of life. This is an absolute shutting up: listen to me, I am the chief here, and so on . . . . This does not correspond to the life experience of the younger generation to such an extent . . . . This is as if you would come to a paleontological museum, and skeletons would teach you how to live. (Prokhorova 2017)

By attempting to conserve the "past" and thwart progressive change, the school is "depriving students of the future," *Novaya Gazeta* editor Kirill Martinov (2017) asserted. Obviously, this should not be understood literally: only death can deprive anybody of her/his future. What was meant here is "*the* future"—the *normal* Westernized future that comes after the pre-modern (pre-Western) past. In this sense, the "future" where the non-Western "past" is preserved is not the future at all; it is still the past—an eternal "past" of Russian underdevelopment. Although some voices acknowledged that "teachers who speak in a more trustful and human manner may also exist" (Saprikin 2017) and that "there are exceptions" (Latynina 2017), the dominant trend was to homogenize Russian educators, presenting them as a mass of morally and intellectually outdated "skeletons from a paleontological museum," as Irina Prokhorova (2017) put it.

Another ideological state apparatus that, in the view of the *Echo*'s and *Novaya*'s contributors, helped to sustain the system of Putin's power was the Russian Orthodox Church, whose political influence is based on numerical strength: about 75 percent of Russia's population identifies as Orthodox Christian. In view of Alexander Nevzorov, a well-known journalist and public figure, the interference of the Church in societal affairs only added to the "after-taste of rotting, mustiness, and general pathology" (Nevzorov 2017). Latynina, as usual, went even further. She ridiculed the faith of millions of Russians, declaring it "insane" and "absurd":

> This comrade named Jesus, who announced himself God while walking around Judaea, pronounced to his followers: "I will set you upon golden thrones and I will come with the legion of angels in the clouds." He lied about everything. He never came back with the legion of angels, and the second appearance has been delayed for two thousand years now, and there are no golden thrones. But they still believe! So, in order to last a long time, an ideology needs to have an element of insanity. As Tertullian used to say, "I believe because it is absurd." (Latynina 2017)

Latynina's comments implied that there was nothing but insanity uniting the parishioners across Russia who believed in God and tradition—everything that, in the eyes of the authors whose "progressive" articulations I analyzed, signified "backwardness," "servitude," "absurdity," and "boredom."

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 78 09-10-2018 14:06:14

Within the discourse of the pathologically backward, old, and sick Russian society, the theme of boredom acquires special significance: If the system of Putin's power looks formidable and scary for an average "anchovy" of the pro-Putin camp, for his opponents, it looks not scary but simply dull. Among the latter, the "ideological vulgarity and platitudes" (Rubtsov 2017) of the "regime" can cause nothing but ennui: "Vladimir Putin is monstrously boring, and he has been monstrously boring for the last decade. They [protesters] took to the streets just out of this boredom . . . . For fun" (Krasovsky 2017).

This is what, in the eyes of anti-Putin activists, distinguished the younger generation of anti-Putin protesters from the older one—the youngest were not scared but *bored*. They wanted changes because Russia was simply outdated and banal. It was similar to or even worse than North Korea, which, by the hierarchical system of uniprogressive historical measurement, occupied one of the lowest positions (if not the lowest) among other states. The dialogue of Yevgenia Albats and her colleague Olga Zhuravlyova in the studio of *Echo of Moscow* is demonstrative in this respect:

A: From an economic point of view, Russia is an invisible state. Can you imagine 2% of the world GDP?
Z: [sarcastically] No, we are the great country, Yevgenia Markovna, come on!
A: This is because we have a red [nuclear] button. In this sense, we are as great as North Korea.

(Zhuravlyova 2017)

In the view of the "progressive" speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed, Russia's similarity to North Korea went beyond the nuclear button. Like North Korea, it also deprived its citizens of freedom, which, in their view, Russia possessed between the collapse of the USSR and Putin's consolidation of power—the years of Boris Yeltsin's presidency.

Such framing of Russian history is rather typical for those struggling against Putin's authoritarianism: "Whatever people say about the 1990s, this was a period of spiritual renaissance," Svetlana Gamzaeva (2017), a correspondent for *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, maintained. As Snyder (2018) suggests, within the limits of the thinkable prescribed by the uniprogressive imaginary (the imaginary of "inevitability," in his words), such a positive evaluation of the 1990s looks only logical:

> In 1993, Yeltsin dissolved the Russian parliament and sent armed men against its deputies. He told his western partners that this was streamlining needed to accelerate market reforms, a version of events accepted in the American press. So long as markets were invoked, politicians of inevitability could see an attack on a parliament as a step towards democracy. (44)

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 79 09-10-2018 14:06:14

In the presentation of the writers and speakers whose opinions I analyzed, almost all other historical periods of Russia (with very few exceptions) lacked this assumed "spirituality" and the sense of "renaissance" seen to accompany Yeltsin's rule with its liberal reforms under the guidance of US economic advisers (Shiraev and Zubok 2000; Stiglitz 2002). Even before Bolsheviks grasped power in 1917, according to Nevzorov (2017), there was "the Russia of unstoppable bribes, the Russia of executions, the Russia of denunciations." In his opinion, "In the beginning of the twentieth century, in terms of their development and understanding the world, Russian peasants did not differ much from the dwellers of Timbuktu, Fiji, or New Guinea." Measured by the uniprogressive scale of historical development, such a positioning of Russia meant nothing but the bottom of civilization—its lower depths. In this sense, as many authors believed, Russia had not changed much since Tsarist times: The level of development of the majority of Russians (as judged against the norm of Western modernity) was still at the very bottom, and "how to dig them out of this pit—we don't understand yet," Anton Krasovsky (2017), a political journalist and gay activist, lamented.

Not all the anti-Putin voices sounded so pessimistic, however. Some of them believed it was inevitable that progressive historical changes would spring from the radical rupture between "the experience of the younger generation" and the system of power whose place was in "a paleontological museum." The basis of this futuristic hope was found in Russia's imperial past:

> The situation reminds me of Sologub's novel *The Petty Devil* written about the last years of Alexander III, who had also properly suppressed everybody and established parish schools. He made everybody learn Latin, Greek, Ancient Greek, and so forth. And suddenly it turned out that young people, instead of being converted to Greek faith, became revolutionaries. And this novel is about totally different perceptions. On the one end there are teachers who talk nonsense and are gloomy and, naturally, conformist. On the other end, there are boys and girls, some of whom went to the revolution and others to the Silver Age. (Yerofeev 2017)

The meaning of this historical parallel was rather transparent: No matter how hard the new Tsar of Russia and his servants—clergy and school educators—were turning the screws on society, all their attempts to preserve the past and prevent the "normal" future from coming were destined to fail. There was a widely shared belief that the young energy of the new generation would inevitably topple the medieval fortress, and the renaissance would come.

How did the activists striving for "democratization" imagine the youth, whom they considered born with the historical mission of bringing Russia a spiritual renewal? As my analysis shows, they imagined it to be completely

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 80 09-10-2018 14:06:14

different from the "anchovies" of Putin's Russia—they were like "aliens" in this political landscape.

THE "NON-WHIPPED GENERATION" AND THE WEST

The speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed presented the protesters as "not indifferent" (Yavlinsky 2017), "successful [and] active" (Zhuravlyova 2017), "self-confident" (Shenkman 2017), "honest [and] smart" (Veller 2017), and so on. As Anton Krasovsky (2017) put it, "This is a class struggle. The class that was not completely beaten in Soviet times has formed itself during the post-Soviet years as a modern—let's say—nobility." Whether or not nobility was a fitting term, the "class" of young people participating in the protests was imagined to be radically different from the "old generation" of Russians. It was widely believed that "the audience attending protest actions does not watch TV" (Kashin 2017), that the protesters had been "formed as personalities on the Internet" (Chizh 2017) and, therefore, "propaganda does not influence them" (Shulika 2017).

Some anti-Putin voices also pointed out that the "new generation" was qualitatively "new" not only as compared to the aging masses of Putin's supporters (TV consumers), but also in comparison to the older generation of anti-Putin opposition. The latter predominantly used Facebook and Twitter, while the former used *VK*, *OK*, YouTube channels, and other "newest" means of communication within the Russian social space. As Martinov (2017) put it:

> We have been comparing TV and the Internet for a long time, and have been hoping that we are on the side of the latter (presumably, progressive and free). Now, we can speak about Internet-I and Internet-II. Our Internet-I (Facebook, Twitter) has been invaded by trolls and conservatives. (Martinov 2017)

Martinov's articulation fit perfectly into the uniprogressive narrative of the unfolding of history: new forces, seen a priori as progressive, were coming to life, and the older generation, which was a priori more regressive, needed to give way.

As I explained earlier, in the presentation of the anti-Putin speakers and writers, TV consumption signified degradation, conformism, and, generally, a lack of intellectual freedom. In contrast, the refusal to watch TV was seen as an act of intellectual liberation and emancipation of the spirit of free citizens. In the opinion of Ilshat Saetov (2017), another contributor to *Novaya*, the families of those who joined street protests had "brought them up with a free spirit, taught them foreign languages and developed critical thinking. In many such households, TV sets are simply absent." As a result of this, it

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 81 09-10-2018 14:06:14

was implied, a qualitatively new generation has been raised that is radically different from the "old" Russia.

To be sure, some observers acknowledged the existence of a "different class of youth" (Krasovsky 2017), which was not so "alien" to the backwardness of Russian society. In Krasovsky's view, meeting this "other youth" was not a pleasure:

> They are not those pretty smiling boys and girls who know English and whose numbers are some dozens of thousands. The other youth will be what Mike Naumenko called in his song "gopniki[4]." And the numbers of this youth are not about ten to twenty thousand, but twenty to thirty million. (Krasovsky 2017)

As is evident from this excerpt, Krasovsky juxtaposes the "progressive" young protesters against the underdeveloped and uncivilized youth of another "class" existing in Russia: the class that does not know English, is not pretty, not smiling, and, obviously, not protesting. In other words, the non-protesting youth were homogeneously imagined by Krasovsky as the mere continuation of the flesh and blood of their parents, living in a state of "social paralysis." Apparently, imagining another youth—non-protesting but educated and attractive—was beyond the limits of the thinkable of the uniprogressive imaginary, where the condition of protesting was signified with the meaning of moving toward a civilized future, a moral consciousness, and an emancipated human spirit.

At any rate, the division of Russia's youth into two classes, "progressive and future-oriented" vs. "gopniki," as suggested by Krasovsky, was an exception rather than a norm. The dominant trend was to present the protesters as *the* "youth" of Russia and its "next generation," juxtaposing them against the "generation of the past" of those supporting Putin. In order to do this, those pushing the uniprogressive agenda had to ignore the "other" youth (which is, without a doubt, far more heterogeneous than Krasovky suggests), and this ignoring was important: without it, the discourse of the "advent of the future" would not have been possible. By homogenizing the youth, however, the opponents of Putin's system of power committed symbolic violence against the young people of Russia who did not support the protests—the latter were either denigrated (Krasovsky 2017) or symbolically annihilated (made invisible). This annihilation was necessary to enable the construction of the uniprogressive discourse.

According to the liberal observers, many young people, although not interested in politics, decided to join the protests because they had been outraged by the level of corruption among high-ranking officials revealed by Navalny: "They did not like that authorities steal so much" (Vishnevsky 2017). The young people came to realize that because of the immorality of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 82 09-10-2018 14:06:14

those in power "they do not have opportunities if they are not the children of functionaries" (Alburov, as cited in Girin 2017). In contrast to Putin's Russia, frozen in an eternal slumber and historical absenteeism, the new generation was seen to be awakened, active, and ready to defend its right to be present on the public scene. Simply making themselves visible there had already made them different, even without political slogans and party affiliations. As the *Novaya Gazeta* columnist Yan Shenkman put it:

> Moscow has been sleeping for about fifteen years . . . and finally it is awake . . . . This is not a political story . . . . They do not have ideological claims, they are just from another tribe, and if the tribe with shoulder straps interferes with their way of life, they need to expel them from their territory. The conflict is purely *anthropological*: two tribes cannot get along together. (Shenkman 2017; emphasis added)

Given that "the tribe with shoulder straps" represented the system of power, which, as I explained earlier, was imagined to be as outdated as ancient monarchies, the allegory of an anthropological conflict between "tribes" was suggestive. The tribe of the elders should give way to the tribe of the young. If this was "not a political story," then the latter had nothing to discuss with the former. What the metaphor of "anthropological conflict" suggested was a fierce fight for survival, in which the "enemy" needed to be destroyed; there was no possibility of sharing symbolic space between the tribe of the old and sick and the tribe of the young and healthy. The need to destroy the enemy was justified, therefore, by the constructed difference between the enemy and the self, which appeared irreconcilable because of the fundamental inferiority of Putin's supporters, a group incompatible with the idea of unidirectional progress.

The lack of a political agenda on the part of the protesters was emphasized by various observers. For Alexander Vilen, a high-school student and a participant in the Moscow protest, the manifestation was a search for truth and lost ethics: "My generation—well-fed and well-dressed—is interested in whether God exists . . . and what is the sense of life. My generation is groping for ethics and cannot find them" (Vilen 2017). For many other young people participating in the manifestations, protesting came to be seen merely as a sign of a more advanced modern condition, where protesting was seen not only as "a sign of advancement and bravery" (Klebanov 2017) but also as an easy and jovial way of spending time together. For many of them, it was just fashionable to protest.

Despite the lack of a clear political agenda and the vagueness of protester motives, however, those observing the protests from the uniprogressive camp could not conceal their excitement because "the new generation does not

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 83 09-10-2018 14:06:14

know fear" (Kashin 2017). In the eyes of the veterans of anti-Putin struggles, the young generation of street revolutionaries appeared as people of free will, full of dignity and self-respect. The "new generation" appeared so radically different from everything "typically Russian" that it looked simply mysterious: How could these wonderful new "aliens" emerge from such a thoroughly rotten societal matrix? The almost religious belief in the inexorable progressive unfolding of human history explained the enigma. "*The patience of history* is over"—this is how the famous actress Liya Akhedzhakova (2017, emphasis is added) imagined the sudden advent of the "forces of the future." She added: "The non-whipped generation is finally awake . . . . Young people who were obliged to come out have done this." The inevitable march of progress was finally happening: the forces of tomorrow had appeared on the historical stage, and it was time for yesterday to recede.

The advent of the future became a dominant theme of framing the protests by anti-Putin activists. "They [protesters] . . . want to abstract their minds from the historical peculiarities of Russia . . . . The future belongs to them quite naturally, historically," Remchukov (2017) maintained. Krasovsky (2017) agreed: "Only real people fight against boredom and the past—those who have to live in the future." This future, however, was separated from Russia by a wall needing to be dismantled, and who else but the young would be able to accomplish this grandiose historical mission? "We have come close to the wall; behind it is either a bright future or the total collapse of Russia"—this is how Yerofeev (2017) imagined this final battle between the forces of good and evil. Victory or death; either a non-Russian tomorrow would come, or there would be an end of history. Nevzorov's (2017) invented dialogue between the old decaying regime and young vigorous revolutionaries is very suggestive in this respect:

> The regime is saying: "Yes, I am archaic, yes, I am stupid, and, yes, I am serving the past and the ideals that have gone." And the people are responding: "Okay, regime, fuck yourself." And that is it. (Nevzorov 2017)

Such a vision of the confrontation implied that there was nothing to discuss with the decaying body of the old Russia of Putin; all his millions of supporters could simply be ignored.

"Good-humored and cheerful" protesters with smartphones in their hands were contrasted against policemen whose faces were "gloomy, dispirited, [and] blank" (Polikovsky 2017). "My dear Pushkin Square is mutilated and dirtied by police chains, dark and ugly mugs . . . in inhuman helmets," Alexei Polikovsky (2017) lamented in *Novaya*. Unlike the protesters, the policemen did not smile and did not radiate the energy of a new beginning—instead, they propped up the old, the decaying, and the sick. They defended the Tsar

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 84 09-10-2018 14:06:14

and his swarm of loyal anchovies, who far outnumbered the protesters but, as the philosopher Alexander Rubtsov pointed out, their numerical advantage was of no great importance. The reason was clear—the decaying body of Putin's Russia was running out of the vital energy necessary for struggle:

> They [Putin's supporters] express their attitude without zest. In contrast, the numbers of those who are dissatisfied or, even more so, who express their protest openly, may be much smaller, but the temperature of rejection or the degree of hate may increase the energy of this mass significantly. (Rubtsov 2017)

Because of this enormous energy coming from young protesters, the regime needed to accommodate them—not those "miserable destitute muzhiks" (Kiselyov 2012) who would "be obedient anyway: to Martians, Buddhists, Kim Jong-un, or whoever"—this is how Nevzorov (2017) explained why the minority needed to be treated with more attention and respect than the majority of Russia's population.

In fact, as Nevzorov (2017) maintained, the young minority could not be stopped; they represented the avant-garde of the historical movement. "Even if all these pithecanthropi—milonovi, mizulini[5], and all those sitting in State Duma—. . . gather and spit on Darwin's bust, the evolution will not stop," Nevzorov (2017) asserted. For him "there is a world, and there is a vector of development." In the representation of Nevzorov and his associates, the direction of this "vector of development" was unquestionably Western. From the speeches and writings that I analyzed, the West, which "had produced civilization, science, and law" (Nevzorov 2017), appeared as a model of economic, political, and cultural modernization; the Western condition served as a yardstick to measure the depth of Russia's barbarism. The luxury to which Russia's state officials had access was "unimagined for the richest American multi-millionaire," Latynina (2017) claimed. "If Russia's corrupted state officials were taken to the US, they would be ousted in one day, and imprisoned in two," Rubtsov (2017) professed. In contrast to Russia, "the level of optimism among adults [in European countries] is the same as among youngsters . . . . Because institutions are working, and they are confident in their tomorrow," Remchukov (2017) argued. Against Western Europe and the United States, which create intellectual products, Russia seemed "a raw material appendage," Albats (2017b) held. "The survival of Russia depended only on the economic, financial, and technological resources of the West," Shevtsova (2017) affirmed.

Since the West symbolized everything positive that Russia lacked, it seemed clear and logical for the "progressives" whose articulations I analyzed that young talented people would "learn English and go to New York—the true Third Rome of our days" (Goryunov 2017). Unfortunately, because

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 85 09-10-2018 14:06:14

of the economic crisis connected with Western sanctions imposed on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea, "middle-class children cannot count any longer on getting an education in Europe" (Martinov 2017). However, the West could still serve as a guiding, albeit unattainable, light—a model of high morality whose approval should be sought by all "progressively-minded" forces. Regretfully, because of Crimea, Albats maintained, the attitude of the West toward Russia became even worse than in Cold-War times:

> The Washington establishment . . . did not think of us so badly even during Soviet times . . . . They felt sorry for Soviet people at those times. Now, they treat us with disgust. First of all, this is connected to Crimea—that 86% of Russian people approved the annexation of a foreign territory. In this sense, Americans and Europeans were struck dumb . . . . They used to think that Russia has bad governors, but it has turned out that Putin's actions were supported, and that people like all this. (Albats 2017a)

Obviously, the "disdain" that Americans and Europeans felt toward Russia because of the annexation of Crimea only worsened the attitudes of the "progressives" toward Russia and its "Tsar," who had disgraced them in the eyes of the civilized world. Because of the disapproval of the West, Putin looked much worse than Medvedev, who had only been accused of corruption. During his presidency, at least Medvedev did not dishonor the anti-Putin opposition in the eyes of the West through inappropriate behavior. "I was not ashamed by him [Medvedev] when he was at Silicon Valley, when he hugged Bill Gates, when his minister pushed the 'reset' button together with Hillary Clinton," Krasovsky (2017) confessed.

As is evident from Krasovky's statement, the importance of looking "civilized" and "Westernized" was more important for him than other criteria in evaluating political performance. In fact, every one of Putin's relatively few positive qualities was "Western" in nature as well: "To his honor, he [Putin] has never made such attempts—to transfer power to relatives—remaining in his soul a leader of a Western type . . . . Maybe, it is his principle position: let us remain people in suits but not in embroidered robes"—this is how Glukhovsky (2017) imagined the contrast between the civilized West and its global "underdeveloped other." In the purest tradition of Orientalism (Said The New Protest Generation 2003), the difference was presented as a juxtaposition between the modernity of suits and premodernity of oriental robes.

So, as is evident from this overview of how the "young" protests have been evaluated by the anti-Putin opposition in Russia, the uniprogressive discourse did not differ much from what I observed earlier when analyzing the modernizing discourses during perestroika or in the aftermath of the presidential election in Russia in 2012. In all the cases I analyzed, the discourse of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 86 09-10-2018 14:06:14

uniprogressivism was characterized by the following nodal points: (1) Russia was presented as an outmoded state formation frozen in pre-modern/pre-Western times; (2) Russian people opposing the agenda of uniprogressivism were presented as a homogeneous mass of morally degraded, dependent, and fearful creatures; (3) Russia's opposition (in this case, its "new generation") was presented as an avant-garde force of history whose mission was to bring Russia up to a civilizational "norm" equated with the "Western condition"; and (4) the West was presented as a model of development and the yardstick to measure the depth of Russia's backwardness and barbarism. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of this uniprogressive imaginary for the democracy and positive social change for which the anti-Putin liberal opposition advocated.

NOTES

1. "Samoderzhaviye" is a form of Tsarist autocracy (absolute monarchy) specific to the Russian Empire. In it, all power and wealth is controlled by the Tsar.
2. Although Varlamov's post was made on *LiveJournal* platform, not on the *Echo of Moscow*'s site, the latter provided the link to the former.
3. Chekists were the officers of a secret police (Cheka) that tracked down and exterminated the enemies of the Bolshevik Revolution.
4. "Gopniki" is a lower-class subculture in Russia uniting poorly educated young people from low-income families.
5. The last names of Vitaly Milonov and Yelena Mizulina, Russian politicians and members of the State Duma, are used here in the plural form and without capitalization to suggest the homogeneity and interchangeability of those who belong to Putin's system of power.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 87 09-10-2018 14:06:15

Chapter 7

Antagonism without Agonism

THE INTERNAL ANTAGONISM OF UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE

As discussed in chapter 3, drawing on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and conceptual frameworks from a variety of other fields, Carpentier (2017) identifies three nodal points that, in his view, constitute antagonistic discourse: (1) the radical difference of the enemy, who is kept at a distance, (2) homogenization of the self in opposition to the enemy, and (3) the need to destroy the enemy (172). All three points were evident in the discourse of uniprogressivism produced by the Russian liberals whose opinions I analyzed in the two previous chapters.

The radical difference of those considered the enemy and the resulting need to keep them at a distance was a dominant trend in the depiction of "pro-Putin others" by those opposing "the regime." From the articulations that I analyzed, the general population of Russia (its "masses") appeared fundamentally different from those fighting for modernization—an outside against which the inside was constituted. The former was always what the latter was not (and vice versa). "The masses" supporting Putin's system of power were presented as fully dependent on the state, unable to think critically or creatively, and scared to voice their grievances from fear of losing social security provided by the state. In contrast, those pushing a uniprogressive agenda portrayed themselves as independent, creative, fearless, and active individuals—a group set up as the radical opposite of the pro-Putin "anchovies," "pithecanthropi," and "slaves."

The radical difference between Putin's supporters and those opposing them (the anti-Putin protesters) was constructed not in neutral terms but in a hierarchical manner. Measured against the uniprogressive historical scale of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 89 09-10-2018 14:06:15

development, the former was articulated as "the forces of the past" and thus inferior to the latter, "the forces of the future." The "masses" of Russia were imagined as outmoded, underdeveloped, and backward. In contrast, those advocating for uniprogressive reforms positioned themselves as the people of the future: Protesting in the name of Westernization was seen as an advanced human condition, modern and fashionable.

Another nodal point of the antagonistic discourse identified by Carpentier (2017)—*homogenization*—manifested itself when the anti-Putin camp was imagined as uniformly progressive, fearless, full of dignity, and possessing all other attributes of "the modern" discussed in chapter 2. However, unlike Carpentier's conceptualization of agonistic discourse, which presupposes the homogenization of one side of the conflict ("homogenization of the self as opposed to the enemy"), the discourse of uniprogressivism that I have analyzed made invisible the diversity within each of the opposing camps—both Putin's supporters and opponents. The differences within each side were obliterated to the extent that the two groups of opponents came to be seen as totally homogeneous and mutually exclusive.

Essentialization was observed when Russia was presented as *essentially* backward and unable to produce anything intellectually valid; when the general population of Russia (as opposed to those advocating for the uniprogressive reforms) was seen as *essentially* submissive and unable to resist the abuses of power; when "the new generation" was constructed as *essentially* progressive; and when the West was presented as a natural avant-garde of humanity, its driving force and role model.

Universalization manifested itself in the belief of the necessity of Westernization. The Western institutions of power and the Western ways of governing society were discussed not as specifically Western but as universal—the ones that need to be established and implemented in Russia in order to make it "modern." The belief in the universal validity of Western "know-how" regarding social and political management was so strong that it warranted no discussion at all; the necessity of Westernization was taken for granted. Everything Western was normatively universalized and presented as a point of reference and guidance.

Normalization appeared in the valorization of the West as a model for imitation; everything that turned out to violate a Western "norm" was taken as pathological, which found its expression in the metaphors of diseases such as "absenteeism," "senility," and "paralysis." *Moralization* found its expression in the presentation of Putin's system of power as an immoral regime functioning in "tight moral frames." The evilness of those in power and people supporting them was often imagined as a shared desire to "turn the clock back," "return the country to the past," "deprive Russia of its future," and so on. In contrast, the advocates for uniprogressive reforms imagined

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 90 09-10-2018 14:06:15

themselves as the forces of good, pursuing their historical mission to fight evil and "normalize" Russia in line with Western norms. These and similar discursive constructions presented the opposition between those in power and the protesters not in political terms, but as a clash of good against evil.

Finally, *dehistorization*—the elimination of historical context—was evident in numerous references to history in which Putin's system of power was equated with that of the USSR or the Russian Empire. Leaving aside all the specificities of the historical context of contemporary Russia, as well as the contexts in which the Russian and Soviet empires functioned, these and similar articulations dealt not with real historical developments but rather with mythologies stripped of all complexity and nuance. To put it in Roland Barthes' (1972) terms, the myth—a second-order semiological system that emerges from a semiological chain existing before it—appeared when an additional signification was added to the sign "empire," transforming its pre-existing meaning to an empty mythical form. In the course of this transformation, the conceptual richness of the sign—its value that belonged to history and its memory of a particular order of things—evaporated. The new mythical form did not retain the full set of historical traces; it impoverished the sign's meaning, putting its history at a distance without totally destroying it.

In sum, by articulating the general population of Russia as a unified "mass" that was *essentially* amoral, non-modern, and radically different from liberals with a uniprogressive agenda, the latter created the conditions for "maximum separation," to put it in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, where "no element in the system of equivalences enters into relations other than those of opposition to the elements of the other system" (1985, 129). When this condition is reached, "two societies" appear in place of one, and the confrontation between these "societies" becomes "fierce, total and indiscriminate: there exist no discourses capable of establishing differences within an equivalential chain in which each and every one of its elements symbolizes evil" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 129). In the cases I analyzed in the two previous chapters, this "fierce" confrontation manifested itself in the symbolic of the "mass" of Russian people through their denigration and dehumanization, as well as suggestions to erase their very existence through "correcting" their "abnormality" or depriving them of political rights. It is here that the third nodal point of the antagonistic discourse discussed by Carpentier (2017)—the need to destroy the enemy—rears its head. Though it takes on various forms, this destruction is always about the destruction of the enemy the way it is: either through changing it beyond recognition or getting rid of it by other means.

As is evident from my analysis, the discourse of unidirectional development employed by anti-Putin activists possessed all the qualities of antagonistic discourse as conceptualized by Carpentier (2017). Instead of targeting

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 91 09-10-2018 14:06:15

the issue of alternative projects in political terms through the discussion of ideological, economic, and political aspects of the current situation, this discourse appealed to morality and constructed a dichotomy of good versus evil that did not have any possible political resolution. By imagining themselves as "the forces of good" fighting against "the forces of evil," the speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed revealed their lack of awareness of the antagonisms and tensions existing within each of the two imagined unities. Their insistence on seeing opponents as a homogeneous entity instead of a complex web of relations characterized by contradictions and tensions prevented them from seeing multiple possibilities for engaging with this complex social reality for the sake of positive social change envisioned in inclusive, pluralistic terms. To use Mouffe's words, they were "trapped" by their closed social imaginary, according to which it is possible to bring about positive change through mere negativity:

> To construct oppositional identities, it is not enough to simply foster a process of "de-identification." A second move is necessary. To insist only on the first move is in fact to remain trapped in a problematic according to which the negative moment would be sufficient on its own to bring about something positive, as if new subjectivities were previously available, ready to emerge when the weight of the dominant ideology has been lifted. (Mouffe 2013, 93–94)

Such a social imaginary simply fails to acknowledge the intricacy of the hegemonic struggle and the complexity of identity construction.

It is worth mentioning that some of the speakers and writers whose articulations I analyzed did acknowledge that imagining the "other Russia" in negatively homogeneous and essentialist terms was distorted and counterproductive thinking. Shargunov (2012) criticized this approach by arguing that "even those who support Putin today are not *hopeless*" (emphasis added) and that the opposition needed to refuse its "doctrinal excesses and sense of elitism." Rubtsov (2017) agreed: "With one voice, 'patriots' and 'liberals' . . . have been repeating over and over again—and still do so—that special loyalty to the state and authorities and to the logic of subordination is part and parcel of the mentality of Russian people."

In Rubtsov's view, such a presentation of Russian people was counterproductive in terms of social mobilization against the abuses of power because it did not allow the imagining of ways out or the development of a strategy for resistance on a broad front. Surprisingly, Latynina (2017) also concurred:

> What the opposition in Russia is mostly doing is participating in elections, creating noise on Facebook, eating at Jean Jacques, receiving its allowable half percent[1], and then shrugging their shoulders: "Well, these are our people" . . . .

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 92 09-10-2018 14:06:15

> They deserve the government they have, it is impossible to reach out to them, and those who try to do so are populists and demagogues. (Latynina 2017)

What is noteworthy, however, is that neither Latynina (who coined the term "anchovies" to refer to Putin's supporters) nor other authors of the discursive constructions I analyzed ever acknowledged their own contribution to the homogenization and denigration of Russian people. By arguing against the "elitism" of anti-Putin opposition, Shargunov, for example, does not recognize his own elitism, which manifested itself in the implication that although Putin's supporters were, according to him, "not hopeless," they could only be rescued if acted upon by the "progressives." Depriving the "other Russia" of its subjectivity by transforming it into a passive object for the application of uniprogressive power under the civilizational gaze of pro-Western modernizers, this discursive construction only exacerbated the split between the "two societies."

Ultimately, the non-acknowledged elitism and snobbery of the anti-Putin liberal opposition turned out to be so counterproductive in terms of broad mobilization in the name of democratic changes that one of the most prominent oppositional voices of Russia, the filmmaker Alexander Sokurov, publicly confessed: "I listen to *Echo of Moscow* less and less . . . and I hardly read *Novaya Gazeta* at all—they are behind the train" (Sokurov 2017). The metaphor of being "behind the train," as employed by Sokurov, implied that Russian liberal opposition, whose representatives had been criticizing Putin's regime for years, now looked outdated themselves; intellectually, they had turned out to be unable to meet the requirements of the moment: "They don't know how to develop their political tactics and strategy" (Sokurov 2017). This is a sad outcome for Russian activism toward democratization, as efforts in this direction were restricted by the uniprogressive imaginary: Not only did the strategy of juxtaposing their "progressiveness" against the assumed "background" condition of millions of their compatriots stifle chances for democratization, but it also demobilized allies from the liberal camp, as Sokurov's speech shows. Frustrated by the lack of vision on the part of the "old generation" of anti-Putin activists, the famous filmmaker, together with many other liberally minded people in Russia, now looked to the young generation of the protesters led by Navalny, where there was hope to be found—hope for civilizational changes and the transformation of Russia into a modern democratic state. However, as I strive to argue in this book, it is excessively optimistic to expect a peaceful transformation of a "Tsarist regime" into a democratic political system if the change is articulated in such a way that it splits society into two irreconcilable parts whose symbolic spaces do not overlap.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 93 09-10-2018 14:06:15

As discussed in chapter 3, the transformation of antagonism into agonism is important for establishing and maintaining a democratic system of government and preserving societal peace. A project of democratization of Russian society cannot be successful without incorporating into the political process a wide variety of social groups. Interestingly, the acknowledgment of the necessity to unite equivalentially different underdogs of Russian society, thus constructing a hegemonic chain, could be found in other oppositional media, such as *The New Times* magazine or not so overtly pro-Kremlin newspaper as *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*:

> Against the "apparition of the youth to the people," we have forgotten about the truckers, about dozens of local conflicts about back pay, about pensioners, who are very upset about price rises, utility bills, and medicine. They simply do not protest in the streets, but they write letters. (Oreshkin 2017)

> Because of the total corruption, there are no social lifts and free education for the youth, and there is no normal pension system for elders, and there is no affordable and qualitative medical service for everybody, and there is the reduction of workplaces, and there are absolutely intolerable conditions for private enterprises. (Kurtov, as cited in Gorbachev 2017)

What we observe in these excerpts is the attempt to pluralize both the adversary and the self, and making the frontiers separating the former from the latter more porous. The hierarchization is also missing: Even the pensioners, the most representative group of the notorious "TV generation," are presented here not as "the forces of the past" unworthy of being accounted for but as potential collaborators in a democratizing project. This is where the transformation of enemies into adversaries is taking place: Despite all the differences in worldview between the different social groups enlisted, there is a recognition of the necessity to deal with social diversity in a democratic way, without suppressing it. As Mouffe (2009) put it, "Far from jeopardizing democracy, agonistic confrontation is in fact its very condition of existence" (103). While recognizing difference and conflict, the agonistic model positions the adversary in the same symbolic space, accepting differences as legitimate. In other words, the democratic rights and humanity of the other are recognized.

As mentioned earlier, the examples I have just discussed are from other media, not from *Echo* and *Novaya*. These discursive constructions did not provide a full-fledged pluralistic discourse, and they did not challenge the dominant discourse of uniprogressivism, but at least they provided an opportunity to see that an alternative articulation was possible. It was not necessary to juxtapose the protesting youth against "another Russia" by valorizing the former and denigrating the latter—an enterprise that is deeply antidemocratic, counterproductive in terms of mass mobilization, and detrimental

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 94 09-10-2018 14:06:15

to societal peace. None of the 131 contributors to the *Echo of Moscow* and *Novaya Gazeta*, whose opinions I analyzed in two of my case studies, made efforts to unite equivalentially various social demands existing in Russia to create a popular front to take on those in power.

The dominant trend of the uniprogressive articulations under my analysis was "closure of the democratic space" (Mouffe 2009, 77) undermining the basis of the democratic public sphere. The representatives of the "other Russia"—Putin's supporters—were imagined not as adversaries striving to organize the common symbolic space in a different way but as enemies existing outside of the symbolic space shared by the anti-Putin "progressives." The latter did not see the difference between themselves and their opponents positively, as a condition of possibility for the democratization of Russian society; rather, they treated it in exclusively negative terms—as an abnormal condition (sickness) in need of correction or eradiation.

As I showed in the two previous chapters, the most radical oppositional voices went so far in the denigration of "common" Russian people as to reach the point of their total symbolic destruction as human beings—dehumanization, in other words. It is interesting to note that I never encountered such an extreme level of "othering" the "general population" of Russia when analyzing the uniprogressive discourse of perestroika. In this sense, the quality of democratic discourse within the Russian public sphere has only deteriorated. This is in line with Mouffe's observation regarding the tension between liberty and equality, which is constitutive for the liberal-democratic project, under neoliberalism:

> What has happened under neo-liberal hegemony is that the liberal component became so dominant that democratic values have been eviscerated. Several previous democratic advances have been dismantled, and under the motto of "modernization," core democratic values have been dismissed as "archaic." (Mouffe 2013, 124)

This tendency is definitely observed in the transformation of the uniprogressive discourse of modernization that has taken place since perestroika times. The democratic value of equality has been diminished and replaced by the liberal value of "free choice"—a "post-democratic condition," as Mouffe (2013, 124) put it.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the relations between the members of a community become more democratic when they acknowledge and accept the particularities and limitations of their claims, an impossibility if discursive closures are stabilized through the establishment of solid dividing frontiers. The stabilization of closures happens inevitably if the frontiers are presented not as contingent and temporary but as essential and natural, as in the case of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 95 09-10-2018 14:06:15

the uniprogressive discourse organized through universalization and homogenization of "the traditional" and "the modern," "the barbarian" and "the progressive," "the West" and "the rest," and so forth. This is exactly what we observe in the uniprogressive discourse drawing solid antagonistic frontiers between the "masses" of "non-progressive" Russians and a constitutive outside consisting not only of Russian uniprogressively minded modernizers but also the entirety of the West, whose modernity they represented and with whom they aligned themselves. In the representation of Russian liberal voices whose articulations I analyzed, Westernization was presented as an unconditional solution that Russia needed to adopt. They did not see Western modernity as a product of specific historical and cultural circumstances; rather, they imagined it to be a universal civilizational condition that Russia, through striving to "catch up," needed to attain. By transforming the situational into a historical necessity and propagating a "there is no alternative" dogma, Russian liberals a uniprogressive imaginary closed their discourse and diminished the opportunities for creative imagination.

As discussed in chapter 3, this "correct" understanding of historical development is inherently non-democratic: It pathologizes those holding different views and excludes them from democratic communication. To be sure, the propagandistic machine of Russia does everything possible to present the members of the non-systemic opposition of Russia as enemies of the Russian state and Russian people, intentionally driving a wedge between them (see chapter 4); the writers and speakers whose opinions I analyzed are correct to point this out. However, their own contribution to the process of alienation is difficult to overestimate. It is unrealistic to expect that the "masses" making up the general population of Russia would support those who systematically disparage and demean them by presenting them as "underdeveloped," "inferior," "sick," "immoral," and so on.

Instead of trying to form coalitions with other social groups, Russian liberals with uniprogressive imaginary only reinforced already-existing antagonisms, preventing popular fronts from coming into being. As a result, there was no understanding between the "other Russia" and the activists pushing forward their unidirectional civilizational outlook. What was clearly missing on their part was an attempt to frame the necessity of social change in such a way as to make the mobilization frame resonate with the potential constituents of the social change process. The success of a social group striving for social change is hardly conceivable without the creation of an equivalential chain with the demands of other societal sectors; in turn, the creation of such a chain is inconceivable without *frame resonance*—congruence between the content of framing and the characteristics of the broader cultural environment in which collective action framing takes place (Snow and Benford 1988). Without *frame alignment*—a linkage of collective action frames and the

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 96 09-10-2018 14:06:15

cultural predisposition of potential allies—one can hardly expect the creation of a broad coalition (Snow et al. 1986).

It is well known that dissonance between the frames of social movement organizations and those of their potential allies appears if there is a mismatch between mobilization frames and the cultural heritage of target publics. In the cases under my analysis, this mismatch was especially evident with respect to Russia's Soviet period of history. By constructing a historic narrative of Soviet Russia as a society with "a heritage of intimidation" and "a heritage of inertness, sluggishness, inability to take responsibility" (Mlechin 2012b), Russian liberals with a uniprogressive agenda mark out the boundaries of their discourse in a way that make it immediately adversarial with respect to many of Putin's supporters.

WAS THERE REALLY NOTHING POSITIVE ABOUT "SOVOK"?

More than 50 percent of Russia's people believe that the economic model of the USSR was close to ideal, while 40 percent also believe that the political system of the USSR was close to ideal (Levada-Center 2014a). Although a more recent poll conducted by Pew Research Center "shows a 10-percentage-point drop in the share of Russians who say the collapse of the Soviet Union has been a bad thing for their country (59% in 2017, compared with 69% in 2015)" (Masci 2017), a majority of Russians continue to evaluate the collapse of the Soviet Union negatively. One can hardly expect to create a chain of equivalence between various democratic demands within Russian society without making attempts to align frames with those of potential allies from the camp of millions of Russians who remember the USSR positively. For the sake of this alliance, it is important to acknowledge that what many Russians miss from the Soviet way of life is not the Gulag, political repression, or any of the other negatives usually highlighted when the USSR is discussed, but their own, non-official socialism—the web of human values that allowed Soviet people to live full lives even under the pressure of a totalitarian ideological system (Yurchak 2006). These values were equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship, ethical relations, and social security, broadly conceived.

As Joseph Stiglitz (2003) put it, "The Communist system, while it did not make for an easy life, avoided the extremes of poverty, and kept living standards relatively equal, by providing a high common denominator of quality for education, housing, health care and child care services" (2003, 154). In the 1980s, the Soviet Union was a country with no homelessness or unemployment; there was no "legacy of inherited inequality," Stiglitz maintains (2003,

154). Susan Buck-Morss agrees: "It needs to be remembered that socialism did deliver to the general population of the Soviet Union levels of public health, medical care, and leisure facilities that had never before existed, and that their democratic distribution set a model for the world" (119). What also needs to be remembered is that by the end of the USSR, during Brezhnev's years that are especially valued by the people of Russia (Lenta.ru 2013), the excesses of Stalinism had been left far behind as well: "Political repression was limited and highly selective, and ideological indoctrination had become more of a bureaucratic ritual than an ardent inquisition" (Castells 2010, 7). Political dissidence was confined to isolated intellectual circles. Within broader strata of Soviet society, it manifested itself through kitchen gossip deeply rooted in Russian tradition (Ries 1997).

On the other hand, the 1990s, as mentioned previously, Yeltsin's years of radical market reforms, valorized by Russian liberals because of the "freedom" brought to Russian society, are remembered by many people of Russia predominantly for soaring inflation, skyrocketing prices, massive unemployment, and rampant crime (see chapter 4). The ethnographic works of Nancy Ries (1997), Alexei Yurchak (2006), Olga Shevchenko (2009), and other scholars provide a priceless source of knowledge on how ordinary people of the former USSR evaluated the changes to their way of life—as "complete disintegration," "collapse," "catastrophe," and so on. "By the time I left [Russia] at the end of May 1990," Ries writes,

> Even the most basic foodstuffs had become scarce in those stores in Moscow (and the situation was worse in other cities and towns). Nine months before, fresh fish and meat had been difficult to find, but there was cheese, and even sugar. In January 1990, cheese had vanished and supplies of sugar had dwindled, even with rationing . . . . In early April 1990, for the first time the bread stores were empty of loaves by mid-morning. People talked about bread's disappearance all day long . . . . A couple of my older acquaintances told me they were starting to hoard bread, drying it and storing it in large plastic bags, in case there were none at all. The last time Russians had dried bread in this manner was during the war. (Ries 1997, 136)

As Ries notes, the war (World War II) was a constant referent in conversations during the 1990s, with the latter evaluated negatively as compared to war times (138). This is exactly how millions of Russian people remember the liberalizing reforms of the 1990s—as murderous, not liberating—in contrast to the vision propagated by Russian liberals. It is because of these memories that many people of Russia refuse to support the initiatives of contemporary Russian modernizers; the discourse of the latter does not differ much from what people heard during perestroika and Yeltsin's liberal reforms: it has always been about democratization, political freedoms, and

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 98 09-10-2018 14:06:15

economic liberalization. In reality of the reforms conducted under these slogans had brought the dissolution of the welfare system, mass misery, and social degradation.

What this very brief overview of the positive aspects of the Soviet project and the negative aspects of Yeltsin's post-perestroika years of liberalizing market reforms suggests is that it is not impossible to re-articulate the issue so as to align the frame of reference toward the USSR with the attitudes of the broad population of Russia. If Buck-Morss, Castells, Stiglitz, and other internationally recognized authors can discuss the positive aspects of Soviet modernity while not forgetting the negative ones, why cannot Russian activists striving for democratization do the same? By focusing their attention exclusively on the negative side of the Soviet way of life, they alienated millions of Russians whose memories of post-perestroika reforms in the name of "progress" led them to believe the cost of another round of such reforms would be impoverishment and social degradation similar to that of the 1990s, when liberals held all the political power and pushed ahead with Westernization—with terrible results for the ordinary person's quality of life.

For activists striving for democratization, it was not necessary to accept the meanings that the majority of Russian people attached to the signifiers "the USSR" and "the 1990s"; yet, they could have treated these interpretations as different, but legitimate, instead of as a remnant of the past to be eradicated. It is through this path of recognizing others as adversaries, but not enemies (see chapter 2), that the idea of "conflictual togetherness" (Carptentier 2017, 178) can be realized and the project of pluralist democracy can come into being. Making the barriers between the identity of the self and the "other Russia" more permeable would allow activists for democratization to establish connections between former enemies and make alliances across borders possible. This would help pave the way toward working out mutually acceptable terms of co-existence and reducing the chance of violence of all types—physical, material, structural, symbolic, and so on.

Interestingly, some of the speakers and writers whose opinions I analyzed confessed that they were "firmly against revolutions" (Shargunov 2012) "because usually their outcomes are sad and different from what we expected" (Prokhorova 2017). In their view, those in power sought to provoke a revolutionary outburst by refusing to negotiate with the progressive opposition (Albats 2017). The problem with this outlook, however, is that by blaming the Kremlin exclusively, while failing to analyze their own mistakes and making no attempt to create broader coalitions with people whom they imagined in strictly negative terms of intellectual underdevelopment and moral degradation, the anti-Putin voices only contributed to the radicalization of the societal split. As we know from history, an unwillingness and/or inability to make alliances often produces detrimental results for popular struggles:

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 99 09-10-2018 14:06:15

The revolutionary minority either cannot succeed in taking power, or it grasps power by violent means and keeps it through repressing the "underdeveloped others" who oppose modernizing transformations. In my view, this is what is happening in post-Euromaidan Ukraine, which is to be analyzed in the next part of the book.

NOTE

1. "Half percent" refers to a share of the electoral vote; Latynina suggests that the so-called systemic opposition in Russia through the registered political parties A Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) are "allowed" to take this trifling portion of the vote by Putin's system of power.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 100 09-10-2018 14:06:15

Part III

THE UNIPROGRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF THE EUROMAIDAN

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 101 09-10-2018 14:06:15

Chapter 8

Shadows of the Past

THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT

The Euromaidan (also "the Maidan") started in Kyiv on November 21, 2013, when protesters expressed their disapproval of President Victor Yanukovych for refusing to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. This agreement was an extension of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) project launched by the EU in 2004 with an idea of creating a comfort zone around the Union—"a ring of friends" that would be aligned with the West though without necessarily becoming EU members. In May 2008, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative was launched targeting six post-Soviet states—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The program aimed to improve political and economic relations with these states by encouraging them to implement reforms toward the principles of rule of law, a market economy, and good democratic governance. Each of these six countries was expected to sign an individual Association Agreement (AA) with a provision of deepening bilateral economic relations through a "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area" (DCFTA).

The negotiations on the AA with Ukraine, which started in 2010, were expected to result in signing the document at the third summit of the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius, on November 28–29, 2013. This never happened, however; on the premise that the government of Ukraine needed more time to negotiate the terms of the agreement, President Yanukovych refused to sign the document, arguing that "he could not afford to sacrifice trade with Russia—which opposes the deal—for EU ties" (EU Rejects 2013). Many commentators agree that the failure to sign the agreement happened as a result of "Russia's attempt to strong-arm the Ukrainian government into joining the Eurasian Economic Union" (Yekelchuk 2015, 66). But observers

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 103 09-10-2018 14:06:15

differ as to the reasons behind Russia's desire to keep Ukraine in its zone of influence.

Some commentators tend to explain Putin's Ukraine policy as an extension of his authoritarian rule at home—his alleged fear of the spread of democracy as a result of Ukraine's integration with the EU (Snyder 2018), and his subsequent desire to impede the efforts of his neighbors "to institute, maintain, or strengthen political rights, civil liberties, and democratic politics" (Cameron and Orenstein 2012, 38). Others discern Russian nationalism, chauvinism toward Ukrainians (Kappeler 2014; Kuzio 2017; Riabchuk 2016), or even Russian "fascism" (Motyl 2016). But the majority of analysts discussing Russian meddling in Ukrainian affairs interpret it through a broader geopolitical lens (Götz 2015; Mead 2014; Rutland 2015). Within this globalized frame of reference, the emphasis falls on either Russia's imperial ambitions (Braun 2014; Connolly 2016; Krickovic 2014) or Russia's right to defend its geopolitical interests and demand the recognition of its security concerns (Bennett 2016; Boyd-Barrett 2017b; Pänke 2015).

According to Richard Sakwa (2015b), representing the latter group of scholars, the Ukraine crisis came about as a result of the geopolitical confrontation between the Russian and the Euro-Atlantic visions of the world order. By trying to integrate Ukraine into its zone of interest, the European Union did not account for the already-existing network of economic and other projects between Russia and Ukraine. The AA precluded Ukraine's closer integration into Eurasian ventures, which, as some observers believe, was taken by Russia as a security threat: "Not only was the Association Agreement incompatible with Ukraine's existing free-trade agreements with Russia, but there was also the Lisbon requirement for Ukraine to align its defence and security policy with the EU" (Sakwa 2015a, 41).

In the view of those who focus on security threats as perceived by Russia, Putin's suspicion toward EU plans to bring Ukraine into its zone of interest also stemmed from the inexorable movement of NATO to Russia's borders despite the promise of then US Secretary of State James Baker to Gorbachev not to extend NATO's jurisdiction eastward (Sarotte 2010). According to this outlook, the Bucharest NATO summit of 2008, where Georgia and Ukraine were promised NATO membership (Bucharest Summit Declaration 2008), only fueled Russia's mistrust toward its "Western partners," which had already been vented in Putin's famous speech at the Munich Security Conference of 2007 (Putin 2007). From this perspective, the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 was Russia's attempt to prevent NATO from encircling it with bases on its southern borders (Mearsheimer 2016). It can thereby be argued that an array of security threats, as the Kremlin understood them, led Putin to reject the Euromaidan, annex Crimea, and support anti-Maidan rebels in eastern Ukraine (Kissinger, as cited in Goldberg 2016; Mearsheimer 2014).

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 104 09-10-2018 14:06:15

As stated earlier, the analysis of broader geopolitical frames also yielded an alternative narrative—one widely adopted in the West—that tendeds to explain Russia's attempts to preserve its spheres of influence not in terms of security considerations but as Russia's long-harbored desire to revive imperial control over its neighboring regions. As Hillary Clinton (2014) unequivocally put it:

> Putin's worldview is shaped by his admiration for powerful czars of Russian history, Russia's long-standing interests in controlling the nations on its borders and his personal determination that his country never again appear weak or at the mercy of the West, as he believes it was after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He wants to reassert Russia's power by dominating its neighbors and controlling their access to energy . . . . All of that helps explain why Putin first pressured Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych to walk away from closer ties with the European Union in late 2013, and why, after Yanukovych's government disintegrated, Putin invaded and annexed Crimea. (227)

The same idea about Putin's imperial ambitions was put forward by Zbigniew Brzezinski (2014), John McCain (2014), Condoleezza Rice (2014), and numerous other well-known politicians, analysts, and journalists.

As McCain asserted, "(Putin) does not accept that Russia's neighbors, least of all Ukraine, are independent countries. To him, they are Russia's 'near abroad' and must be brought back under Moscow's dominion by any means necessary" (McCain 2014). Taras Kuzio (2017), an expert on Ukrainian affairs, took a similar stance: "The roots of Putin's war against Ukraine . . . lie in Russia's inability to come to terms with losing an empire and its prioritisation of building supra-national structures rather than focusing on creating a Russian nation state" (357). Ukraine historian Serhii Plokhii framed the issue as Russia "looking for a more effective and cheaper way of dominating the area," using not only its military but also its culture, language, and "economic muscle" to assert regional influence (Dyczok 2015). In this view, widely shared in the West, Putin's opposition to Ukraine's European integration and the "coup d'etat"—as Putin dubbed the Ukrainian revolution—merely provided a pretext for his decision to invade Ukraine and conquer it.

Regardless of the Kremlin's true goal—to defend its strategic geopolitical interests or to destabilize Ukraine and establish imperial control over it—the pattern of Russian intrusion had already stirred the emotions of Western-looking Ukrainians for whom Yanukovych's refusal to sign the agreement was "the last straw": "In 2013, he was the president, who personified a corrupt and inefficient regime and was increasingly subservient to dictatorial Russia" (Yekelchuk 2015, 85). Many of the protesters were indignant at Putin's alleged "unwillingness to accept Ukrainians are a separate people

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 105 09-10-2018 14:06:15

and Ukraine is an independent state with a sovereign right to determine its geopolitical alliances" (Kuzio 2017, 249).

In the articulations of Euromaidan activists, which I analyze in the next chapter, the agreement with the EU represented several things: a movement away from a system so corrupt that Transparency International ranked Ukraine 144 out of 177 countries on its Corruption Perceptions Index (Åslund 2014); an escape from the Yanukovych family milking the country's economy and depriving its citizens of any hope for a better future; and an attempt to achieve a more advanced democratic and civilizational condition—to make a "civilizational choice," as Anders Åslund (2015, 32) put it. For many of the protesters, who hardly knew the details of the proposed Agreement, an idealized "Europe" served as a symbol of "democracy, rule of law, and economic opportunity (Yekelchuk 2015, 102). Euromaidan supporters found all of these lacking not only in Yanukovych's Ukraine but also in Putin's Russia. For many of them, the Russia-led Eurasian Custom Union signified historical regression. As Kuzio (2017) maintains, "In the eyes of patriotic and nationalistic Ukrainians, Putin and Yanukovych came to represent the revival of the Soviet Union's Ukrainianophobic policies" (183). Joining Russia instead of Europe was seen as slipping back toward a "Soviet despotism."

It is here that the positions of Euromaidan liberals and nationalists converged: The latter supported the Euromaidan not because of democratization but due to its clear anti-Russia stance. A giant portrait of Stepan Bandera[1], an ideologue of Ukrainian nationalism, installed in Kyiv's main square, symbolized the unity of Euromaidan liberals associating the EU with human rights and good governance and the radicals co-opting the movement toward the EU for their own nationalistic agenda. At the end of the day, it is this paradoxical unity that made the Euromaidan movement deeply contradictory, alienated Ukrainian Russophones, and, finally, transformed the civic protest movement into an armed struggle (Gessen 2014; Katchanovski 2015; Shenfield 2014). Among the Euromaidan-related events that most alienated the Russophone population of Ukraine from the revolution (I discuss this in chapter 11 in greater detail) were the massive torch procession in Kyiv on January 1, 2014, to celebrate the 105th anniversary of Stepan Bandera's birth, and then, the following month, an attempt by the Parliament of Ukraine to abolish the law granting Russian the status of official language in several southeastern regions of Ukraine heavily populated by Russian-speakers. This happened on February 23, the day after Yanukovych was removed from office and managed to flee Ukraine for Russia. The beginning of the wide-scale resistance in southeastern regions prevented this measure from being signed into law, but the "damage had been done" (Wilson 2014, 113).

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 106 09-10-2018 14:06:15

UKRAINE'S DIFFICULT TOTALITY

It is important to recognize that the idea of European integration pushed by the Euromaidan was not unanimously accepted throughout Ukraine. In February, when Kyiv was already in flames and people were dying in its streets in the name of Euro-integration, the support for this integration across Ukraine was no higher than 41 percent (Wilson 2014, 150). Regional differences were distinct: "Eighty-two percent in the West and 57% in Northern Ukraine preferred the EU. In the East, 63% preferred the ECU, while in the South there was no settled view, with 37% preferring the ECU and 28% the EU (35% declined to answer)" (Kull and Ramsay 2015, 7). The farther east one looked, the stronger and more unified a rejection of the Euromaidan with its European agenda one would find (KIIS 2014). More than 75 percent of those living in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (two eastern regions of Ukraine predominantly populated by Russian-speakers) rejected the agreement with the EU; many of them believed that the Euromaidan revolution was an "armed coup-d'etat organized by the opposition with the help of the West" and did not approve of Euromaidan revolutionaries using weapons against police forces (ZN,UA 2014). Only 20 percent of people living in Crimea supported the Euromaidan, while 71 percent were against it (Kush 2014).

This split of attitudes toward the Euromaidan reflected the complexities of the history of Ukraine—"a borderland not only of different state formations but, much more importantly, of different civilizational and cultural zones" (Plokhy 2008, 293)—with Russians the second largest ethnic group of the Ukrainian population. Ethnically, Russians and Ukrainians are very close; both descend from eastern Slavs. From the ninth through thirteenth centuries, their common polity was the quasi-state of Kievan Rus. It was the Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth century that separated the histories of the peoples living in the territories of contemporary Ukraine (Bukkvoll 1997). Before these territories were unified as a nation-state, they were controlled by different state and imperial formations, including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Russian Empire. Prior to World War II, the region now known as "western Ukraine" was divided among Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, while southeastern regions were under Russia's control.

Ukraine's path to independence was long and complicated. In 1917–1918, after the collapse of the Russian Empire, it enjoyed a short period of statehood. In 1919, Bolsheviks took control of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was established; in 1922, it became part of the USSR. It was under Soviet rule that the modern borders of the Ukrainian state were formed. In 1919, Lenin also assigned extensive territories to the east

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 107 09-10-2018 14:06:15

and south to what would become Ukrainian jurisdiction. By the end of the World War II, Stalin incorporated into Ukraine its contemporary western regions; Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954. The centuries-long succession of different civilizations has left its mark, however: Numerous public opinion polls conducted before the Euromaidan showed that the majority of residents in Ukraine's West prioritized Ukraine's relations with EU countries, while the majority of residents in the Southeast prioritized Ukraine's relations with Russia, and the preferences of those living in central regions were divided (Formation of a Common Identity 2007). Although there is no clear line separating the East and the West of Ukraine, and although the voting border between these mega-regions is gradually moving eastward (Yekelchuk 2015), the divide still exists.

Since the declaration of Ukraine's independence in 1991, two ideas of national identity and two basic models of statehood have been competing in Ukraine: the "Ethnic Ukrainian National" versus the "Eastern Slavic" identities (Shulman 2004), as well as the "monist" versus "pluralist" models of statehood (Sakwa 2015a). The ethnic Ukrainian national idea is based on the notion that Ukrainian culture, language, and ethnicity-centered history should be the dominant integrating forces in the Ukrainian nation-state. According to this ideology, drawing on the nationalistic ideas of Dmytro Dontsov[2] and Stepan Bandera, Ukraine is regarded as an organic whole; it should be unitary and monolingual, and its national interests (understood in monocultural terms) come before those of individuals or any social group. This perspective presents the historical Ukrainian-Russian relationship as one of colonized and colonizer: The presence of Russians in Ukraine is explained as the result of imperial Russian policy, with the spread of the Russian language seen as the fruit of forced Russification. The ethnic Ukrainian model of statehood seeks Western assistance in terms of creating anti-Russian alliances.

In contrast, the Eastern Slavic idea "envisages the Ukrainian nation as founded on two primary ethnic groups, languages, and cultures—Ukrainian and Russian—that are unified by their being embedded in a common historical and cultural space" (Shulman 2004, 39). Its adherents support imperial Russian and Soviet historiography's interpretation of the common historical and cultural paths of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian peoples, who form "brotherly relations" or "Slavic unity" among the three Slavic groups. Rejecting the narrowness of the ethnic-nationalistic approach, the pluralist model of statehood, in turn, urges recognizing that "the mental mapping of Ukraine was impossible in the past and is hardly possible today without taking into account the diversity of Ukrainian regions" (Plokhy 2008, 290) and that it is necessary, therefore, to rethink Ukraine's history "to overcome limitations imposed on it by the centuries-old national paradigm" (Plokhy 2008, 300). In other words, it is necessary to acknowledge, as the pluralist

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 108 09-10-2018 14:06:15

outlook suggests, that all Ukrainian citizens with all ethnic backgrounds have an equal right to participate in deciding the future of the Ukrainian state. Rather than seeing difference in terms of lack, the pluralist model of Ukrainian statehood presents it as diversity that needs to be recognized and valued by an inclusive constitutional order.

The ideas of ethnic Ukrainian national identity and the monist model of statehood are more popular in western Ukraine, where more ethnic Ukrainians live: "Ethnic Ukrainians more than ethnic Russians tend to adhere to the culture-based definition of nation" (Formation of a Common Identity 2007, 5). In southeastern regions, where more ethnic Russians live, people are fond of the ideologies of Eastern Slavic national identity and the pluralist model of statehood: "Ethnic Russians more adhere to the civic definition of the Ukrainian nation" (Formation of a Common Identity 2007, 5). This East-West division makes even more sense if one takes into account that people's linguistic preferences are not coextensive with their ethnic self-identification. Many ethnic Ukrainians living in the southeast use Russian as a language of everyday communication. The farther east one looks, the more Russian-speakers one finds regardless of ethnic origin, with 96 percent of people living in the Donbas region speaking predominantly or exclusively Russian. In looking father west, one encounters higher concentrations of Ukrainian-speakers, with up to 99 percent of the dwellers of Halychyna (Galicia) and Volyn speaking predominantly or exclusively Ukrainian (Vyshnyak 2015).

What is interesting, before the events of 2013–2014, despite their pluralist views on Ukrainian statehood and their identification with Russian language and culture, the vast majority of Russian-speakers considered Ukraine their motherland, saw themselves as Ukrainian patriots, and did not believe that the regions of eastern and western Ukraine might separate because of political contradictions or linguistic and cultural differences (Formation of a Common Identity 2007). To separate from Ukraine and create an independent state in 2007 was supported by only 8.1 percent of the people living in the South and 4.8 percent in the East; to separate from Ukraine and join another state was supported by 11.6 percent in the South and 10.4 percent in the East (Formation of a Common Identity 2007, 20). However, many people living in the southeastern regions favored the idea of autonomous self-government within the Ukrainian state: In the South, it was supported by 25.7 percent of the people, and in the East by 22.5 percent (Formation of a Common Identity 2007, 20). As these figures show, adherence to separatism was not a popular public mood either in the South or East of Ukraine, both heavily populated by ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians: "Opinion polls in the Donbas both before and after the start of fighting never showed majority support for separation from Ukraine" (Yekelchuk 2015, 7). What the dwellers of the Donbas wanted was the expansion of rights and powers of regional

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 109 09-10-2018 14:06:15

self-government to defend local cultural traditions and political preferences stemming from them.

DONBAS UPRISING

Starting in late February of 2014, demonstrations protesting the "coup d'etat" took place in Ukraine's eastern and some southern regions. Many of these gatherings were held under Russian national banners, although, according to the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), only about 12 percent of people living in the "separatist" regions of Donetsk and Luhansk "definitely agreed" in April 2014 that their regions "should secede from Ukraine and join Russia" (KIIS 2014). More than 75 percent of them believed that "Ukraine and Russia should be independent but friendly states with open borders and without visas" (ZN,UA 2014). About 37 percent of the dwellers of these two regions wanted Ukraine to be unitary but decentralized, while another 40 percent believed Ukraine should be a federation (KIIS 2014).

In early March 2014, after the victory of the Euromaidan, Russian military forces took control of Crimea—a peninsula in the southern part of Ukraine populated predominantly by ethnic Russians. Transferred to Ukraine from Russia by an administrative decision in 1954, it had never belonged to "Ukrainian ethnic territories"—a concept that Ukrainian intellectuals established in the nineteenth century (Yekelchuk 2015, 50). The peninsula is very important to Russia's state narrative. Here, in Crimea, Prince Vladimir[3] adopted Christian Orthodoxy as an official religion for the people of Kievan Rus; it is also where Catherine the Great defeated the Ottoman Empire, and where the "heroic defense" of Sebastopol—"the city of Russian glory"—took place during the Crimean war and the World War II. Crimea is also important to Russia from a strategic perspective: According to a Ukraine-Russia treaty, Russia's Black Sea fleet was stationed here even after the independence of Ukraine was declared in 1991. After Crimea was annexed by Russia, a referendum on the future status of the peninsula was held, and, according to Russian authorities, the majority of its population voted in favor of joining Russia (Gazeta.ru 2014). Despite the fact that a United Nations General Assembly Resolution declared the referendum invalid, Crimea was announced to be a part of the Russian Federation.

The armed conflict in the Donbas probably would not have started without the Crimean precedent and other encouraging signals from Moscow. On March 4, Putin pronounced words that inspired many opponents of the Euromaidan to radicalize their struggle: "We absolutely must send the signal to people in Ukraine's southeast that they can feel safe, and know that they will be able to take part in the general political process of stabilizing the country" (Putin 2014). This made many Donbas people opposing the "coup d'etat" believe that their

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 110 09-10-2018 14:06:15

resistance would be supported by Russia. In addition, "the hope that a Crimean-style incorporation into Russia would immediately increase living standards added to the explosive cocktail" (Yekelchuk 2015, 8). In April 2014, anti-Maidan protests in the Donbas escalated into an armed insurgency, backed by Russia. Not only did Russia provide the rebels with weapons, it also supported them with Russian military personnel when the rebels appeared to be facing defeat in August 2014 (Sutyagin 2015).

The fact that Russia sent to the Donbas weapons, military experts, and "volunteers" is usually referred to as "the Russian invasion." However, what is often lost in representing the Ukrainian crisis exclusively through this frame is that 45.3 percent of the people living in Donetsk and 55.1 percent in Luhansk oblasts justified the armed resistance against the new Kyiv government on the grounds that "during the revolution, the protesters in Kyiv and western regions did the same" and "there was no other means to attract the center's attention to the problems of the regions" (ZN,UA 2014). In other words, what is often left without attention is that the roots of the insurgency were local, despite its co-opting by Russia for its own geopolitical interests: "The fighting in eastern Ukraine . . . combines features of a covert foreign invasion with those of a civil conflict" (Yekelchuk 2015, 5). It is important to recognize that during the first stage of the conflict, in January–March 2014, the rebels "were primarily locals" (Kuzio 2017, 252).

Scholars examining the Ukrainian crisis point out several major factors that influenced the rejection of the Euromaidan by the overwhelming majority of Donbas dwellers; the most important one is the region's cultural identity. The Donbas is an old industrial region famous for its coal and iron mining, as well as metallurgy and chemical industries. During the mass industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century, many ethnic Russians came to the region to work in its mines and workshops. From the 1860s onward, "the region began to take on a pronounced Russian character" (Wilson 1995, 274); "In the 1871 and 1897 censuses, Russians accounted for 82.5 and 73.1 percent respectively of the Donbas population" (Kuzio 2017, 172). During the 1920s, as a result of Bolshevik politics of Ukrainization, which aimed to make the Soviet project more attractive to the Ukrainian peasantry, the proportion of Ukrainians in the Donbas reached 60 percent by 1926; however, the trend reversed following World War II, with the Russian population in the region swelling from its 1926 level of 31.4 percent to 44 percent by 1989 (Wilson 1995, 275). Moreover, the overwhelming majority of Donbas residents, regardless of ethnic origin, use the Russian language in daily communication, with the majority also claiming Russian as their native language.

Regardless of the historical reasons for Russification in the area—Ukrainian historians tend to believe it was a conscious imperial policy, while their Russian counterparts prefer framing the issue in terms of people's free

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 111 09-10-2018 14:06:16

choice—the most important point for the purposes of this book is to recognize that the Donbas has developed into a very specific region even within Ukraine's highly heterogeneous cultural landscape. It is overwhelmingly Russian-speaking, Russia-friendly, and nostalgic for Soviet times (Formation of a Common Identity 2007). Even though, as mentioned earlier, the majority of people living in the region considered the Ukrainian state as their motherland, many believed that Kyiv's governing elites were threatening the Donbas with "'Galicianization"—the imposition of "foreign" culture from the West of Ukraine (Wilson 1995, 281). This perception was only encouraged by politicians: "Incapable of solving the grave economic and social problems during the post-communist transition, political parties found it easier to fight over the 'imposition' of Ukrainian on traditionally Russian-speaking or bilingual regions in eastern and southern Ukraine" (Yekelchuk 2015, 17). As early as 1994, after three years of Ukrainian independence, 80 percent of the participants in a local Donbas referendum on the region's status voted for federalism and 87 percent to make Russian a second state language (Pobedonostsev 2014).

Another factor in the Donbas rejecting the Euromaidan was economic. According to the 1989 Soviet census, 70 percent of Donbas inhabitants belonged to the working class (Mykhnenko 2003, 95), with a significant portion of them working in coal mines. Toiling in extremely dangerous conditions, miners were paid more than any other category of Soviet industrial worker (Crowley 1994); their income was higher than the average for the entire Soviet population (Friedgut and Siegelbaum 1990, 12). Their status as the working elite was also maintained by symbolic means: "Soviet films, songs, and political pronouncements lionized the (always Russian-speaking) Donbas miners as model workers, shouldering their patriotic duty to provide the country with fuel" (Yekelchuk 2015, 116). Although the overall quality of miners' lives under the USSR left much to be desired (poor housing, poor ecological conditions, poor working conditions, extremely high mortality rates, and so forth), it deteriorated significantly after Ukraine declared its state independence (Swain 2006).

In 1991, with the turnout approaching 80 percent, 84 percent of Donbas voters supported Ukraine's separation from the USSR in hopes that the Ukrainian government would do a better job in securing "normal" and "civilized" living conditions (Siegelbaum 1997). But their hopes were never realized. Instead of economic betterment, Ukraine's state independence brought a dramatic worsening of living conditions and profound disillusionment with the new times:

> Wildcat strikes, spontaneous hunger strikes and pickets became a daily occurrence in the Donbas. The repertoire of contention included the blocking of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 112 09-10-2018 14:06:16

> roads and railway lines, a bomb threat, marches of miners to regional capitals and Kiev, "indefinite" refusals to work and underground strikes. Clashes with police, collective suicide threats and several committed protest suicides were among the most extreme contentious actions that miners resorted to. The payment of wage and pension arrears become the most repeated demand. (Mykhnenko 2003, 105)

The chaotic reforms of post-Soviet Ukrainian governments pushed the country into one of the deepest post-Soviet recessions experienced by any of the transition economies not affected by war (Ukraine EIU 1998). Hyperinflation overtook the new state in 1993, two years after its declaration of independence, with annual inflation soaring to over 10,000 percent. With people's savings "wiped out and their salaries not keeping up with prices, three quarters of Ukrainians lived below the poverty level" (Yekelchuk 2015, 77). Industrial workers were especially hard-hit, as they had lost connections with villages where people survived by cultivating their own crops.

Putting all its energy into the creation of new national symbols—the flag, the anthem, the state emblem, and so forth—while completely ignoring the necessity of economic reform, the first Ukrainian post-Communist government met with widespread and harsh repudiation across southeastern industrial regions. Here are some very typical workers' responses to the politics of de-communization and Ukrainization implemented by the new Ukrainian government:

> For two years, the debates on color of the flag are going on. The house is being ruined, the roof is burning, but deputies are thinking of the name of the building that is going to be built in future.
>
> We need to stop puttering about the renaming of cities, streets, squares, the ruining of monuments. History cannot be changed: we had not only bad things but good as well. If we have some extra money, let's spend it for the needs of old and incapable people and child-orphans.
>
> Euphoria . . . has been replaced with the sense of spiritual bankruptcy, disillusionment, and indifference. . . . The volatile ephemerality of people's hopes for quick changes savors of a sweetish smell of cemetery hopelessness. (Baysha 2014, 122)

In the minds of millions of working people living in Russophone industrial regions, the economic crisis of the first post-Soviet years came to be inextricably connected with the cultural nationalization that accompanied it. This explains to a great extent the Donbas nostalgia for Soviet times as well as local dislike of "Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia" that "had bemoaned industrialisation and urbanisation as destroying Ukrainian villages and therefore leading to denationalisation" (Kuzio 2017, 177). As this "cultural

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 113 09-10-2018 14:06:16

intelligentsia" was a driving force behind both the Orange Revolution of 2004 and the Euromaidan revolution of 2013, the Donbas had good reasons to look at these "revolutions" suspiciously.

The skepticism of the Donbas toward the Euromaidan becomes even more understandable given the lessons of the Orange Revolution of 2004 that brought Ukrainians "five years of political chaos ensured with four governments, two parliamentary elections, and two major gas conflicts with Russia" (Áslund 2015, 69). As Áslund put it,

> The Orange Revolution left Ukrainians with a bitter aftertaste. A popular conclusion was that there was little difference between Ukrainian politicians regardless of political color. They were all equally corrupt…. People perceived two clear differences. The Orange camp was more incompetent and more pro-European than Yanukovych, who favored somewhat closer relations with Russia. (2015, 78)

Obviously, the "bitter aftertaste" following the Orange Revolution was experienced by many Ukrainians—not only those living in the Donbas. However, the specific history of this region and its unique social character made it extremely sensitive to the post-Orange-revolution chaos and the economic destabilization that came as a result. The fact that "the Orange camp was more incompetent and more pro-European than Yanukovych" was convincing enough for many residents of the Donbas to support the latter. Yanukovych may indeed have created "semi-feudal oligarchic capitalism with a command-and-control approach to governance in which no dissent is tolerated" (Zon 2007, 874), but, in the eyes of many Donbas dwellers, other oligarchs pushing for another round of revolutionary chaos were probably no better.

As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of people living in the Donbas were against the "coup d'etat" but not in favor of joining Russia. Nonetheless, the new Kyiv government, supported by the United States and its European allies, labeled the whole of their anti-Maidan movement "separatist." In a similar fashion, the new Ukrainian authorities declared anti-Maidan combatants "terrorists," in contrast to Euromaidan armed revolutionaries who were considered heroes. Instead of negotiations, which the people of Donetsk and Luhansk were expecting, an "anti-terrorist" military operation (ATO) was launched. From its onset in mid-April 2014 up to mid-April 2017, at least 10,090 people, including 2,777 civilians, have been killed, and at least 23,966 injured, according to a conservative estimate" (Conflict in Ukraine enters 2017). Hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced or have fled the country.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 114 09-10-2018 14:06:16

NOTES

1. Stepan Bandera (1909–1959) is one of the most controversial historical figures of Ukraine. A leader of its nationalist and independence movement, he cooperated with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. In 1941, however, the Gestapo arrested and imprisoned him in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. While Bandera was in captivity, his Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists committed ethnic cleansing in Volhynia where, according to different estimates, from 35,000 to 60,000 Poles, mostly women and children, were killed. In 1944, the Nazis released Bandera to organize a struggle against the advancing Soviet troops; in 1959, the KGB assassinated him in Munich, Germany (Rossolinski-Liebe 2014).

2. Dmytro Dontsov (1883–March 30, 1973) was a Ukrainian nationalist writer whose radical ideas were a major influence on the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.

3. Vladimir the Great was the ruler of Kievan Rus from 980 to 1015.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 115 09-10-2018 14:06:16

Chapter 9

The Uniprogressive Imagination of the Euromaidan

UKRAYINSKA PRAVDA

One of the most popular legends of the Euromaidan says that the revolution started after Mustafa Nayem, a Ukrainian journalist, put out a call on Facebook for people to gather in Maidan Square in Kyiv to protest. When the Euromaidan began, Nayem was an investigative reporter for *Ukrayinska Pravda* (hereafter *UP*), which has been central in providing Ukrainian society with information alternative to official news sources since its founding in April 2000. Unlike many other media outlets in Ukraine (Ryabinska 2014), *UP* is free from both state and oligarchic control; it is still owned by Olena Pritula, one of the journalists who started the project.

By launching an investigative site, Pritula and her partner, Georgiy Gongadze, intended to expose the corruption that was eroding the young Ukrainian state, which had gained its independence just a decade earlier. In the Ukraine of those times, where oligarchic clans owned and controlled all traditional media (Ryabinska 2011) and where several investigative journalists were murdered or died under unclear circumstances (Catania 2005), the enterprise was risky.

On September 16, 2000, Gongadze disappeared; in November, his beheaded body was found in a wooded area. Shortly thereafter, secret audio recordings were released which featured a voice resembling then president Kuchma's that could be heard ordering Gongadze's abduction. Pritula's decision to publish transcripts of the tapes quickly made *UP* the number one political website in the country and stimulated mass protests demanding the resignation of Kuchma (Interview Olena Pritula 2005). Many believe these protests in 2000 and 2001 were the first stage of the Orange Revolution, in which *UP* played an important mobilizing role (Kyj 2006). By providing a

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 117 09-10-2018 14:06:16

public platform for opposition voices, *UP* contributed to the formation of protest action and amplified the call for others to participate; together with people in the streets, its writers demanded fair elections and supported an opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. For *UP* and its followers, Yushchenko's victory, celebrated in January 2005, meant the defeat of autocracy associated with the name of Viktor Yanukovych, Kuchma's protégé (Interview Olena Pritula 2005).

But the democratic triumph did not last long. The failure of the new "orange" government to stamp out corruption and implement reforms allowed Yanukovych to regain the presidency in the next elections in 2010. Upon taking office, he rolled back the few democratic improvements put in place during the post-revolution years. A progressive constitutional reform from 2004 was abolished and press freedom was significantly curtailed. With media power still concentrated in the hands of oligarchs closely tied to state power, the Internet was the only source of independent news, and *UP* was one of its most respectable information sources (Ryabinska 2014).

In 2010, *UP* began a series of articles on Yanukovych's residence, "Mezhyhirya," which quickly became a symbol of corruption and often appeared in the discourse of Euromaidan activists. An agitator and propagandist of the revolutionary changes, *UP* took part in the whirlwind of events that transpired a few years later. Before the Euromaidan started, *UP*'s audience averaged roughly 250,000 to 300,000 users per day; in January, 2014, this figure reached 1.6 million (Dmytrenko 2014).

As mentioned in chapter 1, from late 2013 into early 2014 I analyzed the discourse of Euromaidan activists in their blogs on *UP*, selecting for study the posts in the "Maidan" group from November 26, 2013—the day the group was formed—until January 21, 2014, which denoted the beginning of a murderous stage of the Euromaidan protest. First, I focused on this period to show how the discourse of anti-Maidan otherness was formed before the bloody period of the confrontation started (when the first casualties appeared). Later, I expanded the scope of my research to include not only *UP* bloggers but also *UP* columnists, and extended the timeframe of analysis until February 18—the beginning of the bloodiest period of conflict, when dozens of people were killed on both sides. In total, I analyzed 430 opinion pieces posted by the activists of the Euromaidan in their *UP* blogs and columns.

A EUROPEAN DREAM

As my analysis shows, the dominant trend among the *UP* writers whose opinions I analyzed was to imagine the AA with the EU not as a treaty with pros and cons, but as a magic carpet that would transport them to a European

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 118 09-10-2018 14:06:16

wonderland of civilizational advance[1]. "Europe" was imagined by the majority of them as a mythological object devoid of any historical, cultural or economic complexities—a symbol of progress and a finishing line of development. From the writings of many *UP* columnists and bloggers, it appeared as an ideal society whose well-being was grounded "not on the expense of other people" (Dubrovsky 2013a), whose politicians were "absolutely fair, responsible, open, and accountable" (Bistritsky 2013a), and whose political parties drew their strength from the "ideas coming from people" (Danylyuk 2013). The signifier "European" was inextricably linked with such signs as "liberty, democracy, and human rights" (Sverstyuk 2013c); "human freedom and dignity" (Andrusiv 2013); "the supremacy of law" (Kuhar 2013) and other enshrined attributes of modernity understood in Western terms. These linkages were never problematized. Some writers highlighted the prosperity of the EU—"I have travelled abroad and seen that our level of life is the worst" (Teren 2013b) or "Their roads are smoother than floors in our homes" (Dyenkov 2013)—but this material frame of reference for the European condition was not a dominant one. More prevalent were concerns for justice, morality, and the progress of the human spirit.

As Archbishop Lubomyr Husar (2013), one of the most respected of *UP*'s contributors, put it, explaining his support of the Euromaidan:

> [People] want to live in a society where truth and only truth is circulated, where justice reigns, and where there is a similar interpretation of rights and duties for all citizens, and where everybody gets what s/he needs for a normal life . . . and—the most important—where human dignity and freedom are spiritual values. (Husar 2013)

As my analysis suggests, for many Euromaidan activists whose opinions I studied, the heaven on Earth described by the archbishop, existed in Europe. No wonder the refusal to sign the Agreement with the EU, which was imagined as a vehicle to bring Ukrainians into the European condition, was interpreted by many of them as a "catastrophe" (K. Matviyenko 2013) leading to "emptiness" and a "precipice" (Dubrovsky 2013b). "If he [Yanukovych] does not return to the European Union direction, both he and all his relatives will be cursed"—this emotional remark by Inna Bogoslovskaya (Nayem 2013), a well-known politician, clearly illustrates the intensity of the belief (at least, as demonstrated publicly) in European salvation.

Because many *UP* writers imagined the signing of the AA in mythological terms of moving from all that was bad to everything that was good, the theme of the final fight of good against evil was also popular among *UP* columnists and bloggers. This is how Anatoliy Hrytsenko, then a Parliamentary deputy, saw the beginning of the Euromaidan movement:

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 119 09-10-2018 14:06:16

> The main strategist of the host of heaven is at the Maidan with us! Is this a mystery? No! . . . . For the second time in a row, Maidan starts on November 21, the day of Kyiv's defender—the Archistratigus Michael! Right behind the walls of his Mikhailovsky Monastery, young activists and students found protection from the brutal Berkut on November 30 . . . . And now, the holy defender of Kyiv, God's messenger with the sword of fire, is with us! (Hrytsenko 2013d)

A similar exaltation of the Euromaidan could be found in the writings of other *UP* contributors who also believed that the protest represented the "forces of good" supported by a divine power. "If in Bible times a mountain could move from one place to another, why cannot this happen now? Bible times differ from ours only because they were earlier"—this is how Ukrainian poet Vasyl Karpyuk (2013) saw the Euromaidan in November 2013. "The Christmas Story goes on. The tyrant was killing children but could not overcome the creation of Good and its victory over the Devil"—such was the reaction by Oleksiy Haran (2014), a historian and political analyst, to an attempt by police to clear protesters from the center of Kyiv in early January of 2014. Among some *UP* writers, the belief that the Euromaidan was a fight between good and evil was so strong that they imagined the protesters as "the army of light" (Andrusiv 2013) that "stormed the sky" (Bistritsky 2013b) and created a "Bible miracle" by "separating the Light from the Darkness" (Ilyenko 2014). The voice of this "army of light" was believed to be "the voice of God" (Kondra 2013).

Seeing the Euromaidan in terms of Armageddon can explain, at least partially, not only the intolerance toward anti-Maidan "others," which will be discussed later in this chapter, but also the full readiness of the Euromaidan to obey the orders of Western politicians, governments, and financial institutions. Within the frame of the sanctity of the protest, the governing structures of the West were taken not as bureaucratic institutions with mundane and not-so-altruistic agendas (Yurchenko 2018), but as the forces of Light leading the global fight against the forces of Evil. Their right to judge and give instructions to the government of Ukraine was taken by *UP* writers for granted: "EU *demands* from Ukraine to adopt democratic laws" (Oleshenko 2013; emphasis added) or "IMF sends the Ukrainian government a letter with the following substance: '*Stop showing off*, abide by the terms!'" (Lyamets 2013; emphasis added). From these and similar constructions, Ukraine appeared as a passive object of interventions by Western structures of power, though none of the authors under my analysis problematized the "demanding" tone of the EU, IMF, and other Western institutions with respect to Ukraine; none of them questioned the right of these institutions to intervene into the internal affairs of Ukraine and impose foreign standards for domestic management.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 120 09-10-2018 14:06:16

In line with the uniprogressive imaginary, *UP* writers were willing to follow all the recommendations given by the "civilized world," including economic austerity measures set forth in IMF requirements (Pishniy 2013) and "suggestions" as to who should handle the negotiations on behalf of the Ukrainian side:

> In their statements regarding the Maidan, the international community—diplomats, the leaders of Western states, the representatives of international organizations—made it clear more than once that *they see* three particular negotiators who need to come to the table in order to resolve the crisis. (Sinchenko 2013; emphasis added)

The willingness of Euromaidan activists to follow all the recommendations coming from the West, including directives as to who should represent the Ukrainian people in negotiations, stemmed not only from their vision of the West as a moral authority with the unquestionable right to judge, but also from their desire to Westernize themselves, to become "Europeans" and "to be equal among equals," as Yevgen Sverstyuk, a famous Soviet dissident (2013b), put it. He wrote: "Europe *wants to see a Ukrainian person* who expresses the dignity of the Independent State. Only then will we be equal among equals" (emphasis added). Paradoxically, for the sake of being accepted into the ranks of the "chosen," the activists of the Euromaidan seemed to have reconciled themselves with an object-position for Ukraine as it was mentored and guided by Western power institutions. Far from questioning the superiority of the EU, some of the *UP* contributors literally begged it to accept Ukraine into the ranks of the deserving: "Enough with the unclear formulas of 'neighborhood' or 'association,' enough with skepticism hiding fear and a lack of trust! Invite us!" (Kryvdyk 2013).

For many of the Euromaidan activists, the project of European integration was the "normal road" (Marynovych 2013) and "natural road" for the "Ukrainian ship" (Sverstyuk 2013a) because "for centuries, it [Ukraine] has been struggling for the European choice" and because "Ukraine is Europe" (Kuhar 2013). For these and other authors with similar views, the European vector of development appeared so natural that "there could be no discussion" in this respect, as Sverstyuk (2013a) asserted. For him and other Euromaidan supporters, the Agreement with the European Union was more than just an agreement—it was a matter of a "civilizational choice" (Zarembo 2013), a battle for an advanced civilizational condition. This is how Taras Stetskiv, a politician and former Parliamentary deputy, expressed the idea: "This is a large-scale battle of the maturing civil society against Putin's regime that wants to turn Ukraine *back to the past*" (2013; emphasis added). In the presentations of these and other activists of the Euromaidan, the fight for the

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 121 09-10-2018 14:06:16

AA seemed to be a struggle not only between despotism and democracy, but also between Oriental obsolescence, symbolized by Russia, and Occidental modernism, exemplified by the EU—between the past and the future, as envisioned by the Euromaidan advocates.

THE EUROMAIDAN'S OUTSIDE

Many of the *UP* contributors whose opinions I studied imagined Russia as the radical outside of European civilization, its negative other: "Russia acts according to its own rules that are unacceptable in the civilized world" (Kulakov 2013). The Russia-led Eurasian Union—"a muddy Union" (Romanchuk 2013) or just "shit" (Petsyukh 2013), as some authors saw it—was seen as a dead end of development: "The modernization of the country is dead" (Stetskiv 2013). In contrast, the agreement with the EU was seen as a means to achieve a state of "civilization" (Shnurko-Tabakova 2013) and "normality" (Sobolev 2013) and not go "back to Sovok" (Hrytsenko 2013a). Many *UP* columnists and bloggers believed that, if Ukraine were with Europe, "no matter how hard Putin spits into the wind, the wind of time will not change" (Sverstyuk 2013*c*). Needless to say, in the imagination of the Euromaidan activists with a uniprogressive imaginary, "the wind of time" was always moving westward.

Even more often than "Russia/Russian," the signifier "USSR/Soviet" (the notorious *sovok*) was used to denote the state of "non-modernity" and "the past." "We still live under imperial-soviet circumstances veiled by the blue-and-yellow flag," Bogdan Sokolovsky (2014), a former Ukrainian diplomat, maintained. Journalist Marta Onufriv (2013) agreed: "It is necessary to use this unique chance," she argued, "and to get out of the criminal-oligarchic sovok swamp and onto the broad international road." "Our system of power is still 'Soviet'—both in its actions and the style of thought," the political science scholar Olexii Polegky (2014) echoed. Only, in his view, "communist ideology was substituted by a criminal-monetary one." As is evident from these and similar constructions, the signifier *sovok* had at least three meanings assigned to it by Euromaidan protesters: (1) the colonial condition (that is, Russia's domination over Ukraine), (2) the criminality and oligarchy of the Ukrainian system of power, and (3) a "style of thought" associated with Soviet life. The latter, as my analysis shows, was understood as mental "conservatism" ("Europe starts from . . . the ability to get rid of a hidebound conservatism of a Soviet type" [Sikora 2013]), which stemmed from the fear of progressive changes ("the fear of changes, the lack of confidence . . . is a sad heritage of Soviet society" [Ilyenko 2014]) or intellectual underdevelopment (inability to understand "the advantages of the agreement and the meaning of the European integration" [Zarembo 2013]). In the representations of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 122 09-10-2018 14:06:16

UP writers, all the meanings of *sovok* were deeply interrelated: it was fear of changes and an inability to understand the need for them that bolstered the contemporary system of Russian imperialism and Ukrainian oligarchy.

Because the *sovok* mental condition was equated with the anti-Maidan stance, the whole southeastern mega-region of Ukraine was imagined to be a territory populated by *sovki*[2] As the activist Dmytro Sinchenko put it, "Since the moment of Ukraine's independence, there has been a fierce information and worldview war—the war between Ukraine and sovok" (2014b). According to Sinchenko, this war was internal, and it had divided the territory of Ukraine in two:

> The front line of the struggle against sovok goes today along the border of Odessa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Luhansk regions [the southeastern regions of Ukraine] . . . . We are foreigners for them. We live in the Independent Ukraine, and they still dwell in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and here is the root of the problem. (Sinchenko 2014b)

The journalist Volodymyr Ilchenko agreed: "The division of the state into 'sovok' and 'pro-Western' parts, which was registered during the 2004 presidential election, has been kept almost in the same proportions . . ." (Ilchenko 2014). According to this view, which was shared by many *UP* writers whose opinions I analyzed, the southeastern regions of Ukraine were territories of civilizational abnormality where people, identifying themselves with a system "that did not differ much from the fascist one," had developed "silent tolerance to millions of crippled and annihilated lives" during Stalin's reign (Zhovtyanska 2014). This was a typical representation of the USSR by *UP* contributors who, similar to anti-Putin activists in Russia, always highlighted the most negative aspects of Soviet modernity and ignored its positive side (see chapter 7). In contrast, when discussing the West, they always accentuated its positive features while downplaying negative ones.

Judging from their writings, *UP* contributors seem to have been shocked to discover that "an endless number of people across the country live in a time that is behind our contemporality by at least 20 years" (Zvinyatskivsyka 2014). Imagining the difference between themselves and those opposing their views not in terms of difference of opinion but as a civilizational gap, many proponents of the Maidan considered the anti-Maidan stance inconceivable and the distance between the two camps unbridgeable. "It turns out that almost 60% of the population still needs to be persuaded, and *half of them will not be convinced under any circumstances*," the activist Volodymyr Kuhar (2013, emphasis added) asserted. "[In the East], a high percentage of the population . . . rejects the Maidan's methods of struggle . . . *no matter how unbelievable this appear*s," political analyst Andriy Miselyuk (2013a; emphasis added) maintained. "Simple things, *which seemed self-evident for*

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 123 09-10-2018 14:06:16

us, turned out to be empty and not so convincing [for the anti-Maidan]," claimed Bogdan Sologub (2014; emphasis added). For Zoya Zvinyatkivsyka (2014), a journalist and fashion critic, "the coexistence in one space of people living in two different time dimensions—modern people and post-Soviet people" turned out to be simply "impossible." But if the views of opponents are taken as "inconceivable" and coexistence with them is imagined to be "impossible," how can such an impasse be addressed politically? What kind of political organization is possible in view of the "impossible but necessary" unity of society, to put it in Laclau's (2005) terms? None of the *UP* contributors whose opinions I analyzed contemplated the question of societal diversity seriously: they ignored the complexity of the issue, or simply disregarded the opinions of "other Ukraine," as I will discuss later in this chapter.

In setting aside the cultural and political complexity of the situation, the heterogeneity of those who opposed the Euromaidan, and the diversity of their reasons to oppose it, *UP* writers simplistically portrayed their anti-Maidan compatriots not as thinking individuals holding alternative views but as dimwitted creatures stuck in their uncivilized, backward condition. In the majority of cases, *UP* columnists and bloggers focused on two groups of people who attended anti-Maidan rallies: (1) "*Titushki*[3] and paid provocateurs" (Timoshyuk 2013) that had been "brought 'en masse'" (Arestovych 2013) to Kyiv by those in power (Zvarych 2013) and (2) "obedient state-employee slaves" (Bereza 2013) "who were taken to meetings under the threat of firing" (Pasternak-Taranushenko 2014). Both categories were imagined as people with "slave habits" (Karpa 2013a); often, they were portrayed as "drunk," "miserable," and unable to make rational choices. "Drunk *titushki* bullies and miserable teachers from Luhansk and Nikolaev [were] commandeered to the center of Kiev" (Skoropadsky 2014)—such a representation of anti-Maidan protests was typical for the *UP* writers, some of whom imagined their opponents at anti-Maidan rallies as brainless "frozen meat" (Zvarych 2013) able only to play cards, listen to primitive music (Kolodiy 2014), and drink vodka (Karpa 2013b).

The difference between Kyiv and the cities of southeastern Ukraine was usually imagined not in complex historical and cultural terms, but as a simple division between fearless fighters for the civilized European future and fearful slaves pulling Ukraine back into the *sovok* past:

> I am not talking about the split along the East-West line or between adherents and opponents of Euro-integration. I am talking about a more bitter and more essential phenomenon that is typical for all regions—the distinction between *the people and the population*; between *citizens and slaves*. (Hrytsenko 2013c; emphasis added)

As mentioned earlier, the "slavish" condition of those opposing the Euromaidan was imagined to stem both from their intellectual inability to

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 124 09-10-2018 14:06:16

understand the advantages of Westernization and their harboring of primitive fear: "Many people living in Kiev think that the Donbas supports Yanukovych. This is not exactly the case. It doesn't support him—it is afraid of him" (Vishynsky 2013). Even some of those who came to Kyiv to support the Euromaidan from southeastern regions shared this dim view of people living in their native lands: "I think here, in [southeastern] regions, we are the last outpost of shameful fear. Without the warm shoulder of the Maidan nearby we are afraid to show—well, I am against. Against the criminal power and bonded obedience" (Narizhna 2013a).

It was common sense to believe that the choice between supporting the Euro-integration and rejecting it was not political but moral: "to become a slave in the Reich-Commissariat 'Donetsk' . . . or to become free at last" (Yanevsky 2014), "to defend the bloody regime . . . or join the struggle for a free country" (Sinchenko 2014a), "to live in a criminal oligarchic system or . . . [in] a new system of human dignity" (Galabala 2014). Because the choice was framed in such simplified Manichean terms, any rejection of the Euromaidan caused indignation and disgust: "I am ashamed and disgusted to live in one country not simply with a few bastards but with millions of slaves" (Dubrovsky 2013c). Those refusing to support the protests were imagined as "zombies"—"poisoned" and "rotten" (Antypovych 2014). Even the most cool-headed bloggers believed that "it is difficult to find adequate opponents of the Maidan" (Gumenyuk 2013a).

To ascribe a lower intellectual and moral status to Euromaidan opponents, the names of the latter were not capitalized: "chalenki and buzini . . . dzhangirovi, korchinski, pihovcheki [well-known anti-Maidan figures]" (Haran 2013). Each of these names was presented in a plural form so as to imply the interchangeability and lack of distinction among these figures, who "should not be among respectable people" (Haran 2013). Seventeen months after this post, Oles Buzina—one of those on the list of "unrespectable people"—was killed by shots fired from a car near his apartment building in Kyiv (Ukraine Conflict 2015). Presumably, the killers were members of a radical nationalist movement (Annis 2015).

Even the most respectable people of the pre-Maidan Ukraine, such as Oleg Blokhin, a soccer legend, lost their respectability if they did not support the protests: "I want to express my sympathy for Blokhin—. . . he has lived such an interesting and active life, and he has not grown into a Citizen" (Hrytsenko 2013b). The author of this excerpt—Anatoliy Hrytsenko, Ukraine's defense minister from 2005 to 2007 who is currently running for president in the 2019 election—was not interested in Blokhin's reasoning. In this statement, the idol of millions appeared as an underdeveloped creature that had not yet grown to the status of a citizen just because he had not supported the revolution. If well-known public figures were deprived of their citizen status (symbolically or through physical annihilation, as in the case of Buzina) just

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 125 09-10-2018 14:06:16

because they did not support the protesters, what should less known and prominent opponents have expected?

WE ARE "THE PEOPLE"

Against their demoralized, degraded, and backward opponents, the activists of the Euromaidan appeared in *UP* blogs and columns as "progressive forces" (Lachykhyna 2014): "the best people" (Surmai 2013); "the people of a new type" (Arestovych 2014a); "normal and decent people . . . who write and show the truth" (Chekmishev 2014); "the intellectual elite of Ukraine" (Oleshenko 2013); "the revived elite of the nation" (Zalishyuk 2014); "the most honest people" (Karpyuk 2013); "the most responsible among the elite" (Kuhar 2013); "successful, brave, fantastic people" (Surmai 2013); "the free people of Ukraine" (Kryvdyk 2013); "caring people" (Solodko 2013); "those who do not want to be slaves and servants," (Siumar 2014) and so forth.

The valorization of representatives of the "middle class" among the protesters was also evident in *UP* writings. Special attention was paid to their "expensive boots and coats" (Oleshenko 2013), as well as to other signs of belonging to the "middle" level of well-being: "iPhones," "expensive motorcycle helmets," "bright sport shoes," and so on (Bereza 2014). For some *UP* writers, the participation of well-dressed and well-fed people in the uprising was important because, as one of them put it, "the middle class is the basis of the stability of *developed countries*" (emphasis added). In other words, the alignment of the middle class with the protest was a sign of moving in the right direction—toward a more "developed" and "advanced" "civilizational" condition where "women in mink coats" "treat unknown passers-by to tea and sandwiches" and where "the owners of coffee houses" "serve protesters free of charge" (P. Matviyenko 2013).

Focusing their attention on those Euromaidan participants whose clothes and deeds were linked to the idea of a "more advanced civilizational condition," *UP* writers only reluctantly admitted that not all people participating in the uprising wore nice clothes on their bodies and nice smiles on their faces. Acknowledging, for example, that people looking like "bullies" and "hobos" were also present at the Euromaidan, Irena Karpa, a writer, assumed that they had been sent there on purpose "to spoil the Maidan's spirit" (Karpa 2013b). Apparently, to imagine that "bullies" and "hobos" could be ordinary protesters, not spies or provocateurs (more on this theme in chapter 11), was beyond the limits of the thinkable for Karpa and many other participants of the Euromaidan: in their imagination, the "progressive" avant-garde of the pro-European revolutionaries could be composed only of Murdoch's "hero[es] of moral philosophy": attractive in appearance and noble in deed.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 126 09-10-2018 14:06:16

Because, as I explained earlier, the evil was equated not only with Yanukovych but with all those "sovki," "slaves," and "the bootlickers of the regime" bolstering his system of power by refusing to support the revolution, it was easy for Euromaidan activists to imagine themselves as "the people of Ukraine"—the whole rather than just a part. Time and again, I saw this synechdochic construction in the writings of *UP* columnists and bloggers. This is how Yulia Timoshenko, then an imprisoned oppositional politician, imagined the confrontation:

> Yanukovych disregards blatantly the will of *the people* to be part of the united Europe . . . . My call to the opposition: lead *the people of Ukraine* to victory! . . . I would consider it the worst betrayal of *the people of Ukraine* to retreat and stop fighting for the Maidan. I believe that *no Ukrainian* will accept this! (Timoshenko 2013; emphasis added).

This was the most typical articulation of Euromaidan protesters: they were equated to *the people* of Ukraine fighting against those in power, who had betrayed the dream of *the people of Ukraine* to integrate with the EU. Similar constructions equating the Euromaidan with Ukraine—"Ukraine is we!" (Yelnikov 2013); "Maidan is Ukraine" (Antonovych 2014)—appear in the writings of the Maidan activists on a regular basis: "All political and property rights will be guaranteed for all former political and state figures . . . who will side with *the people*" (Yanevsky 2014; emphasis added); "The ideal option we should strive for is security forces to take *the people's* side" (Dubrovsky 2013b; emphasis added). The question of why security forces and politicians had to make a choice in favor of the protesters rather than the half of the country that did not approve of the Euromaidan was not discussed. Such a discussion was outside the limits of the thinkable as prescribed by the uniprogressive vision of the social shared by the *UP* columnists and bloggers. By their definition, "the people" were the "normal and decent" folks striving for a European future: "The *people of Ukraine* . . . demand the realization of government promises and compel the signature of the agreement with the EU" (Kondra 2013). "Slaves" and "sovki" were not part of "the body" of the nation, as one construction by the famous writer Yuri Andrukhovych suggested: "The Ukrainian people went out to fight . . . . In its national anthem, it is written that 'we'll lay down our soul and our body to attain our freedom'" (Andrukhovych 2014). The metaphor of the national body, poetized by the Ukrainian anthem and exploited by Andrukhovych, unequivocally suggested that the nation should be imagined in a unitary form, with no space reserved for any internal "others"; speaking within the boundaries of the metaphor of the biological "body," such an internal "otherness" would be conceived as a cancer eating away the body's flesh.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 127 09-10-2018 14:06:16

Because the nation, imagined to be unified, was equated with Euromaidan sympathizers, any negotiations to overcome the crisis were suggested to be held without "the other Ukraine," which was actually conceived not as Ukraine but as its radical outside "other":

> Since the people of Ukraine do not trust the opposition completely, the public must be present [at the negotiations] for sure. But how? There is no mechanism to elect representatives from all of the country, so, I guess, in this very moment, *society would agree if its representatives would be those who advocate the Euromaidan in Kyiv*. (Marynovych 2013; emphasis added)

> The nationwide roundtable . . . may involve three main forces . . . 1) citizens who came out into the streets to defend their rights, 2) acting power headed by Yanukovych, and 3) oppositional political forces . . . . *Besides*, the political and industrial elites of Southeastern regions of the country *may also take part* in it. (Miselyuk 2013a; emphasis added)

As is evident from the last excerpt, even "the political and industrial elites" of the Southeast were not imagined as full partners with an equally legitimate voice; meanwhile, the "non-elite" representatives of the anti-Maidan population were disregarded completely.

As my analysis suggests, the annihilation of "*sovok* others" was a logical outcome of imagining the complex contemporary world, with all its cultural divisions and social stratifications, in the simplistic terms of uniprogressivism: as a fight of the "progressive avant-garde of history" against "barbarians." Sadly enough, this vision was only encouraged by the "international community" of "civilized countries" that supported the revolution:

> The Maidan is independent in international relations. Here, the European Parliament deputies and other important international guests come. The European Parliament even announced that the European integration goes on not with the acting Ukrainian power but with the Maidan. (Antonovych 2014)

The problem with this vision, however, is that the acting Ukrainian power, no matter how inadequately it acted and how corrupt it was, had been legally elected by the majority of the citizens of Ukraine, unlike the Euromaidan. When visiting the Maidan Square and encouraging its revolutionaries to protest, members of the "international community" disrespected millions of Ukrainians who held anti-Maidan views, thus contributing to the escalation of the civil conflict and undermining the very democracy for which the Euromaidan had been initiated. I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 11.

As I strive to argue in this book, the anti-democratic tendencies within the modernizing endeavors of contemporary revolutionaries stem from assumptions deeply ingrained in the uniprogressive imaginary, as informed

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 128 09-10-2018 14:06:16

by civilizing/modernizing discourses that presuppose the existence of an avant-garde with access to some sacred truth and a natural call to lead others forward. As discussed in chapter 2, this vision of the history of humanity guided Jacobins, Bolsheviks, and numerous other groups whose social engineering in the name of progress was imagined in unidirectional terms. Obvious traces of the same vision are evident in the posts of many *UP* writers. "Minorities are the driving force of social changes," Yulia Komarova (2013), a political consultant, claimed. The human rights activist Hanna Svyrydenko (2013) agreed: "The revolution should be carried out . . . through discussions among like-minded people," she asserted. "Demonstrators do not need to be supported by the majority of the population," journalist Natalya Gumenyuk (2013b) maintained. To substantiate her claim, Gumenyuk cited a veteran of the US civil rights movement, James Lawson: "The agreement of all with everybody is a dangerous utopia . . . . If we, the activists for civil rights, wanted all Afro-Americans to agree with us, nothing would have happened." Gumenyuk acknowledged that Lawson has propagated exclusively peaceful methods of struggle; however, she failed to admit that Lawson also insisted on the importance of recognizing differences, which has been a cornerstone of his theory of peaceful protesting. "I criticize the notion that there are only two sides in people and society," Lawson argued. "This idea suppresses conversation because people are multidimensional in how we live. So, conversations should be multidimensional. It's not just liberal and conservative" (Lawson 2017). In other words, according to Lawson, whose views are in line with the thesis of this book, imagining society as divided into two non-intersecting parts inevitably leads to confrontation and violence, both symbolic and physical. This is exactly what happened as the Ukrainian revolution unfolded.

"Maidan supporters chant 'Revolution!' and this is a revolution, indeed. But not a revolution in the Bolsheviks' sense," Sverstyuk (2013b) exclaimed in the heat of a revolutionary moment. But he was mistaken: it turned out to be a revolution exactly like the Bolsheviks' in the sense that it excluded otherness in the name of progress, where "progress" and "the people" were defined by revolutionaries in exclusively unitary terms.

NOTES

1. Only twenty-nine opinion pieces (7 percent) provided some space for presenting the agreement as a matter of rational deliberation.
2. *Sovki* is the plural form of *sovok*, in the sense of a person with a *sovok* (Soviet) mentality.
3. Police mercenaries in civilian clothes who beat and detained Maidan protesters with the aim of intimidating them and dispersing the protests.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 129 09-10-2018 14:06:16

Chapter 10

The Antagonisms of the Euromaidan

THE NODAL POINTS OF THE EUROMAIDAN'S ANTAGONISTIC DISCOURSE

In the uniprogressive discourse of *UP* columnists and bloggers, as presented in the previous chapter, it is possible to discern all the nodal points of antagonistic discourse that I discussed earlier with respect to social movements in Russia. In the articulations of *UP* contributors, their anti-Maidan opponents appeared as fundamentally different—as the constitutive outside of the Euromaidan movement. Similar to other cases discussed in this book, the "masses" of Ukrainian citizens holding "non-progressive" anti-Maidan views were imagined to be dependent on the "criminals in power," scared of them, and fundamentally unable to overcome their fear, imagine a better life, and struggle for it. They were seen not as adversaries striving to organize the common symbolic space in a different way but as enemies existing outside the symbolic space shared by Euromaidan activists. The latter did not see the difference between themselves and their opponents positively, as a condition that opened up the possibilities for the democratization of Ukrainian society; rather, they treated it in exclusively negative terms—as if the other side were nothing but a remnant of the past, clinging to an amoral/profane condition in need of eradication. In contrast to the masses of scared "servants of the regime," Euromaidan activists portrayed themselves as fearless, creative, free, and, thus, modern.

As in other cases discussed earlier, the radical difference between the two parts of Ukrainian society (progressive Euromaidan supporters versus the retrograde anti-Maidan population) was constructed in hierarchical terms. The anti-Maidan population of Ukraine was positioned at the lowest point of the uniprogressive scale of development: they were imagined to be decades

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 131 09-10-2018 14:06:16

behind those supporting the Euromaidan. Anti-Maidan "others" were presented as fearful slaves and *sovki*—the forces of the past—deprived of the sensibility of the "modern agent" who is "free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, and brave" (Murdoch 1971, 80). In contrast, those advocating for uniprogressive reforms positioned themselves as agents of the future—the "new elite" of Ukraine, which is free, brave, smart, honest, and simply "fantastic."

As in other cases considered in this book, the dominant trend among *UP* columnists and bloggers was to imagine their opponents in homogeneous terms, as a uniform group of "slaves," "sovki," and "non-citizens" lacking internal complexity or contradictions. Although some of the *UP* writers did acknowledge that there were "thinking people" in the anti-Maidan camp (I discuss this in greater detail later in the chapter), such opinions were far from typical. Of all 430 opinion pieces I analyzed, only eleven (3 percent) employed this positive frame of reference for anti-Maidan "others." The same is true about the self-presentation of the activists of the Euromaidan, as represented by *UP* bloggers and columnists. Although some of them acknowledged that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark"—that is, that the inclusion of radical nationalists in the Euromaidan's equivalential chain was incommensurable with its democratic aspirations—their voices were isolated and did not form a full-fledged alternative discourse. Only nineteen opinion pieces (4 percent) problematized the coalition of Euromaidan liberals and nationalists. As in the previous cases that I analyzed, *homogenization*—one of the nodal points of antagonistic discourse—manifested itself not only in the construction of the self, as Carpentier (2017) suggests, but in the construction of the radical outside as well.

There is an interesting difference between the uniprogressive discourses of the Euromaidan and the social movements in Russia, discussed in Part II of this book. In the cases of White Ribbons and the New Protest Generation, *essentialization* was observed when the activists of these movements presented Russia as inherently backward and its general population as inherently submissive. In the uniprogressive discourse of the Euromaidan, however, the presentation of Ukraine as *essentially* backward was missing. Similar to their Russian counterparts, Ukrainian activists also saw inherent backwardness in Russia and Russia-leaning populations of Ukraine, presented as the outside of the Ukrainian nation conceived in unitary terms. They imagined both Ukraine and Ukrainians as naturally Western (that is, modern), and this modern essentiality of Ukraine and Ukrainians was constructed in opposition to Russia-oriented "sovki." Whereas Russian revolutionaries constructed their progressive identity by juxtaposing it against the general population of Russia—among whom the backward "sovok" condition prevailed—their Ukrainian counterparts juxtaposed themselves against only one part of Ukraine, specifically,

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 132 09-10-2018 14:06:16

the population of the southeastern regions. In other words, the radical outside for both Russian and Ukrainian activists striving for Westernization was the same—people with the supposed Soviet and Russian "slavish mentality." In the imagination of the Euromaidan activists whose opinions I analyzed, such people lived in Russia or in the southeast regions of Ukraine. The population of these regions was seen as *naturally* underdeveloped because they were under Soviet rule longer than the western part of Ukraine and because they had been living in close geographical proximity with Russia—the symbol of the anti-modern condition and the past.

As in other cases discussed in this book, *universalization* manifested itself in the "progressive" Euromaidan discourse with the belief that Western methods of governing societies are universally valid. The European Union was discussed not as a unique socio-cultural formation existing within geographical borders, but as a fairy land to which all nations aspire but only the chosen few achieve. The belief in the EU Association Agreement was so strong that its details were not even discussed—the necessity of Europeanization in whatever form was taken for granted. It is important to note that this necessity was always framed not in economic and political terms, but in civilizational and moral ones: belonging to the EU was seen as a stamp of modernity—a sign of having achieved a higher-quality societal condition. The belief in Western salvation was so strong that it acquired the features of a closed mythological discourse, where no reflexivity was possible.

As my analysis suggests, the signifier "belief" is a key word to characterize the structure of feeling of many Euromaidan protesters toward the concept of European integration. As I argued earlier, the signing of the AA was imagined by many *UP* writers not as the endorsement of a treaty with pros and cons—a matter of rational deliberation—but as a tool of salvation. Within this frame of reference, the Euromaidan protest appeared in the religious terms of Armageddon, as a final battle of the forces of good against the forces of evil. Clearly discernible in this religious extolling of the Euromaidan are traces of the negative dialectics of enlightenment, as discussed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2002). According to their theory, the Enlightenment narrative of rationality and progress, being inherently irrational, may itself become myth: though intended to secure freedom, it can turn instead into an instrument of domination. Displacing God and tradition, the discourses of rationality and progress start operating as mythologies of their own by capturing "the old distinction between the sacred and the profane as a distinction between lay opinion and expert rationality" (Beck 2010, 212). The traces of this "capturing"—when the "experts" of Westernization, modernization, democratization, and so forth present themselves as the bearers of sacred knowledge—can be discerned in all of the case studies discussed in this book, but it is especially evident with regard to the Euromaidan. As discussed in

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 133 09-10-2018 14:06:17

the previous chapter, its activists considered their struggle for the AA sacred, as if fighting not for a treaty in the service of public good but for a God that people should worship; everything that went against their whole-hearted faith was decried as blasphemy and had to be eradicated. It would be interesting to investigate why the religious frame of reference for Westernization was much more pronounced in the case of the Ukrainian movement than in the movements of Russia, but such a question is beyond the scope of this book.

Similar to the Russia-based cases discussed in the previous part of this book, *normalization* in the case of the Euromaidan manifested itself in the valorization of the West as a model for imitation and in equating modernization with Westernization. As in the previous cases, everything that violated this Western "norm" was taken as pathology, which in the Ukrainian case found its expression in the meta-metaphor of "sovok," conceived as a social disease with the symptoms of post-Soviet "trauma," "apathy," "absenteeism" (Polegky 2014), and so forth. Here, the specificity of the Ukrainian situation also manifested itself in its permanent reference to Russia: similar to their Russian counterparts, Ukrainian activists considered the main villain to be Putin, not Yanukovych, their own president. It was predominantly the Kremlin that, in the representation of the Ukrainian revolutionaries, wanted to turn the clock back, drag Ukraine into the past, and deprive it of the normality of a European future. Because of this permanent tendency to connect Ukraine's difficulties with Russian intrigues, there was also a tendency to see those opposing Westernization inside Ukraine not only as "sovki" with a backward Russian mentality but also as "traitors" (more on this in chapter 12).

As in other cases discussed in this book, elimination of the historical context—*dehistorization*—was evident in the mythological representation of Ukraine as a modern country whose territories had somehow remained in the Dark Ages, which were not always equated specifically with Soviet times:

> Ukraine is occupied by the Golden Horde . . . . Today's pogrom of the peaceful demonstration can be compared with the siege and capture of Kyiv in November-December 1240 by the Mongolian army headed by Batu Khan. At least, since that time until today, the residents of Kyiv have not had to hide behind the walls of Mikhailovsky Cathedral. (Okara 2013)

If taken as real, multi-dimensional social and historical phenomena existing in time and space, obviously neither the USSR nor the Dark Ages can be imagined to exist in contemporary Ukraine, and I doubt that *UP* writers literally meant that. However, if taken as mythological constructions whose histories have been "evaporated" (Barthes 1972, 123), these examples merely denote a state of non-freedom, intellectual passivity and moral degradation—the anti-modern condition, in other words. Deprived of the complexities of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 134 09-10-2018 14:06:17

historical contexts, whole regions were judged along the imagined uniprogressive scale, with the modern West occupying the highest point—the point of reference, stimulus, and desire.

Instead of framing the issue of European integration in political terms through the discussion of its social, economic, and political aspects, the discourse of uniprogressivism employed by *UP* columnists and writers appealed to religiosity and morality, constructing a dichotomy of good versus evil that allowed no room for a political decision. By imagining themselves as "the forces of good" fighting against "the forces of evil," the *UP* writers revealed their lack of awareness of the antagonisms and tensions existing within each of the two imagined unities. Their insistence on seeing the opponents as a homogeneous entity instead of a complex web of relations characterized by contradictions and tensions prevented the Euromaidan activists whose opinions I analyzed from seeing possibilities for engaging with this complex social reality for the sake of positive social change.

"NOT ALL OF THEM ARE HERE FOR MONEY"

It is important to recognize that some of the Euromaidan activists whose opinions I analyzed acknowledged that the empty signifier "anti-Maidan" denoted not a homogeneous mass of morally bankrupt people but a diverse array of individuals with informed judgments as to why they rejected the revolution. In some opinion pieces, there were attempts to understand the anti-Maidan stance as a legitimate counter-opinion, but these cases were exceptional; as stated previously, there were only eleven of them. Here is an example:

> Well, the majority of those who have to rally in support of Yanukovych are paid . . . . But not all of them are here for money and with empty heads. I have talked with several protesters. They approached me because I am a journalist and started asking: "Why do you show only the negative sides of what is going on here? Why do you show only drunk and inadequate people? Why do you think that all have been paid here?" A young person, wandering alone, talked with me for a long time. He told me that his friends had turned away from him after they had discovered he did not share the ideas of the Euromaidan, but he has clear arguments about this . . . . He was not paid for sure, and he was not alone . . . . We have started calling "titushki" all those who do not support the Euromaidan. The division has appeared into "the right" and "the wrong," "believers" and "infidel," and—what is the worst—"reasonable" and "miserable." A parallel reality has occurred from which another conflict can emerge. (Sergatskova 2013)

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 135 09-10-2018 14:06:17

Against other opinions published by *UP*, Yekaterina Sergatskova's observations were unique. Not only did she allow for the existence of "another anti-Maidan"—non-paid, non-drunk, and non-scared, made up of reasonable people with independent views and clear arguments about their unwillingness to support the Euromaidan—but she also acknowledged the construction of a "parallel reality" that did not reflect the complexity of the confrontation. Unfortunately, her premonitions about the possibility of a conflict emerging from this duality of thinking was silenced by the chorus of those presenting the situation in simplistic mythological terms as a historic fight between the evil forces of the past and the heroic providers of the future.

To be sure, some other *UP* contributors whose opinions I analyzed also highlighted the necessity of enhancing communication between the two conflicting camps, though their model of communication differed from that suggested by Sergatskova (2013). If her argument was about a necessity to "listen" and "understand" the points of view of the opponents, other *UP* writers envisaged their communication with opponents as a strategic tool to reach their objectives:

> The task of revolutionaries is to determine the problems that are essential for the people of the East, the problems that strike a nerve. And then *to develop instruments necessary to get them on our side* . . . . We also need to put emphasis on educational work by *explaining to them*. (Miselyuk 2013b; emphasis added)

Although in this case the anti-Maidan population of the Southeast was not imagined to be totally demoralized as in many other writings, they were nevertheless presented as passive recipients of *the* knowledge that enlightened revolutionaries would teach them. In other words, those opposing the Euromaidan were presented as passive objects needing to be educated and enlightened. As Karpa put it, "I will go to the East of Ukraine soon . . . and I will explain *the truth* . . . . If they are awoken, we will win for sure" (Karpa 2014; emphasis added). Yuhim Shteingel agreed: "We, the citizens of Ukraine, are not indifferent to these people. We . . . need to *get them off the hook* [of their dependence on the system of power] and take them to local Maidans across all the country" (Shteingel 2014; emphasis added). "It is necessary *to sow new meanings* in people's heads . . . [and] to explain what the European country is," echoed Svitlana Zalishyuk (2014; emphasis added), who after the victory of the Euromaidan became a Parliamentary deputy.

As some activists acknowledged, however, "awakening" people, getting them "off the hook," and "sowing new meanings" in their heads was not an easy enterprise: "We cannot remake our compatriots quickly," Vitaliy Nakhmanovych, a historian, lamented, "but we can create for them conditions for living in a modern European politically legitimate country. All of

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 136 09-10-2018 14:06:17

us need to realize: they will be able to live in 'our' country, but we won't in theirs" (Nakhmanovych 2014). The metaphors employed in this context—"awakening," "sowing new meanings," "getting them off the hook," "remaking them," and so on—all expressed the same idea: that the citizens of the southeastern regions who had not supported the Euromaidan were passive, outdated, non-modern, and non-civilized "sovki" in need of "correction." Unsurprisingly, this was met with resistance. Contrary to what Nakhmanovych and other revolutionaries expected, many people living in the Donbas did not agree to live in "their" country.

As I showed in the previous chapter, the readiness and willingness of the Euromaidan activists to enlighten their "sovok" compatriots—to carry "the white man's burden," as Rudyard Kipling famously dubbed this civilizational mission—stemmed from their firm conviction that they were on the right side of history, a vantage point from which "something like absolute knowledge finally becomes possible" (Seth 2016, 392) and where "kernel truths about the human condition" (Taylor 1999, 170) become clear. To be sure, there were some exceptions to this dominant trend: twenty-nine opinion pieces (7 percent of all the opinions I analyzed) provided some space for presenting the Euromaidan not in mythical terms, but as a matter of rational deliberation. As early as January 13, 2014 (more than a month before the victory of the revolution), journalist Mikita Poturayev confessed that he had stopped participating in the Euromaidan protest because he had not "heard any reasonable ideas or seen any meaningful actions" there (Poturayev 2014). With this articulation, he clearly challenged the Euromaidan's self-presentation as an "army of light" possessing "absolute knowledge." Some other *UP* writers, albeit later, agreed with Poturayev. On January 16, 2014, Anna Lachykhyna (2014), a graduate student of political science, wrote: "Neither the opposition nor the public has a clear plan of how to fix economic and political issues in case the demand for the resignation [of Yanukovych] is fulfilled." "Nobody understands the meaning of what is going on," Oleksiy Arestovych (2014b) echoed Lachykhyna two days later. On February 14, Ihor Lubkivsky (2014), a publicist, developed the same theme:

> We have forgotten what was the purpose of everything at the beginning. The people demanded an honest and open attitude toward themselves . . . . Now, we do not even remember this—everything has been replaced with smaller and less important things—to vacate or occupy buildings, to release or capture hostages, to grant amnesty or imprison somebody. No doubt, all of this is important . . . . But this is exactly how grifters act: they change meanings.

On February 18, only four days before armed Euromaidan protesters seized power in Ukraine, Vasyl Yeremeev (2014) asserted: "The program is absent."

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 137 09-10-2018 14:06:17

The isolated voices of these contributors, however, were muted by the chorus of those glorifying the Euromaidan struggle without stopping to contemplate its problematic aspects.

Some columnists and bloggers also addressed the issue of the transformation of the Euromaidan from a peaceful manifestation to a violent enterprise: as mentioned earlier, nineteen authors problematized the coalition of Euromaidan liberals and nationalists. The economist Volodimir Dubrovsky (2013c) acknowledged, for example, that the revolutionaries had made a mistake by aligning themselves with ultra-nationalists: "We haven't learned how to find compromises, we have allowed ultra-nationalists to run wild . . . , cut off a considerable and important portion of allies who didn't want to make the revolution under black-and-red flags [the banners of ultra-radicals]." He immediately added, however, that "nothing irreparable has happened yet" and suggested that "[i]t is necessary to work with those who have proven themselves to be free people." In other words, albeit acknowledging that for many people in Ukraine it was unthinkable to collaborate with ultra-nationalists, Dubrovsky quickly dismissed this concern by returning to the mainstream revolutionary discourse of "free people versus slaves."

A similar tendency to downplay the ultra-radicalism of the Euromaidan was observed among other *UP* writers. "The Maidan has condoned many things unacceptable for the European system of values," the writer Victoria Narizhna (2013b) asserted. She went on, "It has tolerated doubtful slogans like 'Ukraine is above all!' in which people stubbornly do not want to recognize the copied 'Deutschland über alles!'" However, like Dubrovsky in the previous case, Narizhna added immediately that "it is not really a good time now to put on white gloves and disassociate oneself from the protest in which there are some unacceptable allies." According to this logic, the "many things unacceptable for the European system of values" that happened at the Euromaidan could and should be tolerated in the name of European integration, which, it was imagined, would bring Ukraine those values trampled by ultra-nationalists. As Victoria Siumar, then a journalist and later a Parliamentary deputy, put it (cited in Teren 2013a), "she [Siumar] doesn't care who is walking on the left or the right—the important thing is to go to one direction." The belief that a democratic condition could be achieved through undemocratic means was widely shared. As my analysis suggests, many "liberally minded" activists sincerely believed that they would be able to get rid of the undemocratic tendencies of the Euromaidan after the victory of the revolution. As the following history of Ukraine shows, this has not happened.

A post by Yekaterina Sergatskova, written not long before the bloody battles of the Euromaidan, which took the lives of both pro-Maidan activists and their anti-Maidan counterparts, is very interesting in this respect. This is

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 138 09-10-2018 14:06:17

how she described her conversation with the security group of Self-Defense, a volunteer organization of Maidan radicals[1]:

> At the peak of the conversation, one of the security guards told us: "Do you want, ladies, to be branded as 'provocateurs'?" Luckily, we were not sent to the headquarters of afghantsi[2] where the "provocateurs" and other "titushki" were detained . . . . The next morning, I saw a report on how the members of Self-Defense pulled along Khreshatik another "guilty" person and made him pray publicly. We can say that it is not a good time now . . . for such an unpleasant topic, but at some point in time, this problem will appear even sharper. (Sergatskova 2014)

As the development of the Ukrainian conflict showed, Sergatskova turned out to be right: the problem grew more severe in the spring of 2014, when the anti-Maidan uprising spread through the southeastern regions of Ukraine among people whom the radicals of the Euromaidan treated as "provocateurs" and "titushki," and whom Euromaidan non-radicals considered "sovki" and "slaves."

Interestingly, out of the 430 blog posts and columns I analyzed, Sergatskova's was the only post that directly addressed the issue of violence committed by Euromaidan radicals. For other *UP* contributors, this discussion was not "convenient" or "timely," or simply did not exist. The majority of Euromaidan liberals preferred to close their eyes to their "temporary" alliance with radicals. On December 18, 2013, Karpa (2013b), for example, wrote that "one can hardly find banderovets"[3] at the Maidan despite the fact that a portrait of Bandera had already been installed in the square and a building of Kyiv state administration had already been occupied by "Svoboda" and other nationalistic organizations who had never tried to conceal their admiration of Bandera. At the end of the day, it is exactly the alliance between Euromaidan radicals and liberals that made the change of power possible (more on this in the next chapter). As my analysis suggests, it was the treatment of all the opponents of the Euromaidan as "slaves," "sovki," and "titushki" by both the radicals and the liberals that made their alliance more than just situational. Combined, the totalitarianisms of the uniprogressive and nationalistic discourses of the Euromaidan—their common unwillingness and inability to see "others" as adversaries with different but legitimate opinions—could not but yield the system of government that was established after the victory of the revolution.

As discussed in chapter 3, the transformation of antagonism into agonism is important for establishing and maintaining a democratic system of governance and preserving societal peace. A project of democratizing Ukrainian society cannot be successful without incorporating into the political process

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 139 09-10-2018 14:06:17

a wide variety of social groups, uniting them equivalentially in a hegemonic chain. It is also necessary to keep in mind, however, that trying to achieve democratic goals by incorporating into the popular front radically anti-democratic forces whose aim is not democratization but fighting with cultural "others" is ideologically unacceptable and, in practical terms, counterproductive. The outcome of the collaboration of liberals with nationalists was predetermined: unlike the ideology of liberalism that valorizes peaceful methods of political protesting, the ideology of nationalism glorifies armed conflict. The latter, by definition, does not allow for an agonistic transformation of enemies into adversaries through the recognition of the necessity to deal with social diversity in a democratic way, without suppressing it. The agonistic model positions the adversary in the same symbolic space, accepting differences as legitimate; the nationalistic model does not leave space for the possibility of such an agonistic turn.

As I highlighted earlier, relations within a community become more democratic when all members acknowledge and accept the particularity and limitations of their claims—an impossibility if discursive closures are stabilized through the establishment of solid dividing frontiers. The stabilization of closures happens inevitably if the frontiers are presented not as contingent and temporary but as essential and natural, which in the Ukrainian case happened not only when the hegemony of the uniprogressive discourse was established (with its presentation of anti-Western "others" in terms of underdeveloped barbarism) but also when the split was reinforced by the discursive-material presence of Ukrainian radicals (the next chapter will discuss this in greater detail). The uniprogressive discourse was organized through contrasting "the traditional" and "the modern," "the barbarian" and "the progressive," "the West" and "the rest," and so forth; the discourse of nationalism juxtaposed "Ukrainian" against "non-Ukrainian," "true Ukrainian" against "not real Ukrainian," and so on. Notably, in both discourses the radical outsiders were "sovki" who identified themselves with Russia or sympathized with it.

The antagonistic frontiers between "progressive" Western-oriented Ukrainians and their backward constitutive outside was only solidified by the collaboration of Euromaidan liberals and nationalists who supported the European course for tactical reasons—as a means of opposing Russia and Russification. Those who were excluded from the Euromaidan's equivalential chain were pathologized and relegated to the rank of "slaves" and "non-citizens," as discussed in the previous chapter. As a result, the split between the "progressive" Euromaidan and its "backward" opposition only widened until it reached the point of no return when the armed resistance against the "coup" began in the eastern regions of Ukraine in the spring of 2014.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 140 09-10-2018 14:06:17

It is important to note that some *UP* contributors acknowledged that the transformation of the revolution from a peaceful protest to violent clashes led not to democratization but to the radicalization of politics, which in turn led to further division and destruction of society. However, even in sober prognoses of the outcomes following the radicalization of the protests, analysis of the unity of Euromaidan liberals and radicals as stemming from their common treatment of all "others" as "underserving" was absent:

> The revolution can also take place in a country whose political elite is unable to take power from an inadequate guarantor [of the constitution] peacefully and legitimately. Even if power occasionally falls into their hands, they cannot keep it and solve stockpiled problems. In this case, the power is grasped by "real" revolutionaries, such as Jacobins in France or Bolsheviks in Russia. Unfortunately, "real" revolutionaries produce bad parliamentarians. In general, they produce nothing good except warriors and executioners. (Nakhmanovych 2014)

> As a result of the spilled blood, the degree of confrontation between the "two Ukraines" can rise. If the current power wins, the western and the central areas will feel occupied; if it loses . . . the eastern and southern regions will feel the same, as if occupied . . . . Animosity and hate will replace disagreements and intolerance to the ideas and worldviews of each other. (Bakhteev 2014)

> The national dialogue on solving the political crisis needs to start from working on our mistakes and realizing that the road of "ultimatums," "the path of force," "the rhetoric of barricades" is hopeless; it will lead to the destruction of Ukrainian statehood. (Stavniychuk 2014)

The authors of these citations turned out to be right: the Jacobin imaginary of the Euromaidan—its sharp division of the country into "Ukrainians" supporting the European agenda of the revolution and the masses of "non-citizens" made up of "sovki" and "slaves"—could not but exacerbate the confrontation between the "two Ukraines," undermining the possibility of political solutions and ruining Ukrainian statehood. Soon after these premonitions were articulated, nationalists took political power, Russia annexed Crimea, the anti-Maidan insurgency broke out in the Donbas, and the "Anti-Terrorist Operation" was launched. Those opposing the revolution in the eastern parts of Ukraine were outlawed as enemies of the Ukrainian state; they were labeled "separatists" and "terrorists" (see chapter 12). This would not have been possible if the Euromaidan had not already framed them as "sovki" and "slaves"—not "real Ukrainians"—whose opinions did not deserve to be taken into account. In the next chapter, I will show the possibility of alternative articulations of reasons for the Euromaidan's rejection by millions of "other" Ukrainians.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 141 09-10-2018 14:06:17

NOTES

1. Self-Defense is the police force of the Maidan. Its head was Andriy Parubiy, a founder of the "Svoboda" nationalistic party. After the victory of the Maidan, Parubiy was appointed the head of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.
2. *Afghantsi* are the veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989) fighting on the Maidan's side.
3. *Banderovtsi* are the followers of Stepan Bandera.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 142 09-10-2018 14:06:17

Chapter 11

The Discursive-Material Knot of the Euromaidan

THE VIOLENCE OF THE EUROMAIDAN

It is impossible to understand the dynamics of confrontation between the two Ukraines (pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan) without accounting for the complex interconnections between the discursive and the material in the course of the unfolding of the Ukrainian crisis. In this chapter, I will try to incorporate the material into my analysis of the discursive using Nico Carpentier's model of the DMK as presented in chapter 3.

For the young people gathered at the Maidan, Yanukovych's refusal to sign the agreement in the presence of European leaders became an event that could neither be domesticated by the habitual discourse of corruption nor explained with the inner logic of their uniprogressive imaginary. It was a "surprising emergence of something new which undermines every stable scheme" (Žižek 2014, 7). In other words, it was "the material change that at least has the potential to dislocate a particular discourse . . . because this discourse turns out to be unable to attribute meaning to the event" (Carpentier 2017, 36). The habitual discourse of corruption seemed now to be powerless in terms of explaining how it was possible to reject the European future, which pro-Maidan Ukrainians imagined as an inevitable civilizational choice. The refusal to sign the agreement invited a break with previous significations; however, the re-significations were not in place immediately after Nayem's followers gathered at the square. Rather, the sense of disorientation lasted until another disrupting event on November 30, when the regime left the marks of violence on the bodies of the beaten students.

On December 1, 2013, when tens of thousands merged into a huge protesting machine cutting into the flow of Kyiv's "normal" life, there was an impression that the whole nation came together to crush Yanukovych's

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 143 09-10-2018 14:06:17

regime, which contributed to the formation of the "we are the nation" discourse employed by Euromaidan participants. The injured bodies of the students played a crucial role in the further development of the confrontation, with the injuries almost taking on a life of their own; the students did not plan for themselves to be humiliated and beaten, but their wounds affected their surroundings in ways they did not choose (Merleau-Ponty 2005). In the eyes of Euromaidan activists, these material marks of brutal violence unambiguously called for the signification of criminality for Yanukovych's system of power and showed the necessity of destroying it. For them, this meaning looked so clear that it was beyond the limit of the possible to give any reasonable explanation for so many in the southeastern regions refusing to support the protest. The only ostensibly "reasonable" explanation, as the previous chapter shows, was the presentation of anti-Maidan "others" as "slaves" and "sovki" lacking human dignity and freedom of spirit.

This one-dimensional explanation for the Euromaidan's lack of support among many people in the Southeast missed several important points. First, Euromaidan activists systematically failed to acknowledge that it was quite possible to disapprove of *both* the violence of those in power and the project of European integration. As I explained in chapter 8, many people in the Southeast held negative views toward the idea of establishing closer economic links with Europe at the expense of cooperation with Russia. According to the logic of the Euromaidan, however, condemnation of the government's violence automatically meant acceptance of the pro-European agenda. These two demands were equivalentially united both discursively and materially: Gathered in the center of Kyiv to protest against the abuses of power on December 1, 2013, demonstrators carried a huge banner of the European Union and chanted "Ukraine is Europe" (Public Television 2013). They were greeted not only by the leaders of the Ukrainian opposition but also by European politicians. "It is not the case that you need Europe. *Europe needs you*, and you will be with Europe!"—this is how Jarosław Aleksander Kaczyński, a former prime minister of Poland, addressed the Euromaidan (TSN 2013a; emphasis added). Diminishing the agency of Ukrainians by stressing that it was *not them but Europe* that needed the Association, this address might have sounded alarming for those opposing the European vector of development; it invited dislocation of the Euromaidan's discourse presenting the Association as serving the best interests of Ukrainians. Taken together, the discursive-material unity of the EU flag, pro-European chants, and European politicians speaking from the Maidan's podium about *their interests* invited alternative interpretations.

The "highly symbolic appearance" (Top US Officials 2013) at the Maidan of US assistant secretary of state Victoria Nuland only reinforced the basis for such a signification. Following US president Barack Obama (Baysha

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 144 09-10-2018 14:06:17

2018) and secretary of state John Kerry (Kerry's Statement on Ukraine 2013), Nuland equated the supporters of the Euromaidan with the entire population of Ukraine: "I hope that the people of Ukraine know that the United States stands with you . . . *for the European future you have chosen and deserve*" (Azattyk 2013; emphasis added). Such a discursive construction of the Ukrainian conflict unequivocally valorized the Ukrainians wanting a "European future" and disregarded those with alternative views. To make things worse, Nuland distributed food among those gathered at the Maidan—both protesters and police (Kiev Riot Police 2013)—a move that became an especial point of attention by Russian media interpreting it as "unprecedented meddling in a country's internal affairs" that was "making those who witnessed the scene wonder if a reciprocal gesture would be imaginable during something like an Occupy Wall Street protest in New York" (Russia Today 2013). But many of those holding anti-Maidan views—those who were excluded by Obama, Kerry, and Nuland from the ranks of Ukrainians—might have asked themselves the same question even without Russian media. The symbolic feeding of Ukrainian people by a high-ranking US official could not but invite an interpretation similar to that pushed by the Russian propaganda (the "coup d'etat" storyline).

Nuland's gesture acquired even more symbolic value after December of 2013, as she publicly acknowledged that the United States had "invested over $5 billion to assist Ukraine" in building "democratic skills and institutions, as they promote civic participation and good governance, *all of which are preconditions for Ukraine to achieve its European aspirations*" (FailWin Compilation 2014; emphasis added). To spend five billion dollars to achieve a democratic condition in which half of the country that rejects Europeanization is not taken into account—what kind of democracy is this and whose interests does it serve? This is what millions of those rejecting the Euromaidan or hesitating in their attitudes toward it might have asked themselves.

The situation became even more dubious after a bugged phone conversation between Nuland and Geoffrey Pyatt, the US Ambassador to Ukraine, which at the beginning of February appeared on *YouTube* (Ukraine Crisis 2014). This is how *The Nation* presented the content of the leaked talk:

> The transcript of the Nuland-Pyatt phone call, which apparently occurred sometime last week and was released on YouTube on February 6, reveals how deeply the United States is enmeshed into internal Ukrainian affairs. The two diplomats banter about which of the Ukrainian opposition figures ought to go into the government, perhaps as prime minister, if a deal can be struck with Viktor Yanukovych, the president. As if it's any of her business, Nuland says, referring to Vitali Klitschko ("Klitsch"), an opposition leader, "I don't think Klitsch should go into the government. I don't think it's necessary, I don't think it's a good idea." To which Pyatt, after a long pause, replies, "Just let him stay

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 145 09-10-2018 14:06:17

> out and do his political homework and stuff." Instead, Pyatt and Nuland agree that Arseniy Yatseniuk ("Yats") ought be the guy who goes in. "I think Yats is the guy who's got the economic experience, the governing experience." Then Nuland concludes: "I just think Klitsch going in . . . he's going to be at that level working for Yatseniuk, it's just not going to work."
>
> After going back and forth, in which the two Americans decide on who'll make what phone call to give Yats and Klitsch their apparent marching orders, and after they note that Oleh Tyahnybok, who represents an outright fascist-nationalist party, might be a "problem" (but, still, it seems, someone they can work with), it gets worse. (Dreyfuss 2014)

One of the most astonishing moments of this leaked conversation, which was broadcast and reprinted not only by Russian but also by Ukrainian media, is that a high-ranking US official, who was "deeply enmeshed" into Ukrainian affairs for the sake of a "European future" of Ukraine, at the same time "expresse[d] her disdain for the European Union . . . 'Fuck the EU!' sa[id] Nuland. Pyatt replie[d], rather hilariously, 'No, exactly'" (Dreyfuss 2014). It is no surprise that the Russian media used these leaks intensively to argue that "[t]he leaked chat fuels earlier allegations that Washington is heavily meddling in the Ukrainian political crisis by manipulating the pro-EU opposition and helping it in its efforts to oust President Viktor Yanukovych" (Russia Today 2014). But even without Russian propaganda, the content of the conversation, taken together with all other discursive-material signs of US involvement in the Ukraine crisis, unambiguously invited the dislocation of the Euromaidan's hegemonic discourse presenting the revolution as an event created exclusively by Ukrainians, which further alienated those rejecting the Euromaidan. Presenting the oppositional leaders as marionettes, this leaked talk only confirmed what many people holding anti-Maidan views had already imagined: the Euromaidan was not *their* struggle serving *their* aspirations and *their* best interests. From this perspective, the machine of the revolution turned out to be not self-propelled, as its cogs—revolutionary activists—presented it, but was instead "the machine of a machine" (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, 36), a part of the global assemblage of US imperial power.

THE LACK OF VISION

Another possible reason for not supporting the Euromaidan was the lack of a clear vision on the part of both the leaders and ordinary protesters as to the expected outcomes of the revolution. The brutal dispersal of the protesting youth might have caused disapproval, but for many people hesitating in their attitudes toward the revolution, the question remained: What exactly do the protesters suggest to do? What is their plan? Is there any plan at all? For many

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 146 09-10-2018 14:06:17

uncertain people it might have been difficult to answer this last question positively. Humorous slogans like "I am a girl! I don't want CU [Custom Union with Russia]! I want lacy panties and EU!"—the one that made famous the young female protester Olga Znachkova (StopFake 2015)—did not create feelings of trust toward the protests among anti-Maidan "others." To those unfamiliar with the culture of carnival protesting, the manifestation might have looked childish and irresponsible. For many people opposing the Euromaidan, pots on the heads of the protesters (a response to a Parliament decision banning hard hats at political rallies) looked weird—for some of them, the image signified a "pan-headed," brainless condition. "Pots on heads or instead of heads?"—this is how Vladimir Skachko (2014), a Ukrainian journalist known for his anti-Maidan stance, addressed this carnivalesque action. In a similar fashion, the spectacle of men in historical Cossack costumes beating war drums near Maidan barricades was a mismatch with the modern urbanity of Kyiv and thus gave rise to contested interpretations: if Euromaidan supporters saw them as a representation of the brave defenders of national traditions, for their opponents the medieval clothes of the drummers calling for war might have signified a condition of abnormality if not insanity.

The destiny of the country was at stake, and this presupposed a very serious discussion on the proposed project of Ukraine's future. As both Euromaidan activists (see the previous chapter) and Ukranian media acknowledged, such a discussion was largely absent from the agenda of the Euromaidan. "Many people [the occupiers of the Kyiv state administration building] looked around not knowing what to do… The opposition is not ready for such rapid development of events" (TSN 2013a)—these and numerous similar statements transmitted via Ukrainian media, attesting not only to the lack of a clear plan of action but also to contradictions inside the protesting camp, could not but disturb those unconvinced by the necessity of a radical change pushed by the most radical part of the uprising.

Evidence of poor coordination between different groups within the Maidan as well as conflicts between them could be found elsewhere:

> An all-Ukrainian Maidan Association was established on 22 December, with various NGOs sitting on its Public Council (though the majority of protesters were increasingly reluctant to be organized by anyone other than themselves). Its "Official Manifesto," issued on 29 December, had little impact. Only 6 percent of protesters had been organized by civic groups (rising to 13 per cent in February). (Wilson 2014, 76)

As is well known, organic organizations, which the Euromaidan definitely represented, differ from mechanistic and bureaucratic ones in that they have lower levels of complexity, formalization, and organization. The lack of well-coordinated organization of the Euromaidan, however, could have repelled its

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 147 09-10-2018 14:06:17

opponents because they might have believed in the importance of effective institutionalized organization for any kind of struggle. As Mouffe (2013) put it: "To effectively transform power relations, the new consciousness that arises out of those [horizontal and loosely organized] protests requires institutional channels" (115). Contrary to what many Euromaidan activists believed, neither their carnival performances (at the beginning) nor violent clashes with the machine of power (later) could by themselves bring a positive social change. An effective organizational machine was obviously lacking at the level of both the discursive (as a plan) and the material (as a structure). It is this organizational void that led to the lack of support on the part of those who might have joined the protests if the Euromaidan signified for them not a gathering of unorganized weirdos but a well-conceived and well-planned action (Polozhinsky 2014).

One can argue, of course, that the gathering at the Maidan was spontaneous, and it could not be pre-planned. This is only half true. The gathering looked spontaneous, but the sequence of events preceding Vilnius all but demanded a crisis plan of urgent actions in case Yanukovych did not sign the agreement. On October 25, Putin announced that Ukraine would not be able to join the Customs Union after the signature of the Association Agreement (NewsRu 2013). On November 11, the Ukrainian League of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs asked Yanukovych to postpone the signature of the Association Agreement for one year because of its presumably negative consequences for the Ukrainian economy (UNIAN 2013a). On November 14, Yanukovych made public that Ukraine lacked the money necessary for the modernization of industrial enterprises in accordance with EU standards (UNIAN 2013b). These and other similar warning signs suggested that the document might not be signed and that protest actions would be required. Of course, many people who later gathered at the Maidan had hoped for a better outcome, but this could hardly excuse the pro-European activists, some of whom later became ministers in the post-Maidan government and parliamentary deputies, from the responsibility to think ahead and develop a plan.

The lack of planning and coordination also contributed to the radicalization of the Euromaidan, stemming from a sense of annoyance and resentment toward not only Yanukovych but also the seemingly helpless state of the opposition: "The official opposition never had much of a plan. The more radical protesters and social networks had yet to develop one. The sense of vacuum was also fueling the frustration" (Wilson 2014, 82). Among other things, this frustration manifested itself in the confrontation between different Euromaidan divisions. As one of the Euromaidan participants, cited by Wilson, claimed: "The leaders of the Fatherland and UDAR were 'not only brakes of the opposition, but . . . stopped us from doing anything other than stand in the square'" (Wilson 2014, 83). The confrontation between different

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 148 09-10-2018 14:06:17

Euromaidan divisions (which some of *UP*'s blogs and columns, analyzed in the previous chapter, also acknowledged) might have discouraged many people from supporting the revolution as well.

PROVOCATEURS VS. ACTIVISTS

Much of the confusion stemming from the lack of organization was caused by "provocateurs" that, according to media reports, were literally everywhere: "There are provocateurs, people in disguise. Who beat students? They were beaten not by military people and not by special forces. Please, don't cry 'Shame on Berkut!'" (TSN 2013a). This is how Ruslana, a famous Ukrainian singer and one of the most prominent Euromaidan activists, described the situation with the beaten students at the beginning of her interview in the studio of 1+1 (TSN 2013a). Several minutes later, however, after a news break, she changed her interpretation completely: "Half an hour after we got to the Mikhailovsky Cathedral, the Berkut was there. Any time we announced the protesters were here or there, the Berkut appeared. This was their planned action to annihilate the Maidan" (TSN 2013a). For people hesitating in their attitudes toward the Euromaidan, this contradiction (and endless similar inconsistencies) in the description of the situation by an activist of the uprising looked suspicious: If the radical change in Ruslana's account was a matter of only several minutes, to what extent was it possible to trust her and others of her ilk at all?

Anytime violence broke out, the discourse of "provocations" reemerged; often, however, the cries about "provocateurs" turned out to be false, as in the case of the Kyiv City State Administration (KCSA) building whose occupiers were first taken as "provocateurs" but later recognized as "activists." Video shows how one of the protesters, holding a "provocateur," shouts: "People will rip you apart!" (TSN 2013a). A moment later, however, the reporter informed her viewers that the building of the administration had been occupied not by "provocateurs" but by well-known "activists" such as Tetyana Chornovol and Ihor Myroshnychenko, a "Svoboda" spokesperson (TSN 2013a). Forbidden for "provocateurs," the seizure of state buildings turned out to be allowed for "activists." Why? Judging from my analysis presented in the previous chapter, this question was left unaddressed by the Euromaidan's speakers as presented by *UP* bloggers and columnists. As further events in the Donbas showed, however, the lesson was not forgotten. In April 2014, activists of the anti-Maidan uprising also seized governmental buildings in the eastern cities of Ukraine; but in this case, the occupiers came to be treated as "terrorists" rather than "activists," as it was in Kyiv (see next chapter). This mismatch between the definitions given by Euromaidan activists and later the post-Maidan government to Euromaidan protesters as

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 149 09-10-2018 14:06:17

compared to their opponents was taken as a stark injustice by many people holding anti-Maidan views; this could not but fuel their resentment.

One of the material manifestations of the contradictions and tensions inside the Euromaidan movement was the appearance of a bulldozer in the streets of Kyiv on December 1 and its participation in storming the governmental district. This is how Andrew Wilson (2014) presented the events:

> [A] group of several hundred that went up the hill from the Maidan towards the presidential administration building was infiltrated by *provocateurs*, who duly staged fierce fights with the police. Most were *fake nationalists*—some from the recently organized Right Sector, but mainly from the Social-National Assembly and Brotherhood, which was linked to Putin's favourite Ukrainian, Viktor Medvedchuk. (69; emphasis added)

As is evident from this excerpt, for Wilson (as for many Maidan activists as well), the "fake" nationalistic identity of the storm troopers was unquestioned. "Provocation" was a dominant meaning that Euromaidan protesters attached to the bulldozer; in their view, it cut into the peaceful flow of the protest intentionally, to provoke a spiral of violence. It was seen as an alien proto-machine of aggression, forcing a disruption into the discourse of the peaceful Maidan.

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that the Euromaidan was a gathering of all kinds of people who wanted to join the protests for all kinds of different reasons, with every participant united equivalentially by the empty signifier "Euromaidan." In the loose structure of the Euromaidan, the presence of people favoring violence over peaceful protesting was quite possible even without the Kremlin's interventions. During the storming of the governmental district, when police were attacked with smoke bombs, stones, and chains, the Public Television journalist Serhii Andrushko interviewed Serhii Pantyuk, a Ukrainian writer, at the site of the confrontation. This is an excerpt of their conversation:

Andrushko: Tell me, please, why do they storm? Why such aggression? This is a peaceful meeting.
Pantyuk: You know, my personal vision is as follows: They were first to spill blood, and we didn't ask them for this.
Andrushko: Do you want to start a war?
Pantyuk: We want to put them in their place.
Andrushko: Do you want to put them in their place by [spilling] other people's blood?
Pantyuk: But I am here as well . . . . They dispersed us, they beat us, and this action is unruly. This is public outrage, and this is the last straw.

(Public Television 2013)

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 150 09-10-2018 14:06:17

The problem with the "fake nationalists" story, propagated by Wilson and other observers holding similar views, is that Pantyuk was not an anonymous fighter with a covered face; he was a member of the National Writers' Union of Ukraine and served as its secretary from 2011 to 2014. He participated in the students' movement of the 1990s, the civil disobedience action of "Ukraine without Kuchma" in 2001–2002, and in the Orange Revolution of 2004. After the Euromaidan, he fought in the Donbas war as a member of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA) Volunteer Battalion, which has a distinctive radically nationalistic identification. In other words, it is difficult to call Pantyuk a "fake nationalist" working for the Kremlin.

Like many other nationalists participating in the occupation of state buildings and the storming of the governmental district on December 1, Pantyuk publicly approved violent methods without covering his face, as some protesters did:

Demonstrator (with a covered face): Yesterday, they spilled the blood of innocent people, they killed a girl . . . . If it is God's will, we will spill their blood today.
Andrushko: Which blood? Whose blood?
Demonstrator: Those in power.
Andrushko: What for? Do you want to oust them?
Demonstrator: [unclear] . . . I am not a democrat.

(Public Television 2013)

First, it is worth mentioning that no girl was killed on November 30, as the interviewee claimed, and this points to the disorientation among Euromaidan participants, with their resentments spurred on in the confusion. Second, it is quite possible to admit that the people in masks throwing stones and smoke grenades at policemen and crashing their defenses with the bulldozer could have been "provocateurs" striving for an escalation of violence. But whose interests did these "provocateurs" represent? The Kremlin's, as the presence of the "Brotherhood" suggested? Or the interests of the nationalistic camp, as one might infer from "Svoboda's" occupiers of the KCSB? Or those of Petro Poroshenko, the future president of Ukraine, who "worked hard to contain the situation on the ground" (Wilson 2014, 69)? Or could it be the interests of other politicians bearing grudges, like Arsen Avakov or Yulia Tymoshenko, who had been prosecuted by Yanukovych? For those hesitating in their attitudes toward the uprising, these were serious questions to consider, and there were no definite answers, especially since the beating of the students had already been publicly condemned by the president, the prime minister, and the minister of internal affairs of Ukraine; the latter asked for forgiveness, and high officials promised to find and punish those responsible for the violent dispersal (TSN 2013a). Of course, given the reputation of Yanukovych and those surrounding him, the

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 151 09-10-2018 14:06:17

public could hardly trust the sincerity of this official remorse. However, the reputation of nationalists in the eyes of many citizens of Ukraine, especially in the Southeast, left much to be desired as well, and the presence of "Svoboda" and other nationalistic organizations at the Euromaidan could only invite a dislocation of the "peaceful and democratic Maidan" narrative of the protest.

EUROMAIDAN RADICALS

"Svoboda's" initial name was the "Social-National Party of Ukraine" (SNPU), and it was organized by Oleh Tyahnybok and Andriy Parubiy in 1991. In 2000, SNPU changed its name to "Svoboda" ("freedom" in Ukrainian) and its official symbol was switched from a neo-Nazi Wolfsangel to a trident (the emblem of Ukraine). "Svododa" is well known for anti-Semitic and anti-Russian public speeches by its leaders. Here are some of the most famous examples:

- In 2004, Tyahnybok called his followers to "give Ukraine to Ukrainians at last": "They [the warriors of UIA] fought against moskals [a derogative name for "Russians"], fought against Germans, fought against zhidovnya [a derogative name for "Jews"], and all other human waste [нечисть]" (Tyahnybok 2010).
- In 2010, Svoboda spokesman Ihor Myroshnychenko, discussing the Ukrainian-born actress Mila Kunis, said she was "not Ukrainian but a Jewess [жидівка]" so she should not be "stuck" (лепить) to Ukraine (TSN 2012).
- The same year, Iryna Farion, another well-known Svoboda activist, became infamous after advising kindergarten children in Lviv to leave Ukraine if they do not change their Russian names for Ukrainian ones (Farion 2014).

As Richard Sakwa (2015a) put it, "Anti-Semitism was deeply embedded in the party, but the intensity of its Russophobia was far greater" (21), and this is exactly what repelled many people living in the Southeast from "Svoboda" and other nationalistic forces. The materiality of their presence at the Maidan—including the portrait of Bandera, the torch ceremony celebrating his birthday, the red-and-black banners of the UIA that had "fought against moskals . . . and zhidovnya" (Tyahnybok 2010), Tyahnybok's and Farion's speeches from the Maidan's podium, UIA songs loudly resonating over the Maidan (SeregaGlin 2013), etc.—was a disturbing discursive-material sign of unity in the Euromaidan of liberal and nationalistic agendas, which contributed to the dislocation of the narrative of Europeanization-as-democratization that was propagated by Euromaidan liberals.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 152 09-10-2018 14:06:17

Discussing the excessive focus of many observers on Euromaidan nationalists, Wilson (2014) claimed: "The Freedom Party [Svoboda] was indeed full of racists and demagogues, but won 10 per cent of the vote in very specific circumstances in 2012 . . . . But in the very different circumstances of the Maidan, the party was already in sharp decline . . ." (70). What Wilson (together with numerous other observers) tries to say is that the role of the nationalists in the Euromaidan uprising was enormously overestimated. In Wilson's view, the influence of Euromaidan nationalists on its radicalization was only marginal, and "much of the negative publicity . . . came from crude black PR from Russian media" (2014, 70).

I do not want to contest that the role of Euromaidan nationalists was exaggerated by Russian media that, following Putin, focused their coverage of the Euromaidan predominantly on its extremists (Baysha 2018); however, I also do not want to fall into a trap of diminishing the influence of Ukrainian nationalism on the development of the Euromaidan revolution in terms of its rejection by many people living in the Southeast. Suffice it to say that Tyahnybok was a member of the oppositional "troika" representing the Euromaidan in the eyes of the whole world. He led the column of the protesters on December 1, after the violent dispersal of the protest (TSN 2013a); he encouraged protesters to strive for more determined struggles "to change the system of power" (Tyahnybok 2013); he participated in negotiations with Yanukovych, and, among other oppositional leaders, signed the agreement on the settlement of the political crisis in the presence of high-ranking European officials. US politicians and officials visiting the Maidan treated Tyahnybok as a legitimate representative of the Ukrainian people (Lee 2014; Taylor 2013). We can argue about the low level of support for nationalistic parties in Ukraine as much as we want, but the fact remains: One of the most virulent nationalists of Ukraine, whose party had been propagating the ideology of ethnic intolerance, represented the Euromaidan both domestically and internationally. Taken together with other signs of the unity of the Euromaidan's European and nationalistic agendas, as well as the presence of numerous other nationalistic organizations at the Maidan, this could not but repel the Russophone population of the Southeast.

As previous examples show, the unity of the two agendas manifested itself not so much through discourse but through the embodied presence of nationalists at the Maidan and the materiality of their actions: the occupation of state buildings, the storming of the governmental district, and all the later violent clashes with police. However, the discursive manifestations of a Russophobe mood at the Maidan were also present. For example, one popular amusement of protesting students—jumping and chanting "Who doesn't jump is a moskal" (Zadorozhnyy 2013)—could not be taken as funny or

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 153 09-10-2018 14:06:17

inoffensive for the Russophone population of the Southeast. Repeated time and again, this discursive-material sign of the Euromaidan's anti-Russianism explicitly invited the drawing of a border between the uprising and its outside not in political but in ethnic and cultural terms. This clearly resonated with the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism and provoked protests in the southeastern regions of Ukraine, as further events showed.

THE SPIRAL OF ANIMOSITY

Although the government's attempts to clear out the Maidan in December and January were more cautious than on November 30 in terms of the visibility of the violence, an increasing number of activists were injured as protests continued: "Growing numbers were beaten away from the world's cameras and smartphones. Kidnapping of activists became increasingly common . . . injured protestors were snatched from their hospital beds" (Wilson 2014, 77). One of the most famous victims among Euromaidan protesters was Chornovol—an activist known not only for her investigations into corruption among senior state officials but also for illegal penetration into the presidential residence of Yanukovych (TBi 2012), occupation of the KSCB (TSN 2013a), and many other extravagant political actions that looked "abnormal" enough to invite pro-governmental media to raise questions about Chornovol's mental health (Gorodskoy Dozor 2012). At midnight on December 25, 2013, her car was stopped by a group of thugs who pulled her out of the vehicle, brutally beat her, and left her in a ditch with a broken nose, concussion, and numerous bruises (Ukrainian Journalist Beaten Up 2013).

A no less publicized story happened with Mykhailo Gavrylyuk, a protester from Yarivka village in the Chervtsi region (the southwestern part of Ukraine). On January 22, 2014, he was stripped naked in the freezing winter by Berkut soldiers, made to hold an ice-axe, pose for photographs, and shout "I love Berkut" (Kozlowska 2014). As in the case with Chornovol and other humiliated and beaten protesters, Gavrylyuk's body had clear marks from encountering the machine of power: it was covered with hematomas. The pictures of Chornovol's mutilated face and a naked Gavrylyuk humiliated by the Berkut circulated around the country via media aligned with the revolution. As Wilson (2014) claims:

> New media technology was more important than in 2004. The "Euromaidan" Facebook page gathered 75,000 likes in its first week and had 300,000 by the spring. Twitter's @Euromaydan had nearly 100,000 followers. Protestors got their news from websites (51 per cent), Facebook (49 per cent) or the local

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 154 09-10-2018 14:06:18

> equivalent Vkontakte ("In Contact," 35 per cent), but that left them in an "alternative reality" to the audience of state TV. (69)

Not only "new" social media, however, were incorporated into the media assemblage embodied in the DMK of the revolution. "Old" national news organizations controlled by oligarchs whose business had been threatened by the Yanukovych family—Petro Poroshenko, Ihor Kolomoyskyi, and Davyd Zhvania—"provided increasingly open coverage of events" (Wilson 2014, 75), offering all the necessary support for the signifying practices of the Euromaidan. In possession of enormous resources "to distribute their signifying practices, and to defend them when other actors launch alternative truth claims" (Carpentier 2017, 65), pro-Maidan media entextualized the Euromaidan's uniprogressive discourse following its solidification. Needless to say, the deep involvement of Ukrainian oligarchs in the revolution provoked suspicion and mistrust among anti-Maidan "others"—another possible reason for them not to support the uprising.

Through the web of this networked media assemblage embodied in the DMK of the Euromaidan, the suffering of victims transcended their individual bodies, causing affect that circulated and passed between the bodies of the protesters, radicalizing them and uniting them in determination to crash the edifice of Yanukovych's power:

> According to the pollsters, support for the idea of creating "armed formations independent from the state" among Maidan protestors went up from 15 per cent in early December to 50 per cent in February. Support for the negotiations with authorities went down from 51 per cent to 27 per cent. (Wilson 2014, 75)

The radicalization of the protest created a spiral of violence, which transformed the peaceful protest into a bloody battlefield. On January 22, two protesters were shot dead during a fight with policemen trying to regain control over the city center; a third participant of the uprising died after falling from a high column of a football stadium. On the same day, the dead body of a Euromaidan activist who had been kidnapped a day before was found on the outskirts of Kyiv. This day became the point of no return: "Videos circulated of the police beating and kicking protesters, many of whom were hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails at officers in scenes that shocked residents of Kiev" (Grytsenko and Walker 2014). In time, the violence became mutual and widespread. The bloodiest day of the revolution—its culmination—happened on February 20, when dozens of protesters were killed by snipers targeting their heads, necks, and chests: "101+ protesters died and nearly 1000 were injured. 215 remain hospitalized" (Timeline of the Euromaidan 2016).

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 155 09-10-2018 14:06:18

Most of the deceased were civilian protesters; however, the names of twenty policemen were also on the list of people killed during the Euromaidan (National Police 2014).

As the violence against Euromaidan activists intensified, the protest grew increasingly radicalized; the more it radicalized, the less inclined it was to understand the motives of people who seemed to ignore the criminality of the regime by not supporting the uprising. As my analysis presented in the previous chapter shows, by the moment of the revolution's culmination, the sedimentation of negative meanings around anti-Maidan "others"—their presentation as "backward sovki," "non-citizens," and "slaves"—was complete, excluding all alternative interpretations of anti-Maidan stances. As my analysis suggests, however, the contingencies of the Maidan's discursive-material assemblage invited the possibility of different meanings, alternative to that hegemonized by the uniprogressive discourse of the Euromaidan.

THE WOUNDS OF THE ANTI-MAIDAN

The radicalization of the Euromaidan in connection with the increasing number of victims bearing the marks of the system of cruelty on their bodies found its reflection in a parallel radicalization of anti-Maidan sentiments as the opposite camp counted its own wounds. On December 2, 2013, the day after the storming of the governmental district, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine reported that 140 policemen sought medical attention; seventy-five of them were hospitalized, with five in critical condition (UP 2013). The majority of the policemen were hospitalized with trauma injuries and bone fractures; some of them had concussions; others were poisoned with an unknown gas—their bodies now bore the material marks of revolutionary violence. Given that the majority of the Berkut officers in service during the clashes were from the southeastern parts of Ukraine (Wilson 2014, 75), their injuries—inflicted by Euromaidan radicals associated with nationalism—invited a reading of the conflict as not only between those in power and radicals but also between the Russophones and Russophobes of Ukraine. As the protest radicalized, with more victims appearing on both sides of the conflict, the more this meaning—Russophones versus Russophobes—ripened for use and normalization.

Given that violence took place not only between radicals and police but also between other participants of the pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan movements, mutual animosity and intolerance was spiraling out of control. On January 14, 2014, a news program on the 1+1 television channel reported about a torture chamber where the "activists of the Euromaidan" "interrogated" people (TSN 2014b). According to the news account, its existence was

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 156 09-10-2018 14:06:18

revealed by a Euromaidan activist who had been detained there himself; the "unknown masked men" who interrogated him, beating him so severely that he required surgical treatment, failed to realize he was their fellow activist. It is noteworthy, however, that even in this proven case of the Euromaidan's violence, it was supposed that the torture chamber was "set up by foreigners to split the Euromaidan" (TSN 2014b). In other words, it was presented as another "provocation" by forces opposing the revolution.

The issue of Euromaidan radicals torturing their political opponents was further publicized by Dr. Olga Bogomolets, a prominent Euromaidan activist. She was concerned about the impossibility of "Svoboda" activists obtaining medical treatment abroad because they were involved in torturing anti-Maidan "others" (112.ua 2014). Attempting to investigate the issue, *UP* reporter Serhiy Leshchenko asked Ihor Krivetsky, a leadership figure of "Svoboda," about the reality of this torture chamber. Krivetsky neither confirmed nor denied its existence: "I have visited the KCSB many times but never went down into its basement. I think, all the talk about the torture chamber is an exaggeration" (Krivetsky, as cited in Leshchenko 2014). Volodymyr Bondarenko, a newly appointed head of KCSA, was no less ambiguous while answering a similar question put to him by a journalist of *Obozrevatel*:

> *Obozrevatel:* Rumors have it that there was a torture chamber in KCSB's basement. Was it really so?
> *Bondarenko:* As far as I understand, if there was a torture room, there must have been a torture rack there or something like this—I didn't see it. However, beatings could have taken place in any room. I've heard that when "Narniya" and "White Hammer"[1] were there, they were holding somebody in some rooms for some time. I've been told they were holding people in a number of rooms, but those were not specialized rooms, there were no windows in those rooms, so they were suitable for holding people. But these are *their internal matters*
>
> (Bondarenko, as cited in Obozrevatel 2014b; emphasis added)

What is noteworthy is that in neither interview did the journalist attempt to dig deeper into the topic. Leshchenko seemed to be satisfied with Krivetsky's argument about "exaggerations" and did not attempt to clear up the meaning of this term with respect to torture: Did it take place, indeed, but not in a specialized room, as Bondarenko's answer suggested? Or did Krivetsky not consider beating to be torture? In a similar fashion, *Obozrevatel* seemed to accept Bondarenko's suggestion that "holding" people in basement rooms without windows is an "internal matter" for Euromaidan radicals. How could an illegal "holding" of people in basement rooms be an internal affair among militant groups that did not have a right to arrest and detain anyone for any reason?

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 157 09-10-2018 14:06:18

These and similar questions, which many people might have asked themselves, remained unanswered simply because they were not asked by the journalists. For those holding anti-Maidan views, this was an invitation to question the meaning of the uprising as "the revolution of dignity," as the Euromaidan's hegemonic discourse posed it. The affronted dignity of the detained, tortured, and probably even murdered bodies of anti-Maidan protesters (Hassan, as cited in Skvortsov 2014) frustrated the Euromaidan's discourse of "dignity" and helped produce an alternative way of seeing the revolution—as a machine for the suppression of those rejecting Europeanization and favoring the union with Russia instead. It is worth mentioning that the bullying of anti-Maidan others took place not only in the KCSB, whose material properties (rooms without windows) were suitable for using it as a prison. Other publicized and well-known cases included the lynchings of representatives of the "criminal power" and "titushki," some of whom were marked with "slave" signs on their foreheads and humiliated in other ways (Obozrevatel 2014a; Zov 2014). Among the tortured representatives of the "criminal power" were the governor of Volyn (Channel 24 2014), the secretary of the Lviv regional committee of the Communist Party (Skvortsov 2014), a public prosecutor of a Kyiv region (Putnik1 2014), and others.

Given the tendency of Euromaidan activists and pro-Maidan media to downplay or hide its violence, it is impossible to estimate how many similar cases remained unknown to the general public. However, pictures and videos of burning policemen, torched by Molotov cocktails, were seen by everyone—the materiality of the officers' suffering bodies obviously frustrated the hegemonic discourse of the Euromaidan, which presented itself as a peaceful protest of people concerned with the issues of human dignity, social justice, democratic governance, and the supremacy of law. According to the Berkut's version of events, Mykhailo Gavrylyuk—the protester who was stripped naked and beaten—was captured by them because he was one of the best throwers of Molotov cocktails, and many policemen had been wounded by him (Andreev 2015).

Social media provided the necessary support for entextualizing the discourse of Euromaidan radicalism and hegemonizing all those participating in the uprising with the empty signifier of "extremism." The storyline of radicals / extremists / nationalists committing the "coup d'etat" orchestrated from abroad became the dominant frame of reference for the Euromaidan uprising employed by Russian state-controlled media. Providing all the necessary resources to support the signifying practices of the anti-Maidan, Russia's propagandistic machine ensured the solidification of the frame "coup d'etat committed by radicals at the West's bidding." Needless to say, the overlapping of the narrative produced by Russian media with that of anti-Maidan "others" inside Ukraine provoked suspicion and mistrust among those supporting the revolution.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 158 09-10-2018 14:06:18

By the end of February, social networks and Russian news media disseminated information about anti-Maidan protesters from Crimea whose buses were stopped by radicals. According to these accounts, sympathetic to the anti-Maidan, the radicals set Crimean buses on fire, beat the passengers, forced them to kneel, and made them sing the Ukrainian anthem and shout "Glory to Ukraine!" (MrsDakuni 2014). One of the victims testified that the radicals chased those trying to escape and even shot them; according to him and other witnesses, some people went missing (Pulyaev 2014). The opposite (pro-Maidan) side, however, disseminated its own version of the incident that could be summarized by one familiar word: "provocation." According to this outlook, there were no shootings, disappearances (let alone murders), or radicals; instead, there were "local muzhiks who stopped fake protesters paid by Yanukovych" and "burned their five buses," "sending them to the railway station" (Svetlov 2014). For Vladimir Svetlov, who made this investigation, the story was clear: it was nothing but "fake Goebbels propaganda," and those believing it were "propaganda's naïve victims." Needless to say, Svetlov's version of the story was accepted by Euromaidan supporters and rejected by the "victims" of "Goebbels propaganda." By February 2014, when the events in Korsun took place, the level of mistrust and mutual animosity between the pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan Ukraines was so high that the confrontation between them became "fierce, total and indiscriminate": there were "no discourses capable of establishing differences within an equivalential chain in which each and every one of its elements symbolizes evil" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 129). To put it in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, a "maximum separation" between the "two Ukraines" was reached.

THE MATERIALITY OF DESTRUCTION

The violations of law on the part of the Euromaidan were registered regularly both by Ukrainian anti-Maidan and Russian media. From time to time, pro-Maidan Ukrainian media also made such transgressions public, adding a dark shadow to the rosy picture of the Euromaidan painted by the columnists and bloggers whose writings I analyzed in the previous chapter. Here is one example:

> On January 31, a volunteer of a charity foundation reported to police that she had been robbed by Maidan protesters standing guard at the Trade Union Building who had taken away her personal belongings and a box with charitable contributions. (TSN 2014a)

The same news story also mentioned some other robberies and beatings at the Maidan; another one told about Euromaidan activists stealing things from

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 159 09-10-2018 14:06:18

the KCSB (TSN 2013b). Later, this information was confirmed by the new head of the KCSA:

> There were valuable goods there such as TV sets, air conditioners, video cameras, system blocks, high-grade calculating systems, some very serious printing equipment for about 500 thousand hryvnas per machine. They had been systematically stolen by people calling themselves the commandants of those premises . . . . What had been done there was committed by criminals—not the Maidan activists who were fighting but those who *pretended to be aligned with the Maidan*. For some period of time, there had been a drug sweatshop in the basement, and a large number of "Molotov cocktails." (Bondarenko, as cited in Obozrevatel 2014b; emphasis added)

As in many other examples discussed above, instead of acknowledging that the "Euromaidan" came to represent the impossible totality of numerous groups and forces, which in many cases turned out to be simply irreconcilable both in terms of ideology and methods of struggle, Bondarenko makes another attempt to pretend that there were two Euromaidans: real and fake. In Bondarenko's view (as with many other Euromaidan activists and observers pushing the story of "provocateurs"), the "real Maidan" consisted exclusively of well-intended, well-mannered, and peacefully minded people (Murdoch's "moderns" discussed in previous chapters), while the "fake" one was to blame for all that did not match the image of this ideal revolutionary.

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that for many Ukrainians it seemed incompatible with the materiality of violence and destruction that took place in the Ukrainian capital and beyond. For them, the "normal" meanings of the objects turned into proto-machines such as Molotov cocktails, torn-up pavement, and burning rubber in the Euromaidan assemblage were anything but militant. All these proto-machines of the revolution had been assembled from materials carrying the cultural codes of peaceful consumption, not destruction and violence. The bottles used for the production of Molotov cocktails originally contained wine, beer, champagne, water, and other everyday liquids; burning rubber, used to stop police movement, was obtained from automobile tires; and the stones were taken from cobblestone pavements normally used for the comfort of walking and driving (Varlamov 2014). For many citizens of Ukraine who rejected the Euromaidan, the militarization of these "peaceful" materials was not "normal." For them, Molotov cocktails, burning tires, and torn-up cobblestones were not the "tools of liberation" as Euromaidan activists perceived them, but the tools of violence and destruction, assembled in the revolutionary machine that crushed not only Yanukovych's system of power but also the whole familiar and peaceful (albeit corrupt) pre-Maidan way of life. The investment of these objects with conflicting meanings by pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan Ukrainians

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 160 09-10-2018 14:06:18

demonstrated in the clearest possible way the contingency of the combination of the material and the discursive within the Euromaidan's DMK. At the end of the day, it is this contingency that allowed anti-Maidan "others" to see the Euromaidan from a totally different perspective and reject it.

The contingency of the meaning of the protesters interacting with cobblestones turned out to be even more complicated, given the history of glorifying the Bolsheviks' revolutionary struggles, in which exactly the same methods were employed. In 2016, a monument in honor of the Russian revolution of 1905 named "Cobblestone—weapon of the proletariat" was demolished in Kiev during the post-Maidan campaign of de-communization (Korrespondent 2016). On December 8, 2013, a monument to Lenin was toppled in the center of Kyiv, with "Svoboda" assumed responsible. This was the first event of the "Leninopad" [the falling of Lenin statutes]—a series of demolitions all across Ukraine, often carried out by masked people or at night, without approval from the local communities. The lack of public deliberation on this campaign was reminiscent of the mass demolition of "monuments erected in honor of kings and their servants" initiated by Bolsheviks in 1918 (Decrees of Soviet Power 1959). Replicating the Bolsheviks' methods in practice while rejecting the Bolsheviks' legacy in discourse was very confusing for observers already struggling to make sense of what exactly was going on in the country and to what extent those pushing the revolutionary changes understood their consequences (Kovalinsky 2013).

THE AGENCY OF THE ANTI-MAIDAN

To define the confrontation between the two Ukraines in Laclau's terms, "the Euromaidan" signified a breach in continuity of the communitarian space that manifested itself in the construction of an internal antagonistic frontier separating those in power from democratic demands of various sorts: The protesters wanted to stop abuses of power, corruption, and nepotism, to restrain oligarchic influence, to refuse economic cooperation with Russia in favor of European integration, and so on. Articulating these demands equivalentially, the movement for European integration brought to the field of Ukraine's discursivity the impossible totality of "the Ukrainian people" fighting against the "anti-popular regime" (the Euromaidan's privileged terms). "Euromaidan," which had thereby become an empty signifier, assumed the hegemonic meaning of the movement for European integration.

As the confrontation between the protesters and power unfolded, the particularism of the demands that were already part of the Euromaidan's equivalential chain clashed with the demands of those holding anti-Maidan views, which blurred the dichotomic frontier separating the uprising from the

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 161 09-10-2018 14:06:18

ousted Ukrainian president and his government. Some of the Euromaidan's basic demands were linked to entirely different associations. European integration—which Euromaidan liberals associated predominantly with the movement toward democracy and civilization, while for Euromaidan radicals it was connected mainly with the movement away from Russia—became linked to the ideas of extremism, nationalism, and a colonial dependency on the West. The empty signifier "Euromaidan" became floating: its meaning was "suspended."

As I have striven to show in this chapter, the possibility of different understandings of the revolution by its opponents and proponents appeared as a result of complex interactions of the material and the discursive, whose contingency did not naturally suggest the one-dimensional explanation of the Euromaidan's rejection by millions of people living in the southeastern regions of Ukraine. On the contrary, it is this contingency that created space for subjectivity, freedom to choose, and the particularity of attitudes of those who did not identify themselves with the Euromaidan's discourse of unidirectional progress. By doing so, anti-Maidan "others" realized their capacity for independent action and free choice—their agency, in other words—which totally contradicted the discourse of "slavish sovki" propagated by Euromaidan activists. The analysis of the Euromaidan's DMK, as presented in this chapter, implies that people rejecting the revolution might have had numerous reasons to do so; however, the complexity of their reasoning was ignored by the Euromaidan's uniprogressive discourse, in which the empty signifier "sovok" came to denote the impossible totality of all the people holding anti-Maidan views.

Thinking and acting within the limits of the possible prescribed by the uniprogressive imaginary, Euromaidan revolutionaries turned out to be unable to engage in dialogue with those rejecting their views. Thinking and acting within the limits of the possible established by nationalistic imaginary, Euromaidan radicals turned out to be unwilling to communicate with anti-Maidan "others." As a result, after the victory of the revolution, when the Euromaidan's most prominent activists became the ministers and parliamentary deputies, anti-Maidan Ukraine found itself marginalized, demonized, and presented as "non-Ukrainian," as "the Ukrainian condition" was imagined exclusively in unitary pro-Maidan terms. The consequences of this development were detrimental not only for democracy but for societal peace as well, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.

NOTE

1. Militarized organizations of Maidan radicals.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 162 09-10-2018 14:06:18

Chapter 12

In the Name of National Unity*

THE DISCOURSE OF TERRORISM

Official and mainstream discourses of terrorism typically divide the world into sharp dichotomies of "free" and "civilized" states versus "evil" and "barbarian" terrorists (Gunning 2007). More often than not, this divisive assumption goes unquestioned in related public speeches by politicians, media reports, and public deliberation (Jackson 2007). It becomes problematic, however, when the signifier "terrorism" is used to depict an armed struggle of ethno-nationalistic groups for independent self-governance. The discourse of counter-terrorism, as Elena Pokalova argues, "justifies a completely different arsenal of response strategies to separatism, including a much broader strategy of military counteroffensives, which might lack legitimacy when countering separatism" (Pokalova 2010, 429–30). This discourse thus creates strong incentives for states opposing separatism to manipulate the fear of terrorism (Thrall and Cramer 2009) and to justify undemocratic actions in the name of national security—including the abridgment of the rights and liberties of ethno-nationalist groups, and unfair prosecution of their leaders (Reinares 1998). As a result of these manipulations, which simplify and misrepresent the nature of the conflict while criminalizing those involved in it and delegitimizing their struggle, "a more detrimental effect for a state than the threat of terrorism itself" may come to life (Pokalova 2010, 343)—antidemocratic methods of governance and state justification of authoritarianism targeting a nation's own citizens.

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* This chapter is a modified version of the article "In the name of national security: Articulating ethno-political struggles as terrorism," published in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 2017, Volume 12, no. 4, pp. 332–348.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 163 09-10-2018 14:06:18

As explained in chapter 8, despite the fact that the vast majority of those opposing the Euromaidan were against the "coup d'etat" but not in favor of joining Russia, Kyiv officials labeled the whole of the anti-Maidan movement "separatist." In a subsequent escalation, the new Ukrainian authorities declared anti-Maidan combatants "terrorists," in contrast to Euromaidan armed revolutionaries who were considered heroes. Instead of negotiations, on which the people of the Donbas counted, an "anti-terrorist" military operation (ATO) was launched by the Ukrainian state.

In this chapter, drawing on Laclau's theory of the discursive as presented in chapter 3, I investigate the following question: *how the anti-Maidan insurgency came to be articulated as a "terrorist" endeavor*? For the purposes of this analysis, I consider the coverage of the Ukrainian confrontation by three of Ukraine's independent political web sites—*Ukrayinska Pravda* (*UP*), *Leviy Bereg* (*LB*), and *Gordon* (*GN*). Neither *LB* nor *GN* can boast as long-term history of oppositional activities as *UP* had (see chapter 9): *LB* was founded in 2009 and *GN* in 2013, during the Euromaidan uprising. However, what unites these two news outlets with *UP* is that, unlike many other media in Ukraine (Ryabinska 2014), they are free from both state and oligarchic control. *GN* is owned by Dmitry Gordon, the journalist who started the project, and his team prides itself on its refusal to "depend either financially or ideologically on oligarchs, foreign grants, government or opposition" (Lebedeva 2014). *LB* is owned by a non-profit, nongovernmental, independent think tank with the mission of establishing a balanced dialogue between different societal groups in Ukraine (Insider's Guide 2016). In other words, all three media under my consideration position themselves as critical and alternative news outlets—non-mainstream, non-state, and non-corporate media with no party affiliation (Atton and Hamilton 2008)—striving for democratization of Ukraine. It is the mission of bringing democratization and transparency into the public sphere of Ukraine that made these media active participants in the Euromaidan revolution and the agents of radical social change.

I analyzed the coverage of the confrontation between pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan activists that *UP*, *LB*, and *GN* published online from February 22, 2014—the day the former president of Ukraine Yanukovich was dismissed—to April 13, 2014, the day the Anti-Terrorist Operation was announced. It was within this time frame that the anti-Maidan movement in the East of Ukraine acquired a "terrorist" articulation. By April 13, when the ATO started, the formation of a terrorism discourse was complete.

In total, within this time frame, these media outlets published 1,138 news pieces related to the Ukrainian confrontation. My research was based on an analysis of the entire corpus of these 1,138 news pieces released within the indicated 52-day period; no sampling was involved. These data were

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 164 09-10-2018 14:06:18

collected from the Internet sites pravda.com.ua, gordonua.com, and lb.ua, using the archive search function of each respective website.

In my analysis, I employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, I calculated how often, within the indicated period, anti-Maidan protesters were defined as "demonstrators," "separatists," "pro-Russian activists," "bandits," "terrorists," and so forth. The comprehensive list of all these labels, collected through the careful reading of the articles, allowed me to map out a "field of discursivity" understood as a discursive reservoir of signifying elements (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 111).

In my conceptualization, the most frequently used sign assumed the hegemonic (i.e., synecdochic) representation of the whole chain of equivalence organizing a hegemonic discourse. The links of this hegemonic sign to other elements of the discursive field were identified through a qualitative discourse analysis informed by the discourse theory of Laclau (chapter 3). When different signs displaced each other *metonymically* (i.e., as a contingent substitution), *metaphorically* (i.e., as an unquestioned analogy), and, finally, *synecdochically* (i.e., when a most frequently used sign was asserted as a new collective identity), they were assumed to organize a chain of equivalence forming a hegemonic discourse.

To discuss contradictions between the media's self-proclaimed democratizing mission and their actual performance, I employed the method of *immanent critique* enabling me to criticize media on their own terms (Antonio 1981).

FROM "ANTI-MAIDAN" TO "SEPARATISM"

The first attempts to storm and occupy state administrative buildings as a response to the "coup d'etat" took place in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Odessa, and other cities of southeastern Ukraine in early March 2014. From the very beginning of these manifestations, all three media under my analysis presented the anti-Maidan movement predominantly as "pro-Russian" and "separatist"—71 percent of all the news stories articulated the anti-Maidan protests in this way. At a glance, such a representation of the protesters seems plausible given that those holding Russian national banners and chanting "Russia!" were the most vocal and visible participants in anti-Maidan meetings, and therefore attracted the lion's share of media attention. The contingency of this representation, however, is that the call to separate the southeastern regions of the country from Ukraine was not the sole demand that the participants in anti-Maidan demonstrations put forward; it was not even the main one.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 165 09-10-2018 14:06:18

Interestingly, the media under my analysis also acknowledged that "separatism" was not the main issue on the agenda of the protesters. For example, this is how they described "separatist" meetings in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv:

> People were carrying placards and chanting anti-fascist slogans, expressing their support for the Berkut. "Referendum," "Freedom for Gubarev," "No EU," "No NATO," "No oligarchic power," "With Russia Forever"—these were the slogans chanted. (*UP* 2014a)

> Luhansk separatists organized a referendum right in the street. They asked city dwellers if they supported federalizing Ukraine and joining the Customs Union with Russia. (*GN* 2014c)

> In Kharkov ["Kharkiv" in Russian], separatists fought with Maidan activists, in Donetsk they occupied the building of the Donetsk Regional State Administration calling for a referendum on federalization, and in Luhansk they seized the building of the National Defense Service demanding the release of their leader. (*LB* 2014b)

> The meeting's participants unfold placards and transparencies with inscriptions "Russia, save us," "Our language is Russian," "Long live Berkut," "Kharkov demands a referendum," "Kharkov for the Custom Union." (*UP* 2014e)

As is evident from the examples provided, many people in the Southeast signified their anti-Maidan struggles not as separating from Ukraine, but as rejecting the policy of cutting ties with Russia in favor of the EU ("No EU") and NATO ("No NATO"). Instead, they advocated an *economic* union with Russia ("For the Customs Union") and wanted to conduct a referendum on federalization ("Referendum!") to enhance *regional* self-governance. Demands to release the arrested activists of the anti-Maidan movement ("Freedom for Gubarev") and Berkut officers ("Long live Berkut") were also important for the protesters, many of whom considered the detention of their leaders and confederates a grave injustice. As I have already explained, many people in southeastern regions justified armed resistance against the new Kyiv government on the premise that similar actions had been taken in Kyiv by the other side during the Euromaidan revolution. The slogan "Our language is Russian" reflected the desire of Russian-speaking people to preserve Russian as an official language in the eastern regions of Ukraine, a demand made in response to a vote immediately after the victory of the revolution by which the Parliament of Ukraine moved to abolish the law granting Russian this status. Finally, by "chanting anti-fascist slogans," people protested the rise of nationalism whose radical adherents were the most active fighters in the Maidan.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 166 09-10-2018 14:06:18

Despite the diversity of these stated positions, in media coverage of the protests, the sign "separatism" assumed a hegemonic representation of all other demands linked in one "anti-Maidan" chain. In other words, in the articulations of the uprising by *GN*, *LB*, and *UP*, "separatism" functioned as *synecdoche*—a part representing the whole—which, in Laclau's theorizing, plays a decisive role in all hegemonic constructions. Such a synecdochic representation of anti-Maidan protests would not have been possible if the sign "separatism" had not displaced the signifier "federalization" first *metonymically* (as a contingent substitution) and then *metaphorically* (as an unquestionable analogy). The moment of synecdoche, when "separatism" assumed the hegemonic representation of the whole chain of anti-Maidan demands, signaled the culmination of the passage from a contiguous displacement of "federalization" for "separatism" to the consolidation of a strict analogy (emphasis is added in all the following examples):

> On Sunday, a *separatist* meeting with demands to release activists and to hold a referendum on *federalization* took place in Luhansk. (*UP* 2014f)
>
> Today, in Luhansk, a *separatist* meeting for *federalization* is held. (*GN* 2014e)
>
> The Kharkov regional department of the Security Service started a criminal case against local *separatists* over their calls for *federalization*. (*GN* 2014b)
>
> In Nikolaev, *separatists* stormed the building of the Regional State Administration demanding a referendum on *federalization*. (*LB* 2014c)

Even when the media acknowledged that the "separatists" wanted federalization—not separation from Ukraine—they habitually lumped all protesting groups together under the label of "separatists": "There was a fight within the group of *separatists*: While some of them wanted *federalization,* others argued for joining Russia" (*LB* 2014d). Even in such obvious cases of mismatch, the term "separatism" was not problematized.

Because "federalization" was tropologically displaced by "separatism," the former was juxtaposed not only to the notion of the "unitary state," but also to the "unity of Ukraine." In other words, the unity of Ukraine came to be understood only in unitary nationalistic terms: "On March 30, two meetings were held in Kharkiv: one for federalization, another for the unity of Ukraine" (*GN* 2014d). All other ideas apart from unitary state organization were thus depicted as undermining the security of the Ukrainian state. Shifting the focus from "anti-Maidan" to "pro-Russian separatism," the media under my analysis not only simplified and distorted the protests, but also delegitimized them. Calls for separatism were interpreted as attempts to change territorial borders and thus overturn the constitutional order. Because "federalization" was used as a synonym for "separatism," and because all the protesters, no matter

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 167 09-10-2018 14:06:18

which demands they pursued, were labeled "separatists," all anti-Maidan protests came to be seen as actions in the name of "separatism." As I show in the next section, this re-signification of the Donbas uprising had dramatic political and social consequences. It created the necessary prerequisites for the administrative application of the meaning of "terrorism" to the actions of protesters who had already been delegitimized and detached from everything "pro-Ukrainian," a meaning equated with the Euromaidan.

FROM "SEPARATISM" TO "TERRORISM"

As the conflict unfolded, coverage by the media outlets studied here re-arranged the initial network of signs connected with the nodal point of anti-Maidan protests. Old connections were deactivated (made invisible); new bonds were highlighted instead. The initial structure of the anti-Maidan movements associated with the political demands discussed earlier changed. The protesters came to be articulated as "terrorists," "militants," and "rioters" who did not actually "protest" but created "disturbances" and "blockages"—these and similar constructions only accentuated the anti-social and criminal character of the protesters, whose anti-Ukrainian identity had already been formed (see chapters 9, 10, and 11). To highlight the anti-Ukrainian character of the "separatist" "pro-Russia" protests, the media activated links between them and such signs as "invaders," "tourists," or "touring artists." The latter was a metaphor invented by Euromaidan activists to stress the idea that anti-Maidan protesters were not the locals of Ukraine's eastern regions but Russian citizens hired and paid by the Russian intelligence service. According to this story line, shuttles delivered anti-Maidan demonstrators to Ukraine from Russia to imitate local protesters:

> The masses of Russian "tourists" came to Donetsk on the eve of the meeting for the unity of Ukraine. (*LB* 2014a)

> Buses and shuttles with "tourists" were noticed in the streets of Donetsk. People get out of the vehicles; Russian banners are distributed among them. (*UP* 2014c)

By focusing on this specific group of protesters (whether real or imagined), these media outlets hid from the view of their readers other participants of the anti-Maidan movement: those citizens of Donetsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Odesa, and other cities and villages of eastern Ukraine, who were paid by Russia in a different sense—through salaries received from economic cooperation between local industrial and agricultural enterprises and their Russian counterparts (Puglisi 2003). It was therefore not in the best interests of these

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 168 09-10-2018 14:06:18

people to support European integration at the expense of economic cooperation with Russia.

In contrast to the peace-minded "pro-Ukrainian activists," their "pro-Russian" counterparts were always presented as "aggressive," "provocative," and "uncivilized":

> Thursday night, Donetsk supporters of pro-Russian organizations surrounded the participants of the pro-Ukrainian meeting . . . and beat them with steel bars, making them kneel . . . . Besides, separatists bombarded the Euromaidan activists with explosives, stones, and smoke bombs. (*GN* 2014a)

> On April 7, 30 pro-Russian activists with masked faces and bats in their hands seized and smashed up the office and the control room of ATN television company in Kharkov. (*LB* 2014e)

> Pro-Ukrainian activists spoke on the need to avoid war and the unity of the country, sang the anthem, proclaimed "Glory to Ukraine!" and "Glory to Heroes!", while pro-Russia activists called "Russia!", blew out at their opponents [фукали], listened to Soviet songs, threw eggs and water balloons. (*UP* 2014b)

While these depicted activities are clearly violent, this media coverage systematically omitted mention of previous atrocities carried out by pro-Maidan activists, who also beat, humiliated, and tortured their opponents (see chapter 11). These events could hardly support the one-dimensional picture of "peaceful Euromaidan versus violent anti-Maidan" propagated by the media I analyzed. Ignoring that civil confrontations, by definition, cannot be entirely violent on one side and peaceful on the other, such representations contributed to the spiral of animosity between the two camps.

Of all 1,138 articles, only 126 (11 percent) provided some space for presenting anti-Maidan protesters not as "hooligans," "separatists," or "terrorists," but as thoughtful citizens with legitimate concerns:

> There are no extremists there; there are no separatists: There are people there who think about the future of our country. (*UP* 2014j)

> Donbas and Russia are blood relatives . . . . Kiev power needs to hear that people want a dialogue, stability, peace, and order. (*GN* 2014f)

> What do these people want? . . . They don't want others to tell them which language to speak and which church to attend . . . . Donbas exists, and it needs to be heard. (*UP* 2014h)

What these and similar statements highlight is that Ukraine is a complex multicultural formation with a very complicated history (see chapter 8); one can hardly democratize Ukraine without taking its cultural diversity into account.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 169 09-10-2018 14:06:18

All these positive evaluations of anti-Maidan protests, however, came from oppositional politicians who represented the pre-Maidan power of Ukraine. Marginalized and finally silenced under the premise of the necessity to mobilize the ranks of Ukrainian patriots in the face of the Russian aggression, their isolated voices could not provide a full-fledged alternative articulation that would have challenged pro-Maidan hegemonic constructions.

The incorporation of Crimea into Russia in March 2014 became a test for the new Ukrainian power in terms of its ability to defend Ukrainian sovereignty, not only externally but internally as well. Before the annexation started, the illegitimacy of this power in the eyes of many Ukrainians living to the east of the Dnieper River was a problem that had a chance to be solved through negotiations and compromises. After Russia took control over strategic objects in Crimea, however, the tendency to see anti-government manifestations in the eastern cities not as democratic protests but as activities undermining national sovereignty was formalized in official discourse. On April 13, 2014, the acting president of Ukraine, Olexander Turchynov, announced the beginning of the anti-terrorist operation, calling the occupiers of the administrative buildings in the Donbas "terrorists" under Russian command (Turchynov 2014). He also pronounced:

> Those initiating resistance to power help the invaders and will be punished severely . . . . This is not a secret that the aggressor is doing everything possible to shaken the situation inside Ukraine, to provoke internal contradictions and civil unrest, and to show the weakness of the Ukrainian power . . . . *Under current circumstances*, all attempts to occupy buildings, institute vigilante justice, and resist military and police forces will be considered as attempts to assist military aggressors and as a crime against the state. (*UP* 2014d; emphasis added)

On April 7, 2014, the prime minister of Ukraine Arseniy Yatsenyuk broadened the list of crimes against the state, adding "federalization" that was equated to "separatism": "Any calls for federalization are attempts to destroy the Ukrainian state system according to the scenario written in Russia" (*UP* 2014g). In other words, the official power discourse, as represented by the speeches of the acting president and the prime minister of Ukraine, only formalized the "otherness" of anti-Maidan Ukrainians, which had already been created by the discourse of "otherness" analyzed in the previous chapters.

In conjunction with his labeling of anti-Maidan protesters as terrorists, Turchynov's use of the phrase "under current circumstances" played an important strategic role. Delineating the frontier between "before" the Crimean events and "after" them, it also juxtaposed the Euromaidan supporters occupying state buildings in February and anti-Maidan protesters doing the same in April. According to this logic, what was allowed before

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 170 09-10-2018 14:06:18

Russia intervened should be forbidden after the invasion: internal democratic struggle should be outlawed in the face of an external threat to state existence.

By the commencement of the anti-terrorist operation, the Euromaidan's opposition had become so linked to everything that was "anti-Ukrainian" that no displacement was possible—a condition that, in Laclau's view, can happen "simply through administrative practices which deal bureaucratically with social issues" (Laclau 2001, 12). This is exactly what we observe in this case, as those in power after the Euromaidan *administratively defined* the anti-Maidan uprising as terrorism. Without this rhetorical intervention, aimed at separating two similar developments (the seizure of state buildings before and after the change of power in Kyiv) by signifying them with opposing meanings (fighting in the name of Ukraine and against it), the implementation of the ATO would have been impossible. Not only did the protesters never identify themselves as "terrorists," but the media under my analysis also avoided this term until the ATO was already announced. The media did nothing, however, to question this discursive intervention by the new Ukrainian power. By letting it go without a critical examination and not providing space for an alternative discourse, these media outlets did nothing to challenge this totalitarian closure leading to dramatic political consequences.

These consequences included the prosecution of criminal cases against "separatists," the prohibition of "pro-Russian protests," the legal ban of the opposition aiming at "the violation of sovereignty and territorial unity of the state," the liquidation of political parties participating in "separatist" actions, an official declaration of "separatists" to be "terrorists" announced by the Office of the Public Prosecutor and, finally, the "Anti-Terrorist Operation" with heavy involvement from the Ukrainian Army and radical nationalists in volunteer battalions. Its beginning was announced on April 13, 2014. As I have already noted, this "anti-terrorist" operation, which turned out to be a full-fledged military operation, brought enormous suffering to people living in the Donbas, facilitated antidemocratic tendencies in governance, and undermined the democracy in the name of which the Euromaidan was initiated.

Analyzing the political representation of pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan narratives in post-Maidan Ukraine, Karina Korostelina (2014) concludes that the interim government of Ukraine was formed only by representatives of pro-Maidan nationalistic discourses, systematically excluding those who did not share their views. Richard Sakwa makes a similar observation:

> The so-called "unity government" turned out to be anything but a unifying force. There was gross imbalance in ministerial appointments, designed to consolidate the victory of the Maidan but thereby alienating the proponents of a more pluralistic interpretation of Ukrainian development. Only two ministers

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 171 09-10-2018 14:06:18

> from the entire south and east, covering half the country, joined the 21-person cabinet. Between five and eight (depending on changing affiliations) core ministerial positions were taken by Right Sector and Svoboda, including the top national security, defence and legal (prosecutor general) posts. The minister of justice and deputy prime minister came from the Russophobic Svoboda party, while its founder, Parubiy, became secretary of the NSDC [National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine], and Yarosh,[1] no less, was nominated as his deputy, although he turned it down in anticipation of a higher post. Parubiy . . . had a long history of ultra-nationalist activism . . . . Parubiy's appointment to head the NSDC was by any measure astonishing, placing him in charge of the country's security policy. Five positions alone were taken by members of the radical Svoboda Party, although at the time the party held only 8 per cent of seats in the parliament, and another seven were from Batkivshchyna[2]. No posts were given to PoR,[3] even though at the time it held 27 per cent of the seats in Rada. In addition, five governorships were taken by Svoboda, covering a fifth of the country. (2015, 95)

As my research suggests, such an exclusion of anti-Maidan "otherness" was a logical consequence of the anti-other Euromaidan discourse, which appeared to be "a real force which contribute[d] to the moulding and constitution of social relations" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 110). It is this discourse that create an environment of intolerance toward the opinions of political and cultural "others"—a logical outcome of any attempt at societal transformation in the name of unidirectional progress where the notion of "progress" is defined by a local "avant-garde" that aligns itself with the West rather than with its "backward" compatriots, and in which the process known as "internal colonization" happens to local populations by domestic colonizers through the mythologies of a universal history.

The totalitarian tendency to marginalize and silence political opponents of the Euromaidan has only been encouraged by international mainstream media valorizing "progressive struggles" in the former Soviet states (e.g., Baldwin and Heartsong 2015; Doctorow 2014; Lowenstein 2014). Some critical voices, in analyzing this trend, argued that mainstream international media had refused to acknowledge that ousted President Yanukovych was a democratically elected president and that the insurrection in eastern Ukraine had real local roots (Brenton 2014). Others maintained that Western media had systematically downplayed the atrocities of Ukrainian nationalists, preferring to blame their victims (Pilger 2014). Through his comprehensive analysis of Western media propaganda with respect to the Ukraine crisis, Joseph Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2017a) identified several "lacks" through which the crisis has been misrepresented:

- The lack of recognition that the conflict originated within a broader geopolitical context and cannot be understood without accounting for it;

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 172 09-10-2018 14:06:18

- The lack of acknowledgement that the post-Maidan government attacked its own people in the Donbas and the lack of attention to people's sufferings;
- The lack of realization that post-Maidan "democracy" in Ukraine is an oligarchic regime, and so forth.

Comparing the anti-Russian bias of the Western media during the Ukrainian crisis to the anti-Soviet propaganda of the Cold War, Stephen Cohen (2014) argued that the Cold War media environment was more attentive to alternative voices than its contemporary analogue. Encouraged by Western politicians and media, the activists created the conditions of totalitarianism from the terrain of democratic revolution.

The meaning of "anti-Maidan" was so attached to the signifiers of "sovki," "slaves," "bandits," "titushki," "separatists," "terrorists," and so forth that no displacement was possible—a so-called totalitarian closure happened (Laclau 2005). It is this closure that later prevented the post-Maidan Ukrainian government from dealing with the anti-Maidan protests in southeastern Ukraine in a democratic manner, through negotiation and compromise. As the protests in the eastern regions of Ukraine escalated into an armed revolt, the new Ukrainian power announced all insurgents to be "Russian hirelings" and "terrorists," refusing to recognize their local roots and the legitimacy of their protests.

As a matter of fact, this is not surprising at all, given that some pro-Maidan bloggers whose posts I analyzed became part of this post-Maidan power. Here are the most well-known examples: Serhiy Leshchenko, Mustafa Nayem, Victoria Siumar, Yegor Sobolev, and Svitlana Zalishchuk were elected to the Ukrainian parliament; Vyacheslav Kyrylenko was appointed the minister of culture, Arsen Avakov the minister of internal affairs, and Andriy Parubiy the secretary of National Security and the Defense Council of Ukraine. The last two cases are especially telling. As discussed in Part II of the book, Parubiy was one of the founders of the "Svoboda" nationalistic party based on the principles of intolerance to cultural "others"; in his *UP* blog, he referred to those opposing the Euromaidan as *titushki* (Parubiy 2013). Arsen Avakov (2013), in turn, presented anti-Maidan "others" in his blogs as "idiots," "provokers," or "fools." After the victory of the Euromaidan, both Parubiy and Avakov took over governmental bodies responsible for enhancing the national security of Ukraine. From the very beginning of the uprising, these people—acting as bloggers—did their best to detach their political opponents from everything that was "Ukrainian," equating the latter exclusively with the Euromaidan. After gaining political power with the victory of the revolution, they defended Ukraine's "national security"—understood as security from cultural others, their different subjectivities, and alternative points of view.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 173 09-10-2018 14:06:18

As stated in the theoretical section of this paper, in order to transform antagonism into agonism, it is necessary to re-articulate the nodal points of antagonistic discourse, re-create a common symbolic space, and re-establish "conflictual togetherness." One can hardly expect, however, that any re-articulation of antagonistic into agonistic discourse can take place as long as opinion leaders, whose judgments matter for their followers, are engaged in the discursive games of dehumanizing political others. Here are some typical instances of such dehumanization of political others by the most charismatic activists of the Maidan whose victory brought them to the top of Ukraine's political Olympus:

> On April 13, 2014, the newly appointed Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Arsen Avakov made a post on Facebook announcing the beginning of the anti-terrorist operation and called those opposing this decision "mean koloradi". More than eight thousand Facebook users liked this post; more than two thousand of them shared it.
>
> On August 21, 2017, the Attorney General of Ukraine Yuri Lutsenko made a post on Facebook devoted to an anniversary of Ukraine's independence; addressing the difficulties of building the post-Maidan Ukraine, he claimed that its political elites were fighting against not only Russia's aggression but also "internal vata." More than three thousand Facebook users liked the post, and more than one thousand shared it.

An exhaustive list of such extreme othering of Ukrainian citizens by post-Maidan Ukrainian public figures could go on indefinitely, but these examples are very telling as they represent the opinions of the heads of the most important law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, responsible for national security. As is evident from their posts, they interpreted "national security" to include defense not only against the external enemy (Russia), but also against an internal one, *koloradi* and *vatniki*/*vata* living in Ukraine.

To be sure, the dehumanization of the enemy by opinion leaders has been taking place on both sides of the conflict—not only by pro-Maidan forces as in the examples above. However, given that after the victory of the revolution, many Euromaidan activists became ministers, parliament members, and other high-ranking officials, the political and social consequences of their discourses are clearly evident. Proof of the interrelation between symbolic and physical violence in post-Maidan Ukraine can be found in UN reports which have regularly expressed concerns about "increasing manifestations of intolerance" toward alternative opinions in Ukraine and legal prosecution of Ukrainian journalists based on "the broad interpretation and application of terrorism-related provisions" (Report on the Human Rights 2017, 3). It is these "broad interpretations" that have allowed post-Maidan authorities in

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 174 09-10-2018 14:06:19

Ukraine to accuse opposition journalists, bloggers, and media organizations of aiding "separatists" and/or "terrorists," and of being guilty of "parricide."

"With the passage of time," one of the most recent UN report claims, "divisions in Ukrainian society resulting from the conflict will continue to deepen and take root" (Report on the Human Rights 2017, 40). In order to stop this tendency, the UN advises the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine to ensure investigation of violence against those holding alternative political opinions, including the cases of enforced disappearance, incommunicado detention, and torture in which Ukrainian forces and right-wing groups have been allegedly involved (Report on the Human Rights 2017, 41). Given that the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine are represented by Avakov and Lutsenko (both cited above), along with their confederates who imagine the "other Ukraine" as *koloradi* and *vata*, one can hardly expect such recommendations to be implemented. Recognition is needed—and this aspect is missing from UN reports—that physical violence is inevitable when the radical othering of political opponents is taking place on the level of discourse. Without addressing the issue of symbolic violence, one can hardly put an end to its physical manifestations.

As this book suggests, the conditions making it possible for an "anti-terrorist operation" to be launched against the anti-Maidan insurgency were created long before any such action was taken. During this shift, the failure to see opponents as people worthy of fair consideration became more and more widespread and gained momentum until it was a major characteristic of the revolution and media coverage in support of it. The military operation, conducted by the regular army in heavily populated regions of Ukraine, was predestined to cause mass casualties among citizens; it was predestined, therefore, not to narrow the gap between the supporters of the Euromaidan and its opponents, the majority of whom dwelled in the Southeast. The anti-terrorist operation solved none of the social contradictions that the Euromaidan had brought to life or, at least, made visible: it only exacerbated them.

As I strive to show, "progressive" media aligning themselves with the revolution contributed significantly to these tragic developments by adopting or not problematizing the Jacobin practice of marginalizing and silencing opponents in the name of progress, as understood in strictly Westernized terms. By presenting the anti-Maidan movement as an absolute outside of the Ukrainian social order, they created the conditions of totalitarian intolerance emerging from the terrain of democratic revolution. As a result, anti-democratic and totalitarian tendencies in post-Yanukovych Ukraine not only reemerged but were even facilitated—a paradoxical outcome for a progressive revolution waged in the name of democracy and social justice.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 175 09-10-2018 14:06:19

NOTES

1. Dmytro Yarosh was a leader of Right Sector—a coalition of radical nationalists organized during the Maidan—from early 2014 to late 2015.

2. Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) is a political party led by Yulia Tymoshenko that "strongly reflects the monist Ukrainian nationalist aspiration of creating a culturally uniform Ukrainian-speaking nation, by contrast with the pluralist concept of Ukraine as culturally and linguistically diverse" (Sakwa 2015, 22).

3. PoR (The Party of Regions) is a centrist party of Ukraine that "sought to raise the legal status of the Russian language, establish closer ties with Russia, maintain neutrality and devolve power to the regions" (Sakwa 2015, 56).

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 176 09-10-2018 14:06:19

Part IV

CONCLUSIONS

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 177 09-10-2018 14:06:19

Chapter 13

Global Coloniality Instead of Democratic Globalization

GLOBALIZING THE FRAME IS NOT ENOUGH

I started this book by taking issue with the argument that we need to expand the frame of reference for democratic struggles from the local to the global in order to stir human imagination so that suppressed possibilities of development can potentially be imagined. The following questions marked the starting point of my critique: What exactly do we mean by "democratic globalization" that would allow us to imagine "suppressed possibilities of development," as many democratically minded thinkers hope? How would this "democratic" globalization differ from "global coloniality" if the conceptual grammar of the former is similar or even identical to that of the latter, as the omnipresent usage of such concepts as "modernization," "development," and "developing countries" suggests? Drawing on postcolonial studies and a theory of radical democracy, I argued that the problem with these and similar terms, habitually employed by social activists and democratically minded scholars, is that they are the key signifiers of colonizing discourses sustaining the global neo-imperial order. Activated through the uncritical employment of Eurocentric conceptual grammars, the uniprogressive discourses of development and modernization enable the judging of whole societies along an imagined scale of unidirectional historical progression, where the highest point is always occupied by the pro-Western "avant-garde" while non-Western "others" are relegated to lower levels.

I argued that the split between "the civilized" and "the barbarian," produced by the uniprogressive imaginary, currently runs not along territorial boundaries but across all kinds of borders, separating "progressive" and "backward" forces within once unified cultural formations. As a result of this cleavage, internal "otherness" comes to life, with labels such as "barbarian"

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 179 09-10-2018 14:06:19

and "ignoramus" applied to political opponents—a paradoxical development given the democratic aspirations of those struggling for the cause of a truly postcolonial world. To substantiate my argument, I discussed in detail three case studies on social movements for democratization in two post-Soviet societies, Russia and Ukraine. By presenting the West as a model for imitation and the avant-garde leading humanity toward the "normal" modern condition, the activists of these social movements clearly expanded the frame of reference for their "democratic" struggles from the local to the global. But did this frame expansion stir the imagination of the activists so that suppressed possibilities of development could be imagined? Did it allow them to present democracy not as a closed set of canons but as a project of open possibilities, with unexpected demands, unprecedented challenges, unforeseeable articulations, and audacious decisions? Did it enable critical judgment through ideological disruption, as many critical scholars hoped? Quite the opposite happened: the employment of uniprogressive discourse, with its presentation of the West as an unquestionable moral power and the model for imitation, led to the discursive closure that made creative and critical thinking impossible.

Ironically, although presenting themselves as the "progressive avant-garde" of history, the activists with a uniprogressive imaginary in all the cases discussed in this book only reproduced the Manichean mythological constructions created by perestroika activists almost three decades earlier (Baysha 2014). "Concomitant with the negation of everything Soviet came a celebration of everything having to do with the old capitalist nemesis," observed Nancy Ries (1997, 174), who conducted her ethnographic research in Moscow from the end of the 1980s into the early 1990s:

> Where the Soviet media had regularly exhibited images of the cruelty, unfairness, and contradictions of capitalist systems, in perestroika this practice was inverted, and images of poor people receiving medical care in U.S. clinics were juxtaposed with interviews with Russian mothers who could not obtain medicines or services their children desperately needed. (174)

In Ries' view, popular mythologizing of the West and presenting it as a land of bounty had set up a form of ideological closure that made the reception of critical arguments impossible. It is this discursive closure that finally brought about the situation observed by Buck-Morss:

> The real surge of critical political energy, including the great dissident literature, belongs to the period before the fall of the Wall. The dissolution of critical thinking began almost immediately thereafter, and it is striking how little original thought subsequently emerged. (2000, 229)

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 180 09-10-2018 14:06:19

In other words, instead of cultural rebirth and intellectual renaissance, what emerged out of the Soviet ashes was an impoverishment of intellectual discourse, which is not surprising after all. The acceptance of the mantra "there is no alternative" cannot but lead to the denial of individual responsibility to make historical change. "Life becomes a sleepwalk to a premarked grave in a prepurchased plot," as Snyder (2018, 15) sarcastically put it.

As the case studies discussed in this book suggest, the reproduction of this discursive closure—the uncritical valorization of the West and the indiscriminate denigration of "the rest," imagined as an underdeveloped "other"—is still a dominant characteristic of "progressive" discourses within the post-Soviet states. Instead of opening new intellectual horizons that would enable dealing with complex societal problems creatively, the uniprogressive discourse has turned into an instrument of symbolic and political domination over the "heretics" refusing to worship the "dead Gods" of uniprogressive beliefs (Beck 2002, 443). This observation is in line with Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the ideology of the Enlightenment, whose inherent irrationality, in their view, transformed it into a myth: intended to secure freedom, it turned instead into an instrument of subjugation.

As my study shows, all three of the social movements I analyzed ended up undermining democracy rather than promoting it, as they diminished and marginalized their presumably underdeveloped compatriots who appeared as miserable folk either unable to understand the benefits of Westernization or simply scared of it. Not only did this undermine democracy, it also ruined social solidarity and instigated internal conflicts. The case studies presented in this book suggest that a simple expansion of the frame of reference for democratic struggle from the local to the global is not enough. If we really want to stir up imagination so that alternative projects for more just and inclusive globalization could be realized, such an expansion should be accompanied by a critical engagement with the issue of colonial imaginary that ubiquitously penetrates into the ways we think, communicate, and struggle. Understanding modernity as a discursive formation, we should engage in the deconstruction of the discourses of development and modernization that bolster the edifice of global neo-colonial power and analyze the ways these discourses are "naturalized" and sedimented.

Since all discourses are organized through discursive closures of some kind, the threat to just governance and peace is not in discursive closures per se, but in the stabilization of such closures by making them not precarious and partial but fixed and unchallenged. It is well documented that such an effect of anti-democratic discursive stabilization is often achieved when state-controlled or corporate media do not provide space for alternative articulations (Bagdikian 2004; Gitlin 2003; Herman and Chomsky 1988; McChesney

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 181 09-10-2018 14:06:19

2011). It is less documented, however, that alternative, non-corporate, and non-state media can also mislead their publics through both inadvertent and willful omissions and distortions. The results of my analysis presented in this book seem paradoxical: "Progressive" alternative media that opposed the authoritarian regimes in Ukraine and Russia in the name of democratization also depicted millions of their compatriots who held alternative views exclusively in negative terms, refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of their concerns. By doing so, the media under my analysis undermined the very democracy they advocated by discursively colonizing their "underdeveloped" compatriots; in the case of Ukraine, they ended up justifying anti-democratic methods of government under the guise of the fight against terrorism.

Analysis of colonizing discourses does not make sense without considering the question of power. By claiming that Russian or Ukrainian activists with a uniprogressive agenda have been colonizing their presumably underdeveloped compatriots, I am also suggesting that the former exercised some kind of power over the latter. At a glance, within the context of Yanukovych's Ukraine (before the victory of the Euromaidan) or contemporary Russia, this assumption looks rather absurd given that the voices of Putin's and Yanukovych's opponents themselves are excluded (in the case of Russia) or were excluded (in the case of Ukraine) from the mainstream public spheres of their societies. Indeed, if one looks at the situation through the traditional Westphalian lenses, Russian and Ukrainian advocates for the universal global project look (or looked, in the case of Ukraine) all but powerless. But if one enlarges her/his frame to see Russia and Ukraine as parts of a global sociopolitical field, the picture changes. From this perspective, the fighters against Putin's and Yanukovych's regimes belong to the global community of those who have been criticizing their authoritarianism and advocating social change within Ukraine and Russia in terms of development and modernization equated to Westernization. This global "wedom" (Hartley 1996) of local activists, as represented by high-ranking European and US politicians supporting "democratization" within post-Soviet states (see chapter 11) is far from powerless—it has global corporate media at its disposal. It is this globalized community of uniprogressive modernizers that inspired Putin's and Yanukovych's opponents and provided them with the moral force to consider those opposing modernization as "uncivilized" and "underdeveloped."

ALTERNATIVE ARTICULATIONS

As the discourse theory postulates, any totality is impossible and necessary at the same time: impossible, since it always consists of various demands that can hardly be equated; necessary, because without a discursive closure

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 182 09-10-2018 14:06:19

of some kind, however precarious and partial, no articulation and no political action would be possible. The question then is not about the closure per se—any discourse is established by the exclusion of alternative ways in which the signs could have been related to one another. The question is about the character of this closure, about the excluded meanings and political possibilities associated with them and the social consequences of particular discursive constructions. The myth of "sovki," "slaves," "anchovies," "titushki," "terrorists," and so on opposing the proposed uniprogressive reforms out of "fear," "mental underdevelopment," "moral degradation," and the like was only one of the possible understandings of the situation within both Russia and Ukraine. The possibility of an alternative way to articulate the problem also existed. Such an alternative articulation would have presented the opposing sides of the internal Ukrainian and Russian conflicts as equally concerned citizens struggling for their rights and interests, no matter how differently they understood them. Such an articulation would not marginalize, silence, and make invisible the "inconvenient" concerns of "unwelcome" people, closing the discourse and eliminating the possibility of finding a peaceful solution.

The ways discourses are constructed delimit what is meaningful to discuss, the manner in which it can be discussed, and the political actions stemming from these discussions. By acknowledging the equal rights of all members of the complex societies of Ukraine and Russia to voice their grievances and to be heard, such an inclusive alternative articulation would have offered a discursive opening for peaceful social change through the recognition of the legitimacy of all popular demands and a respectful dialogue to negotiate them. The presence of multiple voices could have interrupted the totalizing effect of top-down hegemonic discourses and offered conditions for inclusive democratic deliberation. Such an alternative discourse would have suggested entirely different ways of dealing with conflicts, involving greater effort toward peaceful compromise.

The goal of any movement for social change with an agenda of democratization should be disrupting the marginalization of excluded and silenced groups—not creating such groups, as has happened in the cases discussed. Avoiding the marginalization and silencing of "others" can be achieved through analyzing the conditions of this marginality, listening to their voices, and trying to see problems from alternative perspectives. To start such a dialogue, one needs to break with the logic of dichotomy that presupposes both the self and the other as homogeneous entities, radically different and distanced. It is this Manichean logic that annihilates common symbolic space necessary for communication; in extreme cases, it "leads to a dehumanization and demonization of the other" (Carpentier 2017, 12). This is what one can observe not only in Ukraine, where the conflicting sides physically destroy

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 183 09-10-2018 14:06:19

each other, but also in Russia, where the violence against "underdeveloped" "anchovies" and "sovki" is symbolic.

In order to start a dialogue with cultural "others" through transforming antagonism into agonism, social movements striving for democracy need to avoid homogenization, hierarchization, essentialization, universalization, normalization, moralization, and dehistoricization. It is necessary to make the solid and impermeable frontiers between the self and the "other" porous, which will allow the activation of a diversity of positions, the forging of connections between former enemies, and the creation of alliances across borders. This, in turn, will pave the way for working out mutually acceptable terms of co-existence and reducing the chance of violence, whether physical or symbolic.

On the other hand, as the development of the Euromaidan confrontation shows, it is equally important to recognize that total dissolution of boundaries and radical openness to all sorts of compromises for the sake of establishing a popular front are unacceptable for democratic struggles understood in pluralistic terms. The participation of the radical nationalistic forces in the revolution (with the acquiescence of Euromaidan liberals) transformed the symbolic violence toward anti-Maidan "others" into the physical brutality of Euromaidan clashes at the beginning and the anti-terrorist operation later. A total dissolution of boundaries, rather than a dialectical interplay between openness and closure, and the celebration of any type of compromise—a "total pluralism," as Mouffe (2009, 20) calls it—would be detrimental to democracy because it would lead to violence going unnoticed. Such a "total pluralism," according to Mouffe, would lead to the impossibility of distinguishing "between differences that exist but should not exist and differences that do not exist but should exist" (Mouffe 2009, 20). This is exactly what happened in Ukraine, where "the profound civic impetus for dignity and good governance at the heart of the Maidan revolution was hijacked by the radicals" (Sakwa 2015, 131)—which took place when radically anti-democratic forces came to represent the "impossible totality" of the Euromaidan movement initially positioning itself as a peaceful gathering promoting democratic values.

GLOBAL DEMOCRATIZATION

It is well established that the ideology of neoliberalism derives its strength from the Western ideas of liberty and freedom justifying the unleashing of the market and the retreat of the state. However, the ideologies of liberty and freedom by themselves are unable to explain why unrestricted freedom for multinational corporations goes hand-in-hand with the restriction of freedom

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 184 09-10-2018 14:06:19

for nation-states in whose sovereign affairs neoliberal institutions have been given a right to intervene. This contradiction can only be conceived with the help of an additional ideology—that of uniprogressive development, which presents the West and its institutions as "natural" leaders tasked with bringing the rest of the world forward into a future conceived in homogeneous Westernized terms. The project of global democratization can be implemented only through subverting the taken-for-granted assumptions of the neoliberal status quo and working out new propositions. Postcolonial studies and the theory of radical pluralist democracy, discussed in this book, have already suggested alternative paths for such creative thinking. Here are some of the suggested assumptions:

- Nothing that is social is the natural order of things; any historical conjuncture is the expression of certain power configurations;
- There are no "normal" stages of historical development or "normal" models of historical change;
- There can be no fixed lines of development or inexorable laws that give a direction for social change in the name of global democratization;
- Westernization cannot serve as a solution for all societies: The question of global governance cannot be conceived in universal terms;
- The basic precondition for a global democratic project is the refusal to dominate, which is unachievable if the project of democratic social change is conceived in uniprogressive evolutionary terms;
- A truly democratic globalization can be achieved only if the link between the evolutionist paradigm and theorization of democratic social change is broken;
- The exclusion of subaltern groups from "progressive" public deliberation under the premise of their "underdevelopment" and "irrationality" leads to a lack of democratic contestation over political alternatives; it closes imagination and undermines the project of social change in the name of global democratization;
- For the project of democratic globalization, the discourse of a universal history should be replaced with a discourse of the variety of historical projects articulated by a polyphony of voices;
- Without a plurality of competing forces attempting to define the common good differently, an inclusive and pluralist project of global democracy is impossible; to achieve a democratic condition, a break with the tradition of universalization and homogenization of both the other and the self is required;
- Democratic globalization can only come to life if no rigid boundaries between identities are established. Since the drawing of "us versus them" frontiers is necessary for identity construction, discursive closures are

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 185 09-10-2018 14:06:19

unavoidable; all the moments of closure, however, should be treated as temporary, precarious, and unfixed.
- Within the project of social change in the name of global democratization, conflicts are unavoidable. If treated democratically, however, they acquire agonistic characteristics helping to open imagination, forge solidarity, and develop peace.
- In democratic globalization, conceived in all-inclusive agonistic terms, difference (in views, subject positions, identities, etc.) acquires a positive status: it should not be suppressed, but acknowledged and greeted as a condition that enables the possibility of democratic social change on a global scale.

The alternative routes for democratic globalization, conceived as inclusive and pluralist, have already been theoretically developed. The task of the global project of democratization is to carry these propositions into the practical realm: to "naturalize" them and make them feel like a "normal" alternative to the "no alternative" dogma of neoliberal globalization. As mentioned earlier, although the criticism of Enlightenment ideas has become widespread in academia, the basic Enlightenment narrative—an inexorable movement of humankind toward a progressive common condition—still remains a dominant paradigm of thinking within the realpolitikal discourses of modernization, development and democratization. It is still a dominant paradigm of conceptualizing social change in the name of democratization by social movements, as the case studies presented in this book suggest. No global democratization in inclusive and pluralistic terms is even conceivable while this way of thinking is taken for granted; it should be destabilized through activating and normalizing already existing alternatives and working out new ones. Otherwise, global coloniality will persist and flourish under the veil of ostensibly "democratic" struggles.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 186 09-10-2018 14:06:19

Epilogue

Personal Reflections

I was born in Kharkiv, a Ukrainian border city only forty kilometers from Russia. As the first capital of Soviet Ukraine, Kharkiv was one of its leading educational and scientific centers; the city's residents pride themselves on living in the "intellectual capital" of the Ukrainian East. On the other hand, Kharkiv has also been a huge military-industrial center, with thousands of factories and plants established primarily during Stalin's industrialization and the later scientific-technical revolution under Khrushchev. Some of Kharkiv's industrial enterprises—such as *Kommunar*, where both of my parents worked—produced rocket control systems for the Soviet space industry. *Kommunar* was surrounded by a settlement (*posyolok*) where workers lived. There, in the working-class environs of Pomerki (an area on the outskirts of the city), I spent my childhood.

I did not attend a local school, however. Every morning, I traveled forty minutes by trolley-bus to a school in central Kharkiv. To the best of my knowledge, this was the only city school where children studied in Ukrainian. For my parents, the choice was not so much an issue of language but rather of class size; in the East of Ukraine, where all official paperwork and other business of the state was done in Russian, and where one did not generally need to know Ukrainian for professional reasons, a large majority preferred to have their children study in Russian. As a result, the normal class size in a Russian-speaking school could be forty or even more students, whereas in my Ukrainian-speaking school I was in a class of only twenty-three—a luxury for the educational institutions of my neighborhood.

Located in a beautiful nineteenth-century gymnasium building, my school was adjacent to the Ukrainian Drama Theatre founded from the remnants of the suppressed *Berezil*—an avant-garde theater community established in the 1920s by Les Kurbas, who was later accused of "Ukrainian nationalism" and

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 187 09-10-2018 14:06:19

executed. My classmates and I had many points of contact with the legacy of Kurbas' work: we often attended Ukrainian plays at the nearby theater, and its actors were frequent guests in our classes. It is from them that I learned about the history of Ukraine's "Executed Renaissance"—the generation of Ukrainian writers and artists executed or repressed in the 1920s and 1930s—and heard the banned poems of Ukrainian dissidents.

My daily commute was a journey from one Ukraine to another. One was Ukrainian-speaking and intellectual; the other was working-class and spoke Russian, or rather, *surzhyk*—a language mix. It is from the parents of my friends in this industrial neighborhood that I first heard about *banderivtsi* from the West of Ukraine who were "killing our grandfathers." In my own family, I never heard anything about this civil conflict related to the history of World War II. But every year on May 9, my mother took me and my sisters to a Victory Day memorial in Lesopark (a wooded park) to present flowers to war veterans. "Thanks to them, we are all alive," my mother used to tell us. For the people living in my neighborhood, Victory Day was sacred: almost all of the families had lost relatives in the war.

Apart from the two Ukraines I inhabited at home and at school, there were at least two other versions I encountered in childhood: Fedorivka village near Kharkiv, where my father's relatives lived, and the city of Krivij Rig in a heavy industrial region of the Krivbas Iron Ore Basin, home to the relatives of my mother. In each of these Ukraines, where I used to spend my vacations, people spoke different types of *surzhyk* and believed in different Gods. My relatives on my father's side were peasants who did not much care for Soviet authority: they were scornful toward their collective farms and dreamed of private land plots. Additionally, in the view of my grandma from Fedorivka, Ustyna Hnativna, the Communists had come to power sinfully because Bolsheviks "brought down the Tsar" who "had been anointed to rule by God." Among all the houses I spent time in as a child, only my grandma's *khata* ("house" in Ukrainian) had an icon and *rushniks*, the embroidered ritual cloths draped around the image.

My relatives on my mother's side were steelmakers and miners. "The Soviet government provided you with free education, free healthcare, and made you free people," my grandma Alexandra Fedotovna from Krivij Rig taught me. "But for the Soviets in power, you would still have been slaying for capitalist blood-suckers." There were no icons in her house. As my grandma told me, she had stopped believing in God after the hunger of 1921–1923: "My brothers, sisters, and I were made to kneel and kneel asking God to send us food. And he didn't." These reflections of my beloved grandma on surviving the "war communism"[1] always struck me as paradoxical; I remember having this impression while listening to her speak, and I've continued to think about it over the years.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 188 09-10-2018 14:06:19

After I graduated from secondary school, my family moved to Crimea and I took entrance examinations to the department of philology at the Crimea State University in Simferopol, formerly the city of Aqmescit under the Crimean Khanate. During my study there, Crimean Tatars deported en masse by Stalin in 1944 started to return, giving me a chance to discover there was room for non-Ukrainians and non-Russians in my Ukraine as well. I remember how surprised I was to hear one of my new Tatar friends say, "I've come here from Uzbekistan to give birth to my baby in my motherland, the Khanate." Malika, with whom I shared my dormitory room, would later tell me a lot of family stories that sounded to me like scary fairy tales.

While studying in Simferopol, I encountered for the first time a belief that the Ukrainian language "does not exist" and that it is simply a "dialect" of Russian. Although I had been the only applicant to take my entrance exam in Ukrainian—my specially convened exam committee eyed me with stony, and likely uncomprehending, silence as I answered their questions—my right to test in Ukrainian was secured by Soviet Ukrainian law, and I was granted admission to the university. But as I began my studies, I found myself in class with a professor of Romance-Germanic philology who asserted that Ukrainian was no more than a sub-category of Russian. It was the first time in my life that I had to defend my language and ethnic identity. In the end, the professor apologized, and in time we developed good relations. As it turned out, he was not a Russian nationalist; he simply had never heard anything about Ukraine as an entity separated from Russia, and had not reflected on any of the issues related to the complexity of historical relations between Ukraine and Russia. Unlike me, he did not attend a Ukrainian school and thus did not know anything about Ukraine's "Executed Renaissance."

The majority of people I met in Crimea were like my professor in this regard. They lived in a totally different, non-Ukrainian, world. One of my classmates, a daughter of a high-ranking Navy officer from Sebastopol, asked me during my visit to her house, "You really don't understand anything about stars on epaulets?" This discovery shocked her no less than my discovery of this part of Ukraine with a predominantly non-Ukrainian population. "Here, in Sebastopol, every girl is born as a future wife of a Navy officer. From early childhood, we know what these stars mean." In this world of my new non-Ukrainian friends, there was no place for Ukraine's "Executed Renaissance"—they had their own histories and their own renaissance dreams.

The next Ukraine of my life waited for me in Kyiv. I went there to work in 2002, after completing my master's degree in Journalism at a US university in Colorado. In the capital of Ukraine, I had my first chance to communicate personally with those born in the Ukrainian West: many young, ambitious people from western regions had been moving to Kyiv in search of better career opportunities and a more interesting life. It was in Kyiv that I first

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 189 09-10-2018 14:06:19

heard those living in the East of Ukraine referred to as "retrograde *sovki*." This happened during the Orange Revolution of 2004, when my Kyiv colleagues were astonished to discover that not so many people in the country's eastern regions supported the uprising.

I remember our many conversations as if they happened yesterday. "Why didn't I know anything about this?" one of my colleagues shouted, and pounded the table with his fist, upon learning from me the basic facts essential to understanding the histories of Ukrainian lands to the east of the Dnieper River. He had heard none of this in his native Halychyna, a Ukrainian-speaking region that had become part of the USSR only after World War II. The shock of discovering each other—so different and yet holding a common identity as "Ukrainians"—was mutual. Although we lived within the same national borders, none of us had been prepared to comprehend, let alone appreciate, our differences.

Finally, there has been one more Ukraine in my life, situated outside the country's territorial borders. This is the diasporic Ukraine of Ukrainian immigrants who established new lives for themselves in Russia, where I came to work in 2013 after my doctoral studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Some of my former colleagues from the Kharkiv television stations where I worked from 1991 to 2000 also moved to Moscow. After Ukraine's independence, it was easier for them, as Russian-speakers, to establish careers in Russia rather than in an increasingly Ukrainian-speaking Ukraine. For them, as well as for millions of other Ukrainians from Russia-bordering regions, the two countries have remained a common cultural space, impossible to separate by state borders. As one of my fellow travelers on a Moscow–Kharkiv overnight train once told me, "God did not create national frontiers. I was born in a great country with virtually no limits, and I will always miss that feeling of an open unlimited space."

I understand the sentiment. The multiplicity of cultural spaces in which I have lived has formed my perception of the world as a place where strict boundaries are impossible, and diversity is a norm, not a deviation. My years in the east of Ukraine helped me to realize why so many people there rejected the Euromaidan. My Crimea experience allowed me to understand why many people living in the peninsula welcomed its annexation by Russia. My life in Russia makes it apparent why so many people here support today's policy of the Kremlin toward Ukraine and do not support the anti-Putin opposition. And, finally, my work in Kyiv and Moscow clued me in to the extent to which peaceful and democratic dialogue between all of us may be a complicated endeavor.

However, what all my previous experience has also taught me is that without such a respectful dialogue, no peace or democracy is even thinkable. As Raymond Williams (2010) famously said, "There are in fact no masses,

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 190 09-10-2018 14:06:19

but only ways of seeing people as masses" (57). "Sovoks" and "vatniks" do not exist—they emerge through totalizing articulations that lead to confrontation and war. Democracy and peace require different vocabulary and a different vision of the world, one that recognizes rather than stifles diversity. It is suppression that kills the very possibility of cultural and intellectual renaissance—something that everyone on the planet should know from our long and difficult histories of living together.

NOTE

1. The policy of "war communism" carried out by the Bolsheviks from 1918 to 1921 involved the confiscation of "surpluses" from peasants, a move authorities justified as a wartime necessity.

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 191 09-10-2018 14:06:19

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Baysha_9781498558938.indb 224 09-10-2018 14:06:24

Index

Adorno, Theodor, 16–17, 133, 181
adversary, 30, 94, 140
agonism, 28–29, 33, 89, 94, 139, 174, 184
Akhedzhakova, Liya, 84
Albats, Yevgenia, 63–64, 70, 75, 77, 86
Andrukhovych, Yuri, 127
antagonism, xi, xiv, 28–31, 33, 89, 92, 94, 96, 131, 135, 139, 174, 184
anti-Maidan, xv, 9, 104, 111, 114, 120, 123–25, 128, 131–32, 135–36, 139, 143–47, 149, 150, 155–62, 164–73, 175
anti-monetarization protests, 42–43
anti-terrorist operation, 114, 164, 171. *See also* ATO
Áslund, Anders, 106, 114
Association Agreement (AA), 103–4, 119, 122, 134, 148
ATO, 114, 164, 171. *See also* anti-terrorist operation
Avakov, Arsen, 151, 173–75

Bandera, Stepan, 106, 108, 115, 139
Barthes, Roland, 91, 134
Batkivshchyna, 172, 176. *See also* Fatherland
Berezovsky, Boris, 42, 54
Berkut, 120, 149, 154, 156, 158, 166
Blokhin, Oleg, 125
Bogomolets, Olga, 157
Bogoslovskaya, Inna, 119
Bondarenko, Volodymyr, 157, 160
Boyd-Barrett, Joseph Oliver, 172–73
Brotherhood, 150–51
Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 105
Buck-Morss, Susan, 98–99, 180
Buzina, Oles, 125

Carpentier, Nico, xii, xiv–xv, 31–37, 89–91, 132, 143, 183
Castells, Manuel, 4, 18, 45, 99
Chornovol, Tetyana, 149, 154
Clinton, Hillary, 105
coloniality, xiv, xv, 3–6, 179, 186
Crimea, 86, 104–5, 107–8, 110–11, 141, 159, 170, 189–90
Custom Union (CU), 147, 166. *See also* Eurasian Custom Union

dehistorization, 33, 91, 134
Deleuze, Gilles, 16, 35, 36, 146
Discursive-Material Knot (DMK), xii, xiv–xv, 31, 34–36, 143, 155–56, 161–62
dissenters' marches, 41–44, 54
Donbas, 49, 109–14, 125, 137, 141, 149, 151, 164, 168–71, 173

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 225 09-10-2018 14:06:24

Echo of Moscow, 8–9, 11, 57–59, 61–71, 73, 75, 78–79, 94–95
enemy, 31–32, 83, 89–91, 174
Enlightenment, xi, 4, 10, 15–18, 65, 133, 186
essentialization, 32, 90, 132, 184
Eurasian Custom Union (ECU), 103, 106, 122. *See also* Custom Union (CU)
Euromaidan, xii, xv, 9–11, 14, 100, 103–4, 106–8, 110–12, 114, 117–22, 124–28, 131–41, 143–62, 164, 166, 168–75, 182, 184
European integration, xv, 11, 105, 107, 121–22, 135, 161–62, 169
European Union (EU), xv, 10, 104–8, 118–22, 127, 133, 144, 146–48, 166

Farion, Iryna, 152
Fatherland, 148, 176. *See also* Batkivshchyna
Foucault, Michel, 11, 16

Gabowitsch, Mischa, 41, 43, 51–52
Gaonkar, Dilip, 4, 15–16
Gavrylyuk, Mykhailo, 154, 158
Glukhovsky, Dmitry, 75–77, 86
Gongadze, Georgiy, 117
Gorbachev, Mikhail, 6, 57, 73–74
Guattari, Félix, 16, 35–36, 146
Gusinsky, Vladimir, 42, 54

Hartley, John, xiii, 18–19, 59, 62
Harvey, David, 19
homogenization, 29, 31–32, 90, 93, 96, 132, 184–85
Horkheimer, Max, 16–17, 133, 181
Hrytsenko, Anatoliy 119–20, 122, 124–25
Husar, Lyubomir, 119

IMF, 20, 120–21

Jacobins, 21, 32, 129, 141
Judah, Ben, 42, 43–44, 46–48, 53

Kaczyński, Jarosław Aleksander, 144
Karpa, Irena, 124, 126, 136, 139
Kasparov, Garry, 41–42, 54
Kerry, John, 145
Khodorkovsky, Mikhail, 45, 55
Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), 107, 110
Kiselyov, Yevgeny, 63, 85
Kolomoyskyi, Ihor, 155
Konchalovsky, Andrei, 9, 65, 69–71
Krasovsky, Anton, 79–82, 86
Kuzio, Taras, 104–6, 111, 113

Laclau, Ernesto, xi–xv, 13, 20–23, 25–28, 31, 34, 70, 89, 91, 124, 159, 161, 164–65, 167, 171–73
Latynina, Yulia, 9, 68–68, 77–78, 85, 92–93
Le Bon, 70
Leshchenko, Serhiy, 10, 157, 173
Levada-Center, 44, 48–51, 54, 97
Leviy Bereg (LB), 164–68
Limonov, Eduard, 42
Lutsenko, Yuri, 174–75

marches of dissenters, 41–44, 54. *See also* dissenters' marches
Martinov, Kirill, 78, 81, 86
McCain, John, 105
Medvedchuk, Victor, 150
Medvedev, Dmitry, 50, 55, 86
Mlechin, Leonid, 8, 64–65
moralization, 32, 90, 184,
Mouffe, Chantal, xi–xiv, 4, 13, 20–23, 25–31, 34, 91–92, 94–95, 148, 159, 165, 184
Muratov, Dmitry, 8, 60–62, 74
Murdoch, Iris, 16, 132, 160

Narniya, 157
NATO, 104, 166

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 226 09-10-2018 14:06:24

Navalny, Alexei, xii, 11, 49–52, 75–76
Nayem, Mustafa, 117, 119, 143, 173
Nemtsov, Boris, 44, 49, 50
Nevzorov, Alexander, 84–85, 78, 80, 84–85
new protest generation, 14, 50, 53, 132
normalization, 32, 90, 134, 156, 184
Novaya Gazeta, 11, 60, 73–75, 78–81, 84, 94–95
Novodvorskaya, Valeria, 6–8, 71
Nuland, Victoria, 10, 14, 144–46

Obama, Barack, 144–45

Party of Regions (PoR), 10, 14, 176
Parubiy, Andriy, 142, 172–73
perestroika, 6–8, 11, 14, 17, 45, 95, 99, 180
Polikovsky, Alexei, 84
Poroshenko, Petro, 151, 155
Pritula, Olena, 117–18
Prokhorova, Irina, 75, 78, 99
provocateurs, 124, 126, 139, 149–51, 160
Putin, Vladimir, 8–9, 11–12, 14, 41–42, 44–45, 47–49, 51, 53–55, 57–63, 65–70, 74–87, 89–93, 95, 99–100, 104–6, 110, 122–23, 150, 182
Pyatt, Geoffrey, 145–46

Remchukov, Konstantin, 12, 66–67, 76, 85
Rice, Condoleezza, 105
Ries, Nancy, 98, 180
Right Sector, 150, 172, 176
Rubtsov, Alexander, 79, 85, 92
Ruslana, 149

Said, Edward, 5, 17–19
Sakwa, Richard, 104, 152, 171, 176, 184
Self-Defense, 139, 142
separatism, 109, 163, 165–68, 170
Sergatskova, Yekaterina, 135–36, 139
Shargunov, Sergei, 61–62, 93, 99
Siumar, Victoria, 126, 138, 173
Skachko, Vladimir, 5
Snyder, Timothy, 46, 48, 79, 104, 181
Sobchak, Ksenia, 63
Sokurov, Alexander, 93
sovok (sovki), 10, 14, 64, 97, 122–24, 127, 129, 132, 134, 137, 139–41, 144, 156, 173, 183–84, 190–91
Stiglitz, Joseph, 46, 80, 97
Sverstyuk, Yevgen, 119, 121–22, 129
Svoboda, 139, 142, 151–53, 157, 161, 172–73

Taylor, Charles, 5, 15–16, 68, 137
terrorism, 163–64, 168, 171, 174, 182
Timoshenko, Yulia, 127
titushki, 124, 135, 139, 173
torture, 156–58, 169, 175
Turchynov, Olexander, 170
Tyahnybok, Oleh, 146, 152–53

UDAR, 148
Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA), 151–52
Ukrayinska Pravda (UP), 9, 117–24, 126–27, 129, 131–39, 141, 149, 156–57, 164, 166–70, 173
universalization, 32, 90, 96, 133, 184–85

Varlamov, Ilya, 76, 87, 160
Vatnik(i) (vata), 55, 174–75, 191
Venediktov, Alexei, 57–58
Vitorgan, Maxim, 67–68
Volkov, Denis, 42, 50–53

White Hammer, 157
White Ribbons, xii, xiv, 132
Williams, Raymond, 64, 190
Wilson, Andrew, 107, 111–12, 147–48, 150–51, 153–56

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 227 09-10-2018 14:06:24

Yanukovych, Victor, 14, 103, 105–6, 114, 118–19, 125, 127–28, 134–35, 137, 143–46, 148, 151, 153–55, 159–60, 172, 175, 182
Yarosh, Dmytro, 172, 176
Yatsenyuk, Arseniy, 146, 170
Yavlinsky, Grigory, 6, 43–44, 75
Yekelchuk, Serhy 103, 106, 108–13
Yeltsin, Boris, 45–47, 79–80, 98–99
Yerofeev, Victor, 77, 80, 84
Yushchenko, Victor, 118

Zhuravlyova, Olga, 79, 81
Zhvania, Davyd, 155

Baysha_9781498558938.indb 228 09-10-2018 14:06:24

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