The Paralympics
How team Ukraine has already inspired a generation

Room at the top
The Ukrainians taking charge at multinational companies

The art of curating
David Elliott on organising the first Kyiv Biennale
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From the Chairman, Lord Risby

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the restyled magazine Ukrainian Dialogue, the third edition of the British Ukrainian Society’s publication previously called Spectrum. I hope you enjoy reading about all the ways that Ukraine and its people contribute to politics, culture, business and education.

This year has undoubtedly been an important one for Ukraine. From hosting the European Football Championship to its spectacular performance at the Paralympic games in London, Ukraine has gone from sporting strength to strength.

There is much that ties our two countries together as evidenced by the vast array of articles included here. The first ever Kyiv Biennale held this summer was curated by the renowned David Elliott (see page 35), and the now fully-endowed Ukrainian Studies Programme at Cambridge University is the first of its kind in Europe. During this twentieth year of diplomatic relations, we also welcome a new British Ambassador to Ukraine, His Excellency Mr Simon Smith.

Ukraine is a country not without its difficulties and controversy. It has been in the news often in recent months and with Parliamentary elections forthcoming, the world’s eyes are watching. It is accepted in both countries that there is still much to do in terms of judicial reform and members of the British and Ukrainian judiciaries will be seeking to take this forward in the year to come. For its part, the UK is committed to upholding its solid - if at times critical - relationship with Ukraine and is keen to guide and support its track into the European Union. No country in the EU is more eager to promote the success of Ukraine than our own.

Looking forward, we will be holding a roundtable in November to discuss the October elections, and in early 2013 a notable individual will deliver our annual Yalta Memorial Speech. We look forward to welcoming you on these occasions.

Best wishes,
ANDREI KURKOV
Author Andrei Kurkov is a master of surreal post-Soviet humour. He has written 13 novels, among them Death and the Penguin, as well as 5 books for children. His work is translated into 25 languages.

DAVID ELLIOTT
A curator and writer who has directed contemporary art museums and institutions in Oxford, Stockholm, Tokyo, Istanbul, Sydney and Kyiv, Elliott is currently artistic advisor for CPS, the arts hub in the central former prison and police station in Hong Kong. Photo by Maksim Belousov.

OLESYA KROMEYCHUK
Dr. Khromeyuchuk teaches Ukrainian language at the University of Cambridge. She is now researching the role of women in guerrilla violence in the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

MARYNA IRKLIYENKO
Maryna Irkliyenko has been a journalist at the Kyiv Post, the leading English-language newspaper in Ukraine, since 2008. She covers topics ranging from business to local news and entertainment stories. Maryna edits the Gadget Guru column covering IT news and the ‘World in Ukraine’ feature.

Owen Slot is chief sports reporter of The Times. He has been to eight Olympic Games. He is three-times winner of Sports Reporter of the Year award in the UK and three-times winner of Sports Feature Writer of the Year award.

KATE GATACRE
Brought up in the Dutch countryside with a greedy family, Kate Gatacre learned to appreciate food at an early age. Having trained as a silversmith, she was employed by Christies then turned to cooking as a private chef. Today, Kate shoots, forages, gardens and cooks, writing about all three in the Shooting Times.

MARK PERRYMAN
Mark Perryman is a travelling England fan, following the team home and away since 1993. He has chronicled these experiences in his book Ingerland: Travels with a Football Nation. Mark provided fan reports from Euro 2012 for BBC radio and ITN.

JAMES HYDZIK
James Hydzik settled in Kyiv in 2003, and has edited for Eastern Economist. During the Orange Revolution, organized the English language service of Obozrevatel. Since then, he has edited mostly for the IT industry and USAID reform projects, with occasional articles for FDI Magazine and The Banker.
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WEF creates a council on Ukraine

The World Economic Forum, well known for its annual meeting in Davos, has formed a Global Agenda Council on Ukraine. Launched at a WEF gathering in Istanbul in June, the Council on Ukraine is part of a larger Network of Global Agenda Councils that brings together over 1,200 thought leaders to discuss key issues.

Lord Risby, Chairman of the British Ukrainian Society, has been appointed Vice-Chair along with Pavlo Sheremeta, Chairman of the Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Institute in Ukraine. Together with former US Ambassador to Ukraine William Green Miller (1993-98), who will Chair the Council, and 15 other members including BUS director Robert Shetler-Jones, they will address issues such as Ukraine’s position in Europe, democracy and judicial reform, competitiveness and energy security.

The World Economic Forum is an independent, not-for-profit organization, which aims to connect leaders from business, government and civil society to collectively tackle global issues. In 2008, the WEF launched the Network of Global Agenda Councils to find innovative solutions for key global, regional and industry challenges. This year’s Summit on the Global Agenda will take place in Dubai on 12-14 November and will bring together over 900 individuals from 88 Councils in the Network of Global Agenda Councils.

Cambridge Ukrainian Studies teams up with London’s Ukrainian Institute

Cambridge Ukrainian Studies, a programme of the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge, is launching a new project in conjunction with the Ukrainian Institute, located in London’s Holland Park. It will provide a platform for scholars of Ukrainian Studies, mainly from Cambridge and UCL’s School of Slavonic and East European Studies, to lecture to a wider audience in their preferred language - Ukrainian or English.

The first lecture, delivered by leading Ukrainian historian and essayist Andriy Portnov PhD, was titled What Hope for Ukraine After October’s Parliamentary Elections?, and was held on 18 October.

Portnov is the editor of www.historians.in.ua, a visiting lecturer at Humboldt University, and the author of five books and more than 100 scientific publications, articles and blogs.

UCU to hold fifth annual fundraising event

The Ukrainian Catholic University, a dynamic and distinctive institution of higher education and research in Lviv, will hold its fifth annual dinner and silent auction at the InterContinental Hotel in Kyiv on 17th November. The event, which last year raised over $120,000, will be attended by ambassadors, politicians, academics and civil society leaders. The evening will also include a silent auction of artwork, proceeds from which will fund scholarships for talented young people in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Studies programme at Cambridge aims to promote and contribute to the study of Ukraine in the United Kingdom and beyond. The Ukrainian Institute in London seeks to develop and promote a greater awareness, understanding and knowledge of Ukrainian history, language, religion, current affairs, economy, literature and culture through educational, professional and networking activities. It is affiliated to the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv.

For more information on upcoming lectures, visit: www.ukrainianinstitute.org.uk
A post-election roundtable

The British Ukrainian Society, in conjunction with the Aston Centre for Europe, will host a roundtable at the House of Commons on the evening of 6 November to discuss the outcome of the Ukrainian Parliamentary elections due to take place on 28 October. Orysia Lutsevych (Chatham House’s 2012 Robert Bosch Fellow), Jana Kobzova (Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations), Professor Alan Mayhew (Jean Monnet Professorial Fellow at the University of Sussex) and Dr Nat Copsey (Co-Director of the Aston Centre for Europe) will describe what the result means for the country, its European integration, and how the West might seek to engage Ukraine in the future. Contact secretariat@britishukrainiansociety.org.

Meanwhile, in the run-up to Parliamentary elections on 28 October, the OSCE is carrying out programmes in Ukraine to raise the awareness of voters about their legal rights, electoral procedures and the importance of elections in a nation-wide awareness campaign.

The OSCE is the world’s largest regional security organization with 56 States from Europe, Central Asia and North America. It offers a forum for political negotiations and decision-making in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, and puts the political will of its participating States into practice through its unique network of field missions. It addresses a wide range of security-related concerns including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratisation, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities.

In 2013, Ukraine will assume the Presidency of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The year-long term will be Chaired by Ukraine’s Foreign Minister, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko.

Minister Gryshchenko has outlined Ukraine’s priorities during its term, which include looking to settle long-standing conflicts in the region such as the breakaway territory of Transdniestria, a section of Eastern Moldova that borders Ukraine. The OSCE is currently discussing this question engaging representatives of Moldova, Transdniestria, the OSCE, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the US and the EU. Official negotiations were resumed in November 2011 following a hiatus of almost six years.

In late September, at a session of the 67th UN General Assembly in New York, President Yanukovich echoed Mr Gryshchenko and added that they would also attempt to find a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has lingered since a 1994 ceasefire.

According to Gryshchenko, Ukraine will also focus on issues in the military-political sphere, economic development and environment protection, and a broad range of humanitarian issues such as freedom of speech, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, gender equality and combating human trafficking.

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The band that’s big in Kyiv

The Kiev Big Band, formed by Englishmen Peter Davis and Mick Lake in November 2011, will open the Jazz in Kiev Festival 2012 with well-known vocalist, Olga Lukatcheva. The Festival, in its fifth year and host to international artists from the Americas, Europe and Japan, will take place during 26-28 October at the International Centre for Culture and the Arts (October Palace) with concert performances and master classes.

Struck by the abundance of talent within the local jazz scene, Davis and Lake decided to gather some of the best young musicians to create the Ukrainian capital’s very own swing big band. Kyiv has a relatively small jazz scene, but a solid one as evidenced by this established annual festival.

During the opening concert, Kiev Big Band will perform a number of brand new music they composed themselves, as well as familiar classics.

Scholarships for Ukrainian students

With University fees rising and the financial climate as cold as ever, it is becoming more and more difficult for Ukrainian students to study in the UK. However there are several organisations that offer financial help to promising students. The Cambridge-Ukraine Studentships Programme is funded by Dmitry Firtash; World Wide Studies is supported by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation; and there are also scholarships available from the Open Society Foundation, the Chevening Scholarships Programme, and BP Centenary Studentships.

Pavlo Shopin, one of the first students to benefit from a Cambridge-Ukraine Studentship under the aegis of the DF Foundation, writes:

‘Having studied English since I was seven, my ultimate dream was always to study at one of the UK’s renowned universities. In my English classes back in Luhansk, Ukraine, I would read stories and watch educational videos about students punting in Cambridge and visiting British sights. Until recently, these images were distant and ephemeral, but last year I was able to be a part of this reality, reading for an M.Phil. in European Literature and Culture at Cambridge thanks to the Cambridge-Ukraine Studentship.

The academic environment at Cambridge inspired me to carry out creative work in literary criticism, while the seminars and lectures broadened my scholarly horizon. I was impressed by the quality of the course and the level of discussions. I had an amazing opportunity to research the works of English, French, German, Russian, and Ukrainian literatures. Socially and culturally, the trip was a success too. I felt part of a small but strong Ukrainian community and befriended some of the brightest people I have ever met.’

Made in Donetsk

An exhibition of paintings by Ukrainian artist Tatiana Ponomarenko-Leverash is currently on show at the Ukrainian Embassy in London. An oil painting of John Hughes is the centrepiece of the exhibition, with views of Hughesovka also on display.

In the late 1860s, at the invitation of the Russian Imperial government, Welsh industrialist Hughes agreed to build a metallurgical plant in the Donbas area. He brought skilled labour from South Wales and a sizeable expatriate community was established along with a settlement including an Anglican church, school and hospital. Unsurprisingly, before long, the place became known as Hughesovka. Today, it is known as Donetsk and is still the industrial heartland of Ukraine as well as the power base of President Viktor Yanukovych.

Tatiana Ponomarenko-Leverash was born in 1970 and has lived in Donetsk since 1996. She is a talented colourist, a skillful portraitist, and an expert of still life and landscapes. She has taken part in numerous regional and international exhibitions, and been recognized for her considerable contribution to the development of Ukrainian art.
The start of a new term

His Excellency Simon Smith, the British Ambassador to Ukraine, on the goals — and the challenges — he sees ahead as he steps into his new role

by Simon Smith

I arrived in Kyiv on 10th September to start my new role as the seventh British Ambassador to Ukraine. Like many British people, I take a possibly excessive interest in the weather — so I can’t help observing that my first few weeks in Ukraine have been made even more pleasant by some beautiful babyne lito (Indian summer) days, which have shown the city in the best possible light and made my first impressions even more positive.

Well, not quite my first impressions: I first visited Kyiv in 1994. What I remember of that visit was a city which still corresponded to my vision of a typical Soviet conurbation, with ageing infrastructure and strikingly few visible signs of economic and business vibrancy. What I’ve seen eighteen years on is a transformation into what in many respects looks and feels like a dynamic and stylish European city. In August this year, I completed a five year term as British Ambassador to Austria and the UK’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organisations based in Vienna. It’s already clear to me that I’ve been lucky to swap one of Europe’s great cities for another.

I’m also not wholly new to other parts of the country. I had a week’s family holiday in Yalta ten years ago. And earlier this year I spent two weeks in Lviv making a start on learning Ukrainian with the help of some first-rate teachers at the Ivan Franko University, and living with a wonderful Ukrainian family who were patient and generous in giving me hours of opportunity to practice my first uncertain steps in the language. But there is a great deal more territory to cover, and I am looking forward to seeing other cities and regions in Ukraine, not least in promoting opportunities for British business.

It’s a particularly exciting time to have arrived here, with parliamentary elections now less than three weeks away. I’ve already met some candidates and campaigners, and I get a strong sense that this is an exercise in which some real choice is being offered to the Ukrainian electorate. It’s important here, as in every democracy, that the ability of voters to make their choices freely and without coercion, intimidation or manipulation is credibly upheld. A successful election in that sense would be a success for the people of Ukraine, and for their future.

I’m convinced too that the effective development and deepening of Ukraine’s relationship with the European Union is another pathway to success and achievement for the people of Ukraine. So I am very keen that the British Embassy in Kyiv should continue its work to promote Ukraine’s closer political and economic association with the EU, and with its values and standards. The British government is clear that the prospect of Ukraine joining the EU, once it fully fulfils the accession criteria, is a welcome one. And it’s obvious to me even from the short time I have so far spent here that this aim is widely shared in Ukraine.

Joining the EU isn’t something that happens overnight: it’s a long-term project. I’m looking forward to leading the British Embassy in Kyiv’s contribution to that project: helping to build shared understanding of what needs to be done, and providing knowledge and best practice through our bilateral project work, to complement the EU’s technical assistance under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument.

Because it’s a long-term project, we’ll need to have patience, staying power and a correspondingly long-term vision. We’ll need to be resilient when there are delays, difficulties or obstacles. But we’ll also need to be honest and unambiguous about those obstacles to progress. We’ll continue to be clear when we believe that more needs to be done: to uphold the rule of law; to ensure free and fair elections; to sustain legislatures and governments that are truly accountable and responsible to the people who put them in office; to take effective action against corruption; to ensure transparency and fair competition in business; to uphold civil freedoms, combat discrimination and respect diversity. We’ll do this not because we want to preach or moralise. We’ll do it because our experience building the EU convinces us that that these are vital ingredients in a recipe for success. A success which we want Ukraine and Ukrainians to share.
Paralympian efforts

At the Paralympic games in London 2012, Ukraine finished a historic fourth on the medal table. What was behind the team’s extraordinary performances?

by Owen Slot

It was on the day that Ukraine smashed the Great Britain football team that it became clear that questions needed to be asked. Usually when a British football team is beaten soundly, the British media reaction is straightforward, we ask: why are we so bad? But on this occasion, after a 7-1 defeat in the Paralympics, in a hugely one-sided match between two sides whose players had cerebral palsy, a rather different line of enquiry was required: not why are we so bad, but why are they so good?

The question was answered by Lyndon Lynch, the coach of the GB team — it didn’t solve the puzzle, but merely indicated that there was a far bigger solution. Lynch explained the basic mechanics of playing football with CP: one side of the body is far weaker than the other. But the Ukraine players are so good, he said, ‘they don’t have a weaker side.’

The next question, of course, is: why don’t they have a weaker side? The answer was simple: because they train so much better and harder. Yet there was another, far broader answer which explained so much more. I was a journalist at the Paralympics, covering the Games for The Times, and it was this that triggered my fascination: it wasn’t just in CP football that Ukraine were good, it was all over the Paralympic Games.

The morning of that football match, Ukraine had already won a gold and a silver in the athletics stadium. Later that day, they would win four medals in the swimming pool. And they had already established themselves as one of the strongest nations in judo.

How was it that Ukraine was doing so well? No one would describe Ukraine as a world sporting superpower, but here in Paralympic sport, they were one of the giants. China were the strongest Paralympic nation and they were followed by another elite group of nations, each of them pretty much as good as the other, Russia, Great Britain — and Ukraine.

I would meet the answer later that day by the Olympic swimming pool. His name is Valerii Sushkevich and he is one of the most inspirational figures in the history Paralympic sport. He is 58 years old and a long way beyond the day when he was competing in these sorts of events; and he is in a wheelchair, as he has been since he was a three-year-old suffering from the polio virus that would ruin his legs. Carefully, and with far too many apologies for his not-quite-perfect English, he explained what had driven him to lead a movement for the disabled in the Ukraine that, he says, ‘is unique in the world.’

When Sushkevich was a young boy in the Soviet Union, there was no such thing as sport for the disabled. Indeed, the disabled were third-class citizens; disabled kids were not allowed to attend

The basic mechanics of playing football with cerebral palsy is that one side of the body is far weaker than the other. But the Ukrainians players are so good, they don’t have a weaker side.

Lyndon Lynch
GB Paralympics football coach

Why Ukraine?
schools with able-bodied children.

‘But my father was very strong,’ he explained. ‘He said: you must be with ordinary boys, you must not have special help, you will go to an ordinary school.’

Because his father was a teacher, he was able to get his way. His father also believed that if doctors were not able to help him, sport was the best way to improve his body. They tried swimming and Sushkevich loved it. On their holidays, they camped near the sea and his father threw him in, and ‘that,’ Sushkevich explained ‘was where I could swim like other boys; that was where I never felt disabled.’

It was here that the seed of the idea was sown. It was his father’s approach to his disability that would drive his own life’s work. He decided that the manner in which his father treated his disability was a gift that he wanted to share with others.

In the last years of the Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev, disabled sport was introduced. Sushkevich loved it; he twice became a national champion. When the USSR disintegrated, he went into politics determined to create more champions for his native Ukraine.

‘In the new spirit of freedom,’ he said, ‘I wanted disability to be a human right.’

It is this concept that inspired the career he would then follow as a politician in Ukraine. In each of its 27 regions, there is now a special centre for sport for the disabled. The idea is to give the disabled as good an opportunity to partake in sport as the able bodied. And an elitist model was formed simultaneously: the different regions compete against each other and the very best disabled athletes then get invited to train at a special national centre for disability sport, in Evaptoria in the Crimea. It is here that Paralympic dreams are made.

Initially, it took time for Sushkevich’s revolution to pay dividends. At the Paralympics in 1996, Ukraine finished 44th on the medal table, but four years later, they were up to 21st, then four years later still they were 6th. And this year, they were fourth.

It is an astonishing story of success and a model that the rest of the world would do well to follow. Success in the Paralympics is not just a result of athletic ability, it is a reflection of a nation’s welfare system and its attitude to disability.

In the UK, the London Games had a motto: Inspire A Generation. In Ukraine, this is an achievement that the much-loved Sushkevich has already pulled off.
This autumn Ukraine will be bringing in two harvests: the usual one which will be measured in so many tons of grain, potatoes, corn, sunflower seeds and other agricultural products. I imagine this harvest will give Ukraine some cause for celebration — the weather has been kind and this year a good deal more land was put to use than last year. The second harvest – the political one — may be the cause of smiles, but these are likely to be weary ones, despite the array of jolly characters taking part in the upcoming elections.

Ukrainians are very creative and many are talented. One can see this from their brilliant idea to dedicate the main squares of all the country’s major cities to a televised mass dance competition, “Maidan’s”. If the central squares are full of dancers they cannot be used for protests. What’s more the competition has no time limit. You could be forgiven for thinking it’s going to go on forever! Or at least until they cancel parliamentary elections.

Dancing and the arts in general have become very closely bound up with politics. It is not just street dancing which has made political protest difficult. In fact, it is probably true to say that Ukrainians prefer singing to dancing. They also love poetry and poets. During Ukraine’s twenty one years of independence, quite a few cultural figures have sat in Parliament, among them famous poets, writers, etc. Even the Ukrainian winner of the Eurovision song contest, Ruslana, served as an MP and included in her tour of office a mini-concert at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. No doubt she believed that her songs would support Ukraine’s efforts to join that organization and to converge with Europe too.

This autumn the main parties competing in the election battle have also selected champions from the ranks of show business and sporting stars. In second place on The Party of Regions’ list of candidates is pop singer Taisiya Povaliy. She has been singing for President Yanukovych since 2004. Singing for former president Viktor Yushchenko, who won in 2004 but lost in 2010, will be Oksana Bilosir, who has already served as an MP and as Minister of Culture. However, Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine party has absolutely no chance of success in the elections. It will simply absorb about one percent of the votes which would otherwise go to the united opposition. In other words, it will benefit the ruling party.
Vitaliy Klichko’s party ‘Udar’ (“Punch”), instead of a singer, has selected one of Ukraine’s most talented writers, Maria Matios, to second its list of candidates. Klichko’s party may well get into Parliament and then Matios will find herself busy with the fate of the nation, as well as her novels, not that I doubt her skill as a politician.

In first and second place on the candidate list of the ‘Sobor’ (“Cathedral”) Party are identical twins, writers, publishers and public figures, Dmitro and Vitaliy Kapranov. Running for the same party is the well-known writer Vasil Shkliar whose novel ‘Black Raven’, about the conflict between Ukrainians and Bolshevik Russians, caused a unprecedented literary furor throughout the country.

Then there is yet another ‘opposition’ group, set up not without the help of the ruling party, called ‘Ukraina Vperiod’ (Forward Ukraine). It is headed by Natalia Korolevska, a one-time activist in Yulia Tymoshenko’s party.

Her stars are the Ukrainian footballer, Andriy Shevchenko, and the actor Ostap Stupka, son of one of Ukraine’s most famous actors, Bogdan Stupka, who died recently. So far Ostap Stupka has kept quiet, but Shevchenko has already announced that his favourite politician is Russian President Putin. So we can assume that, in his political activity, he will be looking towards Russia.

The list of interesting people who are standing in line for a seat in Parliament is endless. There are professional wrestlers, pole-vaulters and Ukraine’s only astronaut who has actually long been an MP – and always on the side of the ruling party, whichever party it is. Evidently, in politics, as in aeronautics, height is everything!

“In politics, as in aeronautics, height is everything!”
Rebels and risk takers

Ukrainian writers have expanded the boundaries of human expression, often at great cost to themselves. Now more than ever they deserve to be studied

by Dr Rory Finnin

The study of literature is, in one sense, a study of process. Words conspiring to turn a memorable phrase, events aligning in peculiar ways to fashion plot from story — such processes are the sine qua non of any literary text. They have sparked the work of the imagination, and the industry of students and scholars, for ages.

Yet in focusing on process, on how writers write and readers read, we can often overlook a more basic, even banal, ‘why?’ Why do we put pen to paper and generate imaginary realities for anonymous readers? Why do we pick up a book and surrender to the conceit of fiction or identify with a lyrical persona who does not exist? One answer is that, in writing or in reading, we seek affirmation of the belief that other worlds exist beyond our own; that these worlds can be conjured and created by us; and that, in lives so often marked by habit and routine, the new is always possible. A sense of this limitless potential is perhaps no more keenly evident than in that moment before the text is born, before metaphors or characters or metres bound across the page, when the writer sets out to say something no one else has said before and to say it in a new way.

I often think of these moments when teaching Ukrainian-language literature, because for centuries to write in Ukrainian — or Yiddish, or Crimean Tatar, or Belarusian — was above all to resolve to represent the world in a new way. Particularly after the mid-nineteenth century, it was largely to defy convention and imperial fashion, often at personal cost; it was to refuse to conform to imperial majorities, often at the expense of wider renown. After all, writers like Olena Telhia or Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi or Mykola Khvylovyi could have devoted themselves to literary careers in the Russian language; writers like Ivan Franko or Bohdan Ihor Antonych or Vasyl Stefanyk could have devoted themselves to literary careers in Polish. Yet for various reasons all of them made the choice to express themselves in an often marginalized, and at times outlawed, language. All of them sought to craft out of the Ukrainian vernacular a literary language of sensitivity and sophistication. As Melville would say, they believed that it was better to risk failing in originality than succeeding in imitation.

Take, for instance, Olha Kobylianska (1863-1942), the ground-breaking Modernist writer and feminist pioneer from Bukovyna, a region in what is today western Ukraine. The daughter of a Ukrainian father and a Polish-German mother — and a relative of the renowned Romantic poet Zacharias Werner — Kobylianska emerged as a writer out of a predominantly German-language intellectual and cultural environment. Her literary luminaries were Goethe, Heine, and E. Marlitt. Yet in the early 1890s, Kobylianska would make what Lesia Ukrainka described as a ‘deliberate choice’ to write in Ukrainian.

Why? Theories abound, most of them reliant on references to and assumptions about Kobylianska’s biography, career and identity. Some argue that she saw an easier path to influence and prominence in the Ukrainian literary context than in the German one; others posit that she was inspired by the patriotic spirit of feminist contemporaries like Nataliia Kobrynska and Sofiia Okunevska, whom she befriended in the 1890s. These theories tend to frame Kobylianska’s choice as first and foremost political or pragmatic.

They often fail to consider a simpler possibility: that the choice was above all an artistic and even serendipitous one. We might say that Kobylianska’s adoption of Ukrainian was not unlike Jackson Pollock’s adoption of sticks, trowels and basting syringes: it fit a distinctive artistic sensibility. It nourished an individual voice and allowed her, as it were, to speak the new.

For Kobylianska, art was truly everything. She was a follower of Nietzsche and fully committed to his philosophy of life affirmation. In her novella Valse Mélancolique, which was published in Lviv in 1898, she explores the relationship between three independent women who reject patriarchal mores and share a home together, living only for art. One of them, Hanna, declares: ‘I am an artist and live according to the rules of an artist, which are more demanding than the rules of a narrow, programmatic person... My field is wide, limitless, and therefore I live the life I do... I look upon everything from an artistic standpoint... Everyone should.’ Hanna then makes a resounding exclamation: ‘We shall not be wives or mothers, but women.’ Bear in mind that Valse Mélancolique predates Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own by over thirty years.

Ukrainian literature is replete with vigorous voices like Kobylianska’s. It is a literature of rebels and risk-takers, patriots and pioneers, writers whose works injected world culture with new euphony and expanded the boundaries of human expression. That many of them also came to be heralded as voices of the Ukrainian people, or even prophets in a national canon, is hugely significant. But it is ultimately secondary. These artists deserve something more than respect for ‘national service’. They deserve our renewed study, in Britain and beyond.
When Ukraine became an independent state more than 20 years ago it attracted hundreds of multinational companies hungry for a new market. That market — one of the most promising emerging markets in Eastern Europe with 45 million inhabitants unused to western ways of consumerism — was a risky one to invest in, but global companies such as McDonalds, Coca-Cola, Nestle and Kraft Foods not only made a profit within Ukraine but also educated staff and customers in the idea of quality, the satisfaction of good value and the art of polite service.

To do that, these companies brought in an entire community of expat professionals to run their local operations. Nowadays, however, a new generation of Ukrainian top managers is taking the lead.

Ukraine is an attractive destination for around a hundred multinational companies headquartered in the United Kingdom that want to expand their operations. Unlike the early years when expat top managers were literally indispensable in setting the local operations up and running, currently around half of British international companies in Ukraine are headed by locals, according to the British Embassy in Ukraine.

Unilever, the world's largest ice-cream maker and the third-largest consumer goods company by revenues, has followed the trend. Having entered the Ukrainian market almost two decades ago, for the first nine years the local office was headed by expats. Since then, Ukrainians have taken charge. 'First we had a Dutch head, then a Brit, then a Russian, and then I was appointed as the general director,' says Vasyliy Bovdilov, head of Unilever in Ukraine. 'As in any company, among the staff there are managers that have necessary potential and fit the position.'

Prior to the appointment in 2002, Bovdilov worked at Unilever for eight years, during which he was also posted to the Unilever multi-country office in Moscow (responsible for Russia, Ukraine and Belarus), a factor which later tipped the balance about his appointment. 'Sometimes [expats] return to their country, leaving local top managers who 'grew up' inside the company to occupy their position,' says Olga Shtil, a senior recruitment consultant at Brain Source International.

Lately, Unilever’s business results have been in an upswing. With established brands like Lipton, Rexona, Dove and Persil the company occupies leading positions in segments of tea, deodorants and homecare goods in Ukraine.

Evaluating the chances of Ukrainian managers in multinational companies, Bovdilov says they have every chance to succeed in a corporate multinational environment.

'It's [due to] the high quality of education, the ability to work hard, the ambition to build a career, and how to get ahead in corporate Ukraine

The multinational companies that bundled into Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union brought their CEOs with them. But now, the tide is turning – and multinationals are turning to Ukrainians to run their businesses

by Maryna Irkliyenko

Ukrainian managers in multinational companies have every chance to succeed in a corporate environment."
peculiarities of Ukrainian character — that’s why more and more companies appoint local heads,’ he says. Ukraine’s office of GlaxoSmithKline, one of the world’s leading pharmaceutical companies, is led by local top manager Andriy Stogniy. Like Bovdilov, he was preceded by an expat — a British national, David Pritchard. Stogniy says he has benefitted greatly from the expertise his British colleague, who was his boss at that time, brought in.

‘I had a great opportunity to learn a lot from him, especially in human resource management, coaching and leadership,’ says Stogniy.

He recalls that his appointment was a lengthy and complicated process which took nearly two years. During this time the company ‘actively invested’ in his professional development; the company’s recent operating results suggest that such investment did pay off. Currently, GSK is one of the top ten pharmaceutical companies in Ukraine, employing more than 300 people who work at their two units — prescription medicine sales and Research & Development division performing clinical trials. This is a result of a rapid growth of company’s operations on Ukrainian market since 2008, when it was registered as a legal entity. Until then the company was operating as a representative office.

Mott MacDonald, a leading multinational engineering company, is still a representative office despite working on local projects since 1992. Some of their most notable projects include the modernization of the gas transportation system and the engineering of bridges. However, ‘We are still restrained by the business environment,’ says Tatyana Chekhet, a country representative for Mott MacDonald. ‘But for Ukraine we always had long-term perspective.’ Mott MacDonald projects are usually financed by international financial institutions, and therefore depend on Ukraine’s accession to the European Union. ‘We still hope for approximation with European Union and in that case infrastructure has to be put in line with European standards,’ said Chekhet.

Chekhet coordinated the company’s projects from the start and was later appointed to head the representative office. ‘Mott MacDonald does not enter a country if they do not have a local person they trust and who knows the market,’ explains Chekhet. Such a strategy is due to the fact that Mott MacDonald is owned by its employees, who believe that local offices are best managed by local people.

Notwithstanding the global tendency towards locals, there are still certain types of international businesses, such as auditing and law firms, that tend to have a larger number of expats than others. ‘In those cases expats are considered as native of that culture and of course their international experience matters, especially when it comes to bringing clients. But this is a peculiarity of the service sphere,’ says Shtil.

On the other hand, there are types of businesses, such as real estate development and retail, where a Ukrainian head is almost a must. A franchise of Mothercare in Ukraine, a children’s clothing store, is owned by British national who picked Ukrainian Natalya Rudichenko to manage it.

‘Experienced business people and well-known brands have clear reasons to appoint local top managers,’ says Rudichenko. Their advantage is rather in having the profound knowledge and experience of Ukraine’s market and the country’s realities, which often become a crucial factor when it comes to finding a right person for the job.

‘Especially in retail, every country’s consumer culture has its own mentality, traditions, and feelings, which can never be fully explored and can only be understood after living for a long time in the country,’ she adds.

Yet, as the most recent trend on Ukraine’s HR market shows, employers are getting less concerned about the candidate’s nationality when making hiring decisions. Some of the latest candidate requests for top positions that Shtil has received were considering local as well as expat candidates equally, since the difference in their qualifications is not an impediment any more. ‘[Employers] no longer want to be restrained by geography,’ she says.

Most notably, as the human resource experts point out, Ukrainian top managers are no longer much cheaper to hire than their foreign counterparts. ‘Expats are still ‘more expensive’ than Ukrainians. But the gap is not as big as it used to be in the beginning of the 2000’s. Since then, Ukrainians have ‘grown up’ in their achievements and their resume experience. Naturally they expect more money,’ says recruiter Shtil. It’s a trend that demonstrates just how far Ukraine has come.

‘Local top managers have a profound knowledge and experience of Ukraine’s market and the country’s realities’

Natalyia Rudichenko
General manager, Mothercare
For a number of expatriates from around the world, Ukraine has become home. They are discovering the country’s numerous business opportunities, adding their expertise to the marketplace and in many cases succeeding in a tough yet lucrative environment.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine’s highly-educated workforce, rich natural resources and developed infrastructure was a highly attractive proposition for Western start ups. Since then the market has developed exponentially, with foreign entrepreneurs finding a new place to work and live.

Agriculture is arguably the most promising sector since Ukraine — one of the richest black soil countries — has long been recognized as one of the best places for agriculture in the world. While some have grand plans of growth, others keep it smaller and more personal, earning money from what is essentially a hobby.

Terry Pickard, 64, was one of the first to spot the hidden potential of Ukraine’s underdeveloped market in the early 1990s. Working for almost two decades with JCB, a leading British manufacturer of excavators, he was the first to bring the famous yellow machines to Ukraine. As soon as the country proclaimed its independence in 1991 Pickard had no doubt it was the right place for him to pursue his hobby of buying and selling property. ‘I’m called one of the founding fathers,’ he says. ‘I started with myself, one person and a car,’ says Pickard, who moved to Ukraine in 1992. ‘When I first came here it was the real wild east.’ But the gamble was worth it. Twenty years on, Pickard Company is one of the three biggest real estate consulting companies in Ukraine with a 300 square meter office in the center of Kyiv, employing 35 people. In 2005, the company became part of NAI Global, a network of independent commercial real estate companies, with offices in 55 countries and now operates under NAI Pickard brand.

When American farmer David Sweere and his son Daniel first visited the country in 1990 to study the local varieties of seeds, they were excited about its farming potential. ‘My father saw a very rich country in Ukraine,’ says Daniel Sweere, 47, who’s now in charge of the company. ‘But he also saw a lot of inefficiencies and it intrigued him to see if American farming systems could be implemented in Ukraine.’

As a result, in 1990 the Sweeres founded a small company bartering diesel fuel for grain that later served as a base for a number of agriculture businesses united under the name Kyiv-Atlantic Group. ‘With the progress that we made in the trading business, we decided to construct our own grain elevator, a feed mill and oil processing plant,’ recalls Sweere.

Over the years, the company has invested about $35 million in their Ukrainian business, and reached $40 million annual turnover. But this isn’t the limit of the Sweere’s entrepreneurial aspirations. Their next goal is to invest around $100 million over the three years into Ukraine’s agriculture through raising money on capital markets.

Yet one doesn’t have to dream big to succeed in Ukraine. Parisian Thierry Vallee’s one-week vacation in Ukraine in 2002 turned out to be a life-changer. Falling in love with the country, he decided to stay for longer. After all, having restaurant business experience, Vallee could easily see that good French cuisine was exactly what Kyiv was lacking.

‘In Kyiv we try to continue the tradition of French food: good salads, meat and desserts,’ explains 48-year-old Vallee, owner of Ile de France restaurant. Even though Ukraine’s business realities are far from rosy, with existing bureaucracy and corruption, Vallee enjoys the challenge. ‘Doing business in Ukraine is not easy, but like we say in France, ‘The fight is interesting’.’

Having worked in Ukraine for more than 20 years, Sweere and Pickard, likewise, are here to stay. There is still simply too much unused potential in the country. ‘In Ukraine there is still, and will be for many years to come, lots of opportunities for new products, ideas (and) proposals,’ says Pickard. ‘In western Europe just about every niche is being filled.’
The rise and rise of Ukraine IT

Foreign software companies are increasingly looking to Ukraine for their development outsourcing. How are the Ukrainian IT businesses coping, and how could they make more of their services?

by James Hydzik

Over the last ten years, IT outsourcing in Ukraine has grown into a billion dollar industry. At the same time, development branches of foreign software companies are also tapping into Ukraine’s increasingly renowned IT talent pool. Getting to this point and — hopefully — reaching the country’s estimated potential of $10 billion in IT outsourcing by the year 2020, has meant overcoming bureaucratic, technical and personnel development issues that affect every level of the industry.

Getting a clear picture on software development in Ukraine was, until very recently, yet another problem for those looking at the sector. On 17th August, the Ukrainian Hi-Tech Initiative released its Exploring Ukraine, IT Outsourcing Industry 2012 report. Feedback has been positive, in part because of the breadth of its coverage. ‘One thing we had noticed was that it’s difficult to find all of the information that a company coming into Ukraine might need in one place,’ says Inna Sergiychuk, the report’s editor. ‘We tried to cover everything from general history, to current market conditions in specific locations, to administrative details.’

The report paints a picture of an industry that has grown steadily despite turmoil elsewhere, and is poised to continue. Except for 2008, the volume of IT outsourcing has grown yearly in Ukraine since 2003, rising ten times in eight years to $1.1 billion. The majority of mid- and large sized companies are more than seven years old, and most new offices are development arms of existing corporations; sector stability is high.

The report also mentions that Ukrainian firms have specialised in big projects that require a large amount of developer input. However, that specialisation places burdens on companies which need to trust their developers to deal not only with code, but also with colleagues and clients.

SoftServe, a leading global provider of software development and technology consulting with its European headquarters in Lviv, faced every corporate growth issue head-on. Taras Vervega, President, Business Development EMEA, points out that ‘there are two problems every IT outsourcing company in Ukraine must solve: first, delivery, and second, internal management.’ SoftServe’s size creates both challenges and advantages, as its size requires managers to lead teams. Extended career paths are available in the company, and Taras explains that technical know-how isn’t enough. ‘We do extensive personality checks to better understand a worker’s motivation, as well as assessing their soft skills.’
Internal management training supplemented by foreign expert advice is a must. Upper-middle management and above are strongly advised to get an MBA, and SoftServe is one of the founding members of the Lviv Business School. These skills are used daily in client and colleague relations as well. ‘Not everyone survives our management training programme, but those who do are excellent managers indeed,’ Taras notes.

Technical education is another factor. While Ukraine’s universities have solved the riddle of how to increase the number of graduates without diluting quality, there is no focus on real-world skills such as working in teams. For this reason, SoftServe created its own education program and after a few months developers have gained the organisational and basic people skills required to collaborate.

The Exploring Ukraine report emphasises the cultural closeness of Ukraine, but the greatest strength of the industry – the forthrightness and creativity of its developers – is something that must be handled with care. Agreeing in clear terms with the developers as the project begins is critical. And although site visits require time and bureaucracy to get visas — for either the UK or Schengen countries — such careful planning and communication brings results.

For instance, Manchester-based usability and user experience experts Sigma created a new user interface for their long-standing client the InterContinental Hotels Group. The resulting interface was so informative yet user-friendly that the ‘Green Engage’ hotel online sustainability system garnered the highest score to date on the Southern Polytechnic State University (Georgia, USA) System Usability Scale. This success was due in part to the close ties between Sigma’s UK and Kharkiv, Ukraine offices.

‘We work extensively with our developers in Kharkiv,’ says Hilary Stephenson, Managing Director of Sigma UK. ‘Communication is great and the time difference between the offices is only two hours.’ Communication during a work in progress is not enough, though, and Hilary notes that a successful project needs early involvement. ‘Bringing the Ukrainian side into defining the specifications is vital, as they need to help set a common vision.’

One emphasis in the Exploring Ukraine report is the sustainability of the country’s IT market. Although IT outsourcing alone could reach up to $10 billion in volume in Ukraine by the year 2020, that is only part of the picture. Ukraine’s increased IT needs already provide a market for British companies. However, doing business in Ukraine, whether for the UK market or within Ukraine itself, inevitably raises questions about how to handle Ukraine’s famous red tape and opaque business practices.

Inna Sergeychuk of the Ukrainian Hi-Tech Initiative recommends that companies coming into the market, whether to set up their own development branches or to find an outsourcing partner, begin by working with one of the larger, more experienced outsourcing firms. ‘Most of the larger companies here are well versed in setting up entire development units, including administration, for outside companies and then handing them over at the end of a set period. This gives the client the time needed to get used to the regulatory environment while also getting the team up and running.’

Derek Mansfield, founder of London-area based Bold Endeavours, explains that though he set up the Ukraine office of his bespoke software development and internet marketing services company in 1999 to facilitate his UK operations, e-marketing in Ukraine has created further opportunities, as well as challenges regarding business practices. Derek has found that a clean hand in business operations can work well in Ukraine. ‘Bold Endeavours has done it the hard way,’ says Derek, ‘but in doing so, we’ve garnered a reputation for value for money, and importantly, within Ukraine, transparency in operation. There are companies here that value our way of doing things, and they are coming to us now.’
The European Centre for a Modern Ukraine (ECFMU) is a new non-governmental organisation in Brussels providing political information and a network for government, opinion leaders, political decision makers and civil society.

A unique “Modern Ukraine” organisation with a Ukrainian perspective, the ECFMU works closely with Ukrainian and European representatives throughout the political, business and cultural spectrum to fulfil Ukraine’s aspirations for European integration.

Visit us here: www.modernukraine.eu
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Follow us on Twitter: @modern_ukraine
The events of the Arab Spring, the ‘Occupy’ movements in major cities and the anti-austerity protests throughout Europe show how citizens around the world are determined to become drivers of social change. The growth of the knowledge economy, the empowerment of people through social media and the emergence of transnational citizens’ networks have given the public an increasingly powerful voice in domestic and foreign affairs.

Ukraine had its own splash of citizens’ power to demand justice and respect for political rights. The 2004 Orange Revolution was an amazing manifestation of active citizens, which later regretfully lead to a growing public disillusionment with the then President Yushchenko and the Orange coalition to deliver democratic reforms and eradicate corruption. Only a few years later the hard-won democratic gains are at risk again. Since 2010 President Yanukovych swiftly consolidated power which has led to a decline in basic democratic freedoms — in the media, political pluralism and freedom of assembly. Today, more than 60 per cent of Ukrainians believe that the country is moving in the wrong direction.

Negative dynamics in Ukraine raise the question of how to ensure that the country returns to a steadier path. In this regard, a vibrant civil society that enables the collective power of its citizens — like that expressed during the Orange Revolution — must manifest itself in day-to-day political life.

At present, Ukrainian civil society as a public space between the family and the state is very narrow. This is due to the post-totalitarian political culture, widespread corruption and elitist nature of Western-funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Civil society implies the existence of independent citizens’ NGOs which consolidate various interests; these can take numerous forms such as membership organizations, charities, think-tanks, neighbourhood associations, informal movements and faith-based groups. In Ukraine, such groups rarely have a true societal foundation.

Despite the growing numbers of registered NGOs — about 71,000 in Ukraine — very few citizens actually participate, volunteer their time or make donations. Less than five per cent of Ukrainians participate in any organisation. Because citizens do not know enough about their local NGOs, they are reluctant to contribute their time or financial resources. Instead they mostly donate money to their fellow citizens in need, supporting churches, monasteries, beggars and...
The connection between NGOs and the private sector is also weak in Ukraine. The growth of a corporate social responsibility agenda, mainly driven by international companies operating there, offers the possibility of partnership and is viewed by the NGOs as a source of sponsorship. Social welfare, education and healthcare are three major areas of corporate support for NGOs, but the majority of companies also view NGOs as inefficient and tend to provide assistance directly to beneficiaries or establish their own corporate foundations.

Both large private foundations and local businesses find it too risky to support civic initiatives that may alienate the state. Such organisations steer clear of getting involved in campaigns regarding issues such as corruption, human rights violations or media censorship. Two of the largest private foundations in Ukraine, Development of Ukraine and Victor Pinchuk Foundation, prefer to focus on softer issues such as healthcare, education and culture, providing direct financial assistance to state institutions or individuals. They do not operate as grant-making foundations and often implement programmes themselves.

The largest international donor to civil society in Ukraine is the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which spent $28 million in 2011. The European Union is the second largest donor, though its programmes amount to approximately EUR 3 million annually for civil society per country. Individual EU members, such as Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany, are also very active in supporting civil society. The Open Society Foundation (OSF) funded by George Soros is also a major funder, with the budget of its local offices around $7.5 million.

All these funds are channelled to numerous local NGOs, who work on various issues including human rights, voter education, environmental protection, European integration, youth engagement, social support to children and the elderly. Western-funded organizations are not anchored in society and constitute a form of NGO-cracy: a system where professional NGO leaders use access to domestic policy-makers and Western donors to influence public policies without having a constituency in society. Many of these organizations employ professionals and experts who try to influence policy decisions but fail to deliver tangible results. Their impact is weak especially in policy areas that challenge the state’s political and economic power.

Because many Western-funded NGOs have failed to overcome the Soviet legacy and to occupy the very narrow public space between the private sphere and the state, the Ukrainian government has carte blanche to exercise maximum power. Selective use of courts to imprison opposition leaders, censorship of the media, corruption, business raids and the use of force against non-violent protests are just some examples of how the country has not fully attained democratic standards. What is striking in Ukraine is that major policy decisions are made without real public debate. A controversial law on languages, pension reform and a new tax code, the extension of the Russian Black Sea Fleet are just a few examples of crucial decisions taken without wider deliberations.

Part of the problem is that the elites in power do not see NGOs as credible counterparts, nor do they consider wider consultations beneficial. Most high-
level government officials have a superior attitude towards NGOs. Knowing their weak societal basis, they believe they are non-representative and do not understand the complexities of political life.

Despite stagnating NGO membership statistics, citizens in Ukraine are increasingly willing to challenge the state. Twenty years of relative media freedom, international mobility, political pluralism and successful public protests have dispelled their fear of the state and encouraged self-expression. Post-Soviet transitions have created societies divided between cynicism and empowered optimism. Whether joining specific campaigns, protesting against the destruction of historic heritage, volunteering for environmental causes or demanding justice for human rights abuses, the empowered part of society will give a new boost to further democratisation.

In 2010 and 2011 Ukraine witnessed an awakening of civil movements that seemed dormant after the Orange Revolution. Two major national movements were related to tax and educational reforms. Among the most vivid examples of massive protest was the 2010 Tax Maidan-II when about 90,000 small and medium-sized business representatives protested against the new tax and labour codes, with partial success. In 2011 representatives of various organizations — including those supporting miners; Chernobyl; Afghan War victims — blocked the adoption of cuts in benefits for these groups.

Later that same year, students and academics protested against reforms in higher education and influenced the legislative process by developing an alternative law with the help of an independent public committee. Smaller but equally successful were regional demonstrations to demand justice and protests to stop the destruction of the historic centre and green public spaces in Kyiv. All these movements were non-political, non-violent and organised by grassroots associations and activists, aiming to protect citizens’ rights.

Most recently, Citizen Initiative has united about 50 NGOs from the regions and the capital, launching a public information campaign ‘Chesno’ (Fair) to monitor the quality of party candidates for the October 2012 parliamentary elections. Based on a public opinion poll the initiative published professional criteria for MPs. The list includes: personal voting in Parliament, respect for human rights, declaration of income and no history of corruption. The activists checked all current deputies for compliance with these criteria and concluded that only two out of 499 MPs comply with public expectations of legislative service.

As the result of an extensive PR campaign, all major political parties agreed to cooperate with the movement during the October elections, with the exception of the ruling Party of Regions. ‘Chesno’ successfully used social media, especially Facebook, to build collective power around the movement and its Facebook page unites over 6,000 followers.

Similar civic movements are gradually becoming part of everyday public life and are expected to grow. A recent poll shows that 55 per cent of Ukrainians anticipate more demonstrations in the future. This growing drive to self-expression provides a window of opportunity for civil society activists, encouraging them to talk to citizens and to act as platforms to formulate their opinions. That is why well-established NGOs who receive funding from the West should turn their attention to common citizens and work with them to increase civic engagement. They should form citizens’ lobbies to advocate for issues that define their agendas. Very often these issues are related to economic rights, city planning, education and other public services.

Ukrainian FEMEN is one of the civic groups that often capture media attention in Ukraine and abroad. The group is a member of the wider international FEMEN movement which acts in many countries: France, Japan, Poland, Canada and Brazil to mention just a few. Since 2008 young Ukrainian female activists have been trying to attract public attention to issues such as gender discrimination, corruption and human trafficking. Uniting around 10 members, the activists create huge publicity due to their nudity. In 2012 they organized around 20 public performances protesting against the sex-industry on the eve of the European Football Championship in Kyiv and most recently against the trial in Russia of the members of Pussy Riot. Their movement is hardly popular in wider Ukrainian society as most Ukrainians disapprove the methods of FEMEN and are unclear as to their real agenda.

In order to ensure Ukraine returns to a steadier path to a democracy, citizens must find ways to be included in shaping the destiny of their country beyond elections. That is why Ukrainian activists seeking to bring change in Ukraine must build social trust, cultivate the culture of public debate and promote the value of this to free and democratic institutions.

As Karl Popper, renowned philosopher and an advocate of open societies pointed out: ‘Democracy may help to preserve freedom but it can never create it if the individual citizens do not care for it.’ Assisting citizens in Ukraine to cherish freedom and embrace their responsibilities in a democratic system of governance is crucial for the further democratic transition of the country. For it will be these citizens, despite all the weaknesses of civil society today, who will decide the future path of Ukraine, just as they decided it in 2004.
Growing up in Lviv in the 1980s in a Ukrainian-speaking family, my older brothers thought it ‘cool’ to speak Russian with their friends. Growing up in the same city in the 1990s I was following a new trend: Ukrainian became ‘cool’. It was the language of the new and exciting journals such as Post-Postup. Old films were being re-dubbed from Russian into their original Ukrainian. Ukrainian was the language of teenagers who were born in the Soviet Union but were shaping their personalities in the independent Ukrainian state, hungry for new thoughts and fresh ideas.

What is interesting is that despite my brothers’ perception of Russian as cool and my perception of Ukrainian as fashionable, all of us were fluent in both languages. So were many young Ukrainians all over the country. But it was not the same story everywhere.

For instance, my little friend from Crimea whom I met at a former pioneer camp was not as comfortable outside the Russian-speaking environment. Why would she be? She had no classes in Ukrainian language in her Sevastopol school. And I, going to a Lviv primary school in 1991, had no compulsory tuition in Russian language. Hypothetically, this could have meant that two little girls who lived in the same country would have been unable to understand each other. Yet in spite of having no formal classes I was fluent in the now-foreign Russian language, when my

“...It is the task of every Ukrainian to popularise their language, to speak it, to write in it, to read it, to live it.”

Discussion around the language bill has missed a vital point – what stands to be lost if young Ukrainians no longer learn Ukrainian?

by Olesya Khromeychuk
Growing up in Lviv in the 1990s, Ukrainian was becoming ‘cool’. It was the language of new and exciting journals and daring newspapers. Old films were being re-dubbed from Russian to their original Ukrainian.”
The ministry of Bishop Borys

Father Borys Gudziak, Rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv and now Bishop Borys, has spent his professional life preaching the message of freedom and dignity for all.

by Andy Hunder, Director of the Ukrainian Institute in London

A top business summit in the heart of London isn’t necessarily a venue where you would expect to find a Ukrainian Catholic priest among the key speakers. But in April this year the Adam Smith Ukrainian Investment Summit — the largest and longest-established investment conference for Ukraine worldwide — invited Bishop Borys Gudziak, a Harvard PhD graduate and Rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University to present in front of 300 key decision-makers from Ukrainian business, financial institutions and government.

‘It was certainly a calculated risk inviting a Catholic priest to address a business forum. The overwhelmingly positive feedback to Bishop Borys’s presentation reassured me that particularly in the cut-
throat environment of Ukrainian business, there is the need for spirituality and moral principles,’ recollects Stephen Butler, Director of Strategy at Adam Smith Conferences.

Bishop Borys spoke to the entrepreneurs about freedom, dignity and trust, a message that he has consistently delivered since launching the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU), a dynamic and distinctive institution of higher education and research, a decade ago in Ukraine.

Gudziak, who last month was elevated to the ecclesiastical rank of a bishop, was in the spotlight in 2010 after a visit from an agent of Ukraine’s Security Service, warning him about illegal students’ protests and encouraging him to sign a letter of cooperation with the spooks, a proposal he turned down. This event is one of a litany of challenges that Bishop Borys and the university have been passionately surmounting in modern day Ukraine.

The picturesque western Ukrainian city where the University is based has a long history of vigorous activities of the secret police. Throughout its rich yet complex history it has been called Lwow, Lemburg, Lvov and today bears the name Lviv. The city has an uninterrupted architectural tradition, much of which wasn’t destroyed. The same, sadly, cannot be said of its people.

In 1939 the city had a population of around 300,000, of which over 30 per cent were Jews, a third Poles and no more than 20 per cent Ukrainian, with Armenians, German speakers and many others all coexisting in the cosmopolitan city. By the end of World War II only 60,000 of those residents remained. Nearly all the Poles were deported; at least 98 per cent of the Jewish population was exterminated by the Nazis; and every tenth Ukrainian deported to a labour camp a year later, where he spent 18 years in imprisonment. He was liberated in 1963 and moved to Rome, later acquiring six affiliates for the University, including a white stucco building in London’s prestigious Holland Park, where UCU’s affiliate in England, the Ukrainian Institute in London, continues to operate today.

The history of UCU stems back to 1928, when the Lviv Theological Academy was founded by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky in Lwow, at the time part of Poland. It was shut down by Soviet authorities in 1944 and its rector, Josyf Slipyj, was sent to a Siberian labour camp a year later, where he spent 18 years in imprisonment. He was liberated in 1963 and moved to Rome, where he was made a cardinal. In 1969 Cardinal Slipyj launched the Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome, later acquiring six affiliates for the University, including a white stucco building in London’s prestigious Holland Park, where UCU’s affiliate in England, the Ukrainian Institute in London, continues to operate today.

UCU has developed strong ties in the UK with institutions like Ampleforth College, Cambridge University Ukrainian Studies, the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain and especially with the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, who recently launched the Ukrainian Catholic Foundation in the UK, a charity specifically targeted at supporting UCU.

What next for Bishop Borys? He is now preparing to relocate to Paris after his recent appointment as Bishop for Ukrainians in France, where he has been given responsibility for the Ukrainian Catholic Church
In Lviv, the ‘city of people, the fabric of people was shred to threads, and is only now being sewn together,’ says Bishop Borys.”

In France, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. As a bishop, Gudziak will now assume a broader role for the whole Church; earlier this month he was appointed one of five bishops on the Church’s permanent Synod. Bishop Borys has also been given an ecumenical and diplomatic assignment: representing the concerns of the Ukrainian Catholic Church with the European Union’s Commission and Parliament in both Brussels and Strasbourg. In terms of ecumenism, his jurisdiction covers Switzerland, where the World Council of Churches, the biggest body of ecumenical Christian activity, is headquartered. In France there is a budding Ukrainian community and a (currently dormant) Ukrainian scientific centre in Sarcelles, on the outskirts of Paris, where the first encyclopaedia on Ukraine was compiled. The Ukrainian centre in Lourdes is also in need of revitalisation. All in all, a lot of new exciting projects to focus on.

And what now for UCU? ‘My role will diminish, but will still be significant,’ Bishop Borys says. Although no official decision has been made, there is a strong likelihood that the new Bishop will take on the role of University President, focussing on strategic advice, with the daily management in the hands of the experienced team in Lviv. In business, a good leader can always be judged on the continuity of organisation after he or she moves on. Based on the past decade in learning from Borys and from each other, the team at UCU, together with their friends and supporters across the globe, are ready to continue the challenging and exhilarating work for the good of the University in Ukraine.

Catholic connections

The Ukrainian Catholic University is at the centre of an educational swap-shop, enabling students from UCU and further afield to immerse themselves in the languages and cultures they are studying

by Megan Hodges

Yorkshire played host to five Ukrainian students in June, when Ampleforth College gave them a unique opportunity to experience British Catholic education, traditions and culture for three weeks, and an immersion setting in which to improve their English language skills.

This initial exchange was a result of an earlier visit to Ampleforth, made in March by senior academic staff from the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU). Dr Volodymyr Turchynovsky and Dr Ihor Boyko came to the UK to understand how some of Britain’s best boarding schools combine the pursuit of academic excellence with spiritual formation and community life. The professors also visited Stonyhurst College and Cambridge University on their fact-finding tour.

The goal of the five students was more straightforward: to absorb the English-speaking environment. Studying English is a priority at UCU, as international visiting professors are commonplace and a command of English broadens the amount of source material students can use in written work or conducting research.

The student exchange, which Ampleforth will continue over the next few years for UCU’s most promising students, will go both ways: Amplefordians in their final years may also go to UCU over the summer months to volunteer at the University’s English language summer school, or to participate in a Ukrainian language and culture course. Along the way, they will also learn about Eastern Christian traditions and spirituality.

Dr Rory Finnin, Head of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Cambridge, plans to visit UCU later this year to explore cooperative programmes with UCU. These would allow students studying Ukrainian to immerse themselves in the culture and language of the country.
Tamara Demidenko, who passed away on 18 August following a three-year battle with cancer, was best known for popularising Ukrainian art from the past century amongst art lovers in the United Kingdom through the art gallery she founded, “Danusha Fine Arts”.

Tamara was born on 7 October 1948 in Kryvyi Rih, a city in the centre of Ukraine and at the heart of the country’s steel industry. She graduated from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv where she received her PhD in Economic Geography, attended the London Institute of Marketing, and completed an MBA at Clayton State University in the US state of Georgia. After moving permanently to the UK in 1983, Tamara worked as a financial consultant in the City of London and facilitated the signing of agreements between British and Soviet companies.

In 1992, she founded the art gallery “Danusha Fine Arts” named for her son, Daniel Shashoua. Thanks to Tamara’s gallery, British art connoisseurs discovered the works of Tatiana Yablonska, Grigory Shishka, Mikhail Kokin, Peter Magro, Andrey Yelanskiy, Panas and Olena Yakovenko and many other contemporary Ukrainian artists. She believed that the language of art connects people, and that every exhibition of paintings by Ukrainian artists she organised promoted friendly relations between Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

In the same vein, she supported the British charity Chernobyl Relief Foundation by donating paintings to raise money for kids affected by the Chernobyl disaster. As well as London exhibitions, Tamara also organised shows in prestigious galleries in Switzerland, the US, the Netherlands and France. In late May 2012 she organised a show for Ukrainian artist Grigoriy Shishka at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The exhibition was a great success but due to poor health Tamara was not able to take part in the opening.

Those who knew Tamara describe her as having a strong character and iron will. She was a people person and could find a common language with anyone. She impressed those she met with her professionalism and knowledge of politics, business and culture, and was a sharp conversationalist. She embraced British society, taking up tennis and even Scottish dancing.

Well travelled and a keen-driver, she often drove to exhibitions in Scotland and throughout mainland Europe in her Volvo. She did not burden people with talk of her illness. In fact news of her death was met with surprise as many of her acquaintances were unaware she was unwell. Her favourite quote was, “Just do it”, and that was what the outside world saw — a confident, beautiful and positive woman getting on with life.
Learning and connecting with Ukraine in London

The Ukrainian Institute in London develops and promotes a greater awareness, understanding and knowledge of Ukrainian history, language, religion, current affairs, economy, literature and culture through educational, professional and networking activities. Located in Holland Park, the Institute is maintained and supported by the Society of St Sophia, a UK registered charity. The Ukrainian Institute is affiliated to the Ukrainian Catholic University, a dynamic and distinctive institution of higher education and research in Ukraine.
We’re football crazy

The travelling England fans that weren’t put off by the negative media of Euro 2012 host Ukraine had a ball

by Mark Perryman

From the mid 1980s to the early 2000s, the media agenda in any build up to a major football tournament was almost entirely dominated by dire predictions of the trouble England fans would cause. Not without good reason: Euro ’88 in Germany, the Italia ’90 World Cup, Euro ’92 in Sweden, the 1998 World Cup in France and Euro 2000 were all marked by serious outbreaks of English hooliganism. The fighting and vandalism only involved a minority of the fans but a town or city where England was due to play became represented as a mad, bad and dangerous place to be. Massed ranks of armour-plated riot cops, snarling dogs on tight leads, water cannons parked up in side streets, bars shut, ‘no vacancies’ signs on every hotel window: what a picture of England abroad. No wonder we were the least welcome guests at any World Cup or European Championship party.

All of this began to change when England hosted Euro ’96. Despite Scotland and Holland being in our group, and a semi-final showdown with Germany, there was next to no trouble. Instead England erupted in a sea of St George Cross flags, singing along to ‘Three Lions on My Shirt’, and welcoming for the most part the fans of the 15 other countries playing over here. For perhaps the first time since the 1966 World Cup Finals (also hosted in England), those supporting England were children and families, women fans, and a growing number of black and Asian fans.

The changes didn’t sink in straight away — there was trouble at France in ’98 — but what was significant about the French tournament was the huge numbers of England fans who travelled, looking to make a holiday of the tournament and wanting to steer clear of any hooliganism. Two years later and England’s behaviour seemed to be moving backwards — the fighting in Brussels and Charleroi was so bad the team could have made history for being the first to be expelled from a tournament for the misbehaviour of their fans if an inept performance against Romania hadn’t meant we were knocked out anyway.

The World Cup in 2002 brought the joyfulness of Euro ’96 back. The Japanese adored these mad English fans with our singing and our flags, invariably stripped to the waist and getting sunburnt. We learned it was more fun to be loved than to be loathed and despite all pessimists in the media this change has more or less continued ever since. At Euro ’04 in Portugal, the World Cup in Germany 2006, we travelled in unprecedented numbers, hundreds of thousands, with scarcely an arrest, an enormous party in tow instead.

Now the media build-up to the tournament follows a different agenda: for South Africa 2010 we were promised muggings, carjackings and a race war. This was despite the country hosting the Cricket and Rugby World Cups: a year before Football’s
Baking hot sunshine, beer at 80p a pint, decent food to suit a budget and an extraordinary history and culture to explore. This is what many will remember from Ukraine during Euro 2012."

World Cup almost 30,000 British Lions Rugby fans travelled to South Africa, with none of these serious crime incidents we were promised occurring. And the football fans didn’t experience anything of the sort either. It was cruel and insulting to misrepresent South Africa in this way, and coloured by the legacy of an imperial mentality.

So for experienced travelling England fans it didn’t come as much of a surprise to see our Euro 2012 hosts, Ukraine, being misrepresented in this way too. Of course Ukraine has significant problems with racism affecting some club sides and particular matches. But when it was seriously suggested that going to Euro 2012 could be life-threatening for our fans, then reporting of an important issue becomes sensationalised out of all sense of proportion. No column inches were given to those black and Asian fans who’d travelled to Dnipropetrovsk in 2009 to see England play and their positive experiences. No account was given to Arsenal, Spurs, Fulham and Everton playing Ukrainian sides in Champions League and Europa League games with no trouble. And when the media started describing Ukrainians as not much better than savages no thought was given to the dismal recent history of depicting Slavic people in this way.

When I appeared on BBC Radio Five and described the coverage as a smear I was treated as if I was covering up for racism. Anything but. The misrepresentation of an entire people, culture and nation in this way does anti-racism no favours at all.

Those who travelled to Ukraine by and large were unaffected by this coverage, and treated it with a degree of contempt. The reasons why the numbers of England fans who went to Donetsk and Kyiv were nothing like the huge crowds who travelled to Portugal in 2004 and Germany in 2006 were more complex.

Firstly the team had performed so badly at World Cup 2010, scraping their way second out of an easy-looking group only to be thrashed 4-1 by Germany in the first knockout phase. Expectations of the team doing well at Euro 2012 could hardly have been lower. Secondly, the recession meant that money is tighter and taking time off a job which might not be secure, less easy. Thirdly, Ukraine is hardly a tourist or business destination which fans are used to travelling to, as Portugal and Germany are.

While these factors put off the mass support, there’s an element amongst England fans who positively revel in the unknown, the challenge of far flung and unfamiliar destinations. The internet has transformed our ability to find cheap routes, means of getting around, budget accommodation. And the more intrepid will find places to eat and drink outside the tourist areas which are cheap too. Baking hot sunshine, beer at 80p a pint, decent food to suit a budget and an extraordinary history and culture to explore, this is what many will remember Ukraine 2012 for.

Could Ukraine have found a way to bypass all the negative coverage and attracted more fans to Euro 2012? Quite possibly, and I would suggest they were spectacularly ill-advised by UEFA not to be prepared for the media onslaught. We worked closely via LondonEnglandFans with the Ukrainian Embassy in Britain, Ukrainian travel writers, journalists and football writers. We’ve done the same ahead of every tournament since Japan 2002. If as fans we’d been asked we would have predicted the kind of negativity Ukraine suffered in the build up. A well-targeted PR campaign aimed at those most likely to travel to Euro 2012 at least a year in advance, selling the country’s strong points — namely the weather, the low cost of food and drink, the sights to see — would have made a considerable difference. At the same time the country needed to have been better prepared in terms of the accommodation and public transport options it could offer: a country without a Westernised tourist industry needed to adapt its undoubted resources to suit the market.

So was it all worth it for Ukraine? It depends what Ukraine was seeking to achieve. The country will not become an overnight tourist destination, although host cities Kyiv and Lviv have immense potential for city breaks. English club teams who draw Ukrainian clubs in the Champions or Europa Leagues may well bring more fans who stay longer. England’s away game in Kyiv on 10th September 2013 could be key in reinforcing the country’s attractiveness for a short city break. And Kyiv should now be a top contender to host a Champions League final too.

But more generally the smears against Ukraine, loaded in the legacy of a Cold War mentality framing a supposed moral and cultural Western superiority have been revealed for what they are, crude over-generalisations. The first former Warsaw Pact nation, with co-hosts Poland, to host an international football tournament of the European Championships’ scale and status has helped to project what Eastern Europe looks and feels like post-1989. This in itself is a considerable achievement. It’s just a shame that neither Ukraine, nor England looked remotely like lifting the trophy at the end of the tournament: a few more years of hurt for the both of us.
Euro 2012: a business boost for Ukraine?

Hosting Euro 2012 put Ukraine in the world spotlight. Can the country conquer its demons and provide a good framework for economic growth?

by Yuri Bender

The feel-good factor in Ukrainian football, emanating from the successful co-hosting of the Euro 2012 football championship in June, carried on through to an autumnal night at Wembley when the national team narrowly failed to achieve a historic victory against England. Coach Oleh Blokhin had coaxed a technically proficient, attractive and steely performance from a new generation of players including Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk duo Roman Zozulya and Yevhen Konoplyanka, achieving a credible 1-1 draw.

But can we expect the same optimism to course through Ukrainian society, the economy and its business outlook? A similar new wave of names and faces is making its way through the often fraught TV talkshows which form the background to the never-ending soap opera of Ukrainian politics. Those jockeying for position within the opposition ahead of parliamentary elections include wealthy industrialist, turned political poster-girl, Natalia Korolevska, who recently recruited former iconic footballer Andriy Shevchenko to her controversial ‘Ukraine-Forward!’ party. Her manifesto includes a more market-run economy with less political interference.

WBC heavyweight boxing champion Vitali Klitschko, currently leader of the ‘Udar’ (Punch) party is also expected to play an increasing role in the country’s future. Klitschko, like Korolevska, is calling for a battle against corruption and introduction of transparency — he has demanded a detailed audit of the $14 billion of state funds spent on Euro 2012 by infrastructure minister and Presidential ally Boris Kolesnikov – and a lowering of taxation to stimulate the economy.

He also calls for the freeing of opposition leaders Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuri Lutsenko, both banned from competing in elections and controversially serving time in prison on what EU leaders believe to be charges to sideline key political rivals. During the football tournament, it was rumoured that allies and backers of President Yanukovych came close to brokering a deal to authorise the release of Ms Tymoshenko, so she could be treated abroad for her deteriorating health. This would have been a huge publicity coup for the Ukrainian government when all the world’s eyes were on Kyiv and Donetsk for the Euros. But having failed to seize that nettle, the perceived absence of a rule of law will remain a major obstacle for both international business and global institutions who would otherwise invest.

‘The negative political image of Ukraine on the international arena worsens Ukraine’s investment climate and may well keep foreign investors from launching new projects in Ukraine,’ says Troika Dialog’s Kyiv-based economist Iryna Piontkivska. But political background is not the biggest issue that sours the investment climate, she says. ‘Corruption, excessive regulation, and a changeable taxation regime also discourage investment activity.’

Despite Ukraine’s improved transportation capacity, following substantial road construction and repairs, she also warns of the need to service a legacy of new debt as a result of the tournament’s huge infrastructure spend, which could impose some short-to-medium-term limitations on public investment growth.

While Euro 2012 helped speed up much-needed investment in infrastructure, which benefited a wide range of businesses and boosted airports, manufacturing and employment, Aziz Unan, fund manager of the Renaissance Ottoman Fund, expects the economy to enter a ‘wait-and-see mode’ up to the October elections, as there seems to be some expectation of a limited currency appreciation after the vote. ‘I personally believe Ukraine is well positioned to become the leading logistics and agriculture hub between Russia and Central and Western Europe,’ says Mr Unan. ‘These are the clear beneficiaries in the long term and a long-awaited land reform may speed up this process.’

This is a view shared by Ms Piontkivska at Troika: ‘From the long-term perspective, the agricultural sector looks as providing potentially the best investment opportunities,’ with one important caveat, ‘providing the government policies are reasonable.’ For the time-being at least, the words of the national anthem which was sung so heartily by Ukraine’s fans at Wembley still ring true: ‘Ukraine is not dead yet!’
It is not often that one is asked to make the first edition of any large cultural event and it is of particular interest, and concern, when this is a large international contemporary art exhibition in a newly formed country on a scale and ambition never attempted before.

Natalia Zabolotna, the charismatic and dynamic head of Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv’s new contemporary Art Centre, slated to become the new National Museum, first approached me about being the Artistic Director of the 1st Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art in August 2011. I had been recommended to her by Joseph Backstein, an advisor to the Kyiv Board and himself the Commissioner of the now established Moscow Biennale; he is now working on its fifth edition for 2013. At this time, although flattered by being approached, I did not really know what to make of this invitation. Could it be a fantastic opportunity to make something new? Or was it a poisoned chalice?

I only finally made up my mind nine months later, once the exhibition was fully realised and I could see how my ideas had taken concrete form. The Best of Times, The Worst of Times. Rebirth and Apocalypse in Contemporary Art, as I soon realised the Biennale should be called, contained around two hundred and fifty works by one hundred artists from across the world (forty of them specially made for the exhibition). It was realised without significant compromise. But it was not an easy ride.

Exhibitions on this scale are rarely simple to put together wherever you make them, and they usually need much more research and preparation than can be crammed into the space of nine months. Thinking up the approach, negotiating loans, organising the transport, designing the graphics and exhibition layout, writing the press releases and devising and writing an extensive catalogue that has the quality of an artwork in itself, all take an inordinate amount of time. That I was up to speed after having successfully completed the 17th Biennale of Sydney in 2010 was of enormous help as was also my broad knowledge of the region, having travelled there extensively in the late 1990s to research the large travelling exhibition After the Wall. Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe 1989-99. I had organised this with Bojana Pejić when I was Director of Moderna Museet, the National Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, Sweden, to show the NEW generation of artists who had emerged in east and central Europe during the decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

But what was decisive for me in deciding to go ahead with the exhibition in Kyiv was the rough, magnificent
beauty of the vast industrial spaces of the Arsenal buildings that would house it. These looked so imposing in their ‘natural’ unconverted state that that I realised that it would be a hell of a challenge to think of putting any art in them that could stand alone and look better itself as a result. For me this challenge was the attraction. There were other practical challenges in the realisation of the exhibition but these pale into significance considering the quality of the exhibition and both Mystetskyi Arsenal’s and the artists’ commitment to it.

When showing contemporary art, the ubiquitous ‘white cube’ too easily generates a miasma of boredom predictability. Spaces that have ‘lived,’ on the other hand, carry a much richer baggage and are indelibly printed with the memories and actions of what had happened in and around them. In Sydney I had installed part of the Biennale I made there in the former cells of one of the first penal colonies as well as in the windy, open sheds of an obsolete shipyard. The Kyiv Arsenal building too was crammed full of impressions and ghosts. Situated directly opposite the glittery, ringing domes of the historic Pechersk Lavra it had once been the site of a nunnery but towards the end of the eighteenth century fortified walls were erected around a new building for the manufacture of munitions. This activity continued there through to the end of Soviet times and, although very large, the building and what went on inside it were shrouded in secrecy. In making this first Biennale here, by throwing open the whole formerly closed property, I realised that I had first to ask the Kyiv ghosts for their help, or at least for their compliance.

Invoking the shades of the past, I wanted the art I chose to exorcise both the present and future. However much we may want to forget or deny it, we have, unavoidably, been formed by what has gone before and for many the past can be a prison that limits their range of vision making them unable to grasp the future. But when looked at critically, the past becomes a resource, even a platform, from which to launch new ideas and possibilities. This was a key idea behind the ‘best’ and the ‘worst’ and fed into the whole exhibition.

In Ukraine, as in many other newly independent republics, the clichéd tropes of post-Soviet reality are too easily projected into contemporary politics, public administration and culture. The whole country, and Kyiv in particular, has been at the crossroads of trade, religion, ideas and ideology since the Megalithic period. Long before the advent of Soviet power, peoples had habitually migrated and settled there, travelling not only from east to west and vice versa, but from north to south and back again. It was only in the Soviet time that borders were closed and the region became a cul-de-sac.

I wanted to reflect, and to an extent recreate, a sense of cultural openness. The aim was to reflect current realities — in the art world as well as in the wider geopolitical and economic sphere to which art, if it is any good, cannot help making some kind of reference. For this reason I laid a particular focus on contemporary art from Asia, especially from the centre and the east, including, alongside established ‘westerners’, three artists from Turkey, four from Kazakhstan, one from Uzbekistan, two from Mongolia, three from India, one from Pakistan, one from Vietnam, fourteen from China, two from Korea, nine from Japan and four from Russia as well as twenty two from Ukraine itself. This enabled me to show how very different aesthetic and cultural traditions were expressed in the present. It also provided a firm platform on which to compare how contemporary artists in Ukraine and Russia had digested Soviet aesthetic ideology alongside artists working in China. From the early 1950s Russian masters had taught Socialist Realism in China and this style came of age during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). In looking at the category of ‘post-revolutionary’ art in China, Mongolia, Vietnam and the former Soviet republics, Ilya and Emila Kabakov’s ironical, multifaceted large installation Monument to a Lost Civilisation 1999 was a key to understanding how good artists created and built on aesthetic autonomy in whatever dire situation they had found themselves.

The title of the Biennale The Best of Times, The Worst of Times echoed the first lines of Charles Dickens A Tale of Two Cities, his novel about the time of the French Revolution. This reference used one historical watershed – the eighteenth century Enlightenment – to throw light on another – the global present. One can argue that with the end of old style communism in 1989-91 (in the West at least), of old style colonialism with the free elections in South Africa in 1994 and with severe cracks appearing in the fabric of neo-Liberal capitalism from 2008 to the present, we are experiencing the end of one political, economic and intellectual cycle without being fully aware of what will come in its place. I wanted to reflect this in the fabric of the exhibition, laying bare historical continuities while flagging up new possibilities for the future.

At the very start I devised four hub ideas that would help inform my subsequent selection of work. The Restless Spirit looked at the way in which we derive strength from beliefs, myths and concepts of the universe that are not governed by material need. In the Name of Order examined how, under the pretext of rationalism, power attempts to dominate culture through the creation of self-serving hierarchies; this is presently as well as historically true. Flesh, the category that excited some Ukrainian politicians the

“Ukraine has been at the crossroads of trade, religion, ideas and ideology since the Megalithic period. I wanted to reflect, and to an extent re-create, a sense of cultural openness.”
most as an exhibition around this theme had just been summarily terminated at the Kyiv Academy, took the human body, its appetites, desires and limitations as its central point. And The Unquiet Dream was focused on necessary and unavoidable nightmares as well as premonitions of disaster, without which we seem unable to change.

As my work progressed these ideas slowly receded and began to merge into the background. The final selection of works was more or less finalised by the end of January. Then came the harrowing process of getting the transport organised, inevitably disrupted by the tragic death of one of the young curators and the serious illness of two other key staff members. At this point lack of experience had a strong impact and there was no expertise, either in the commercial art transport firms that operate in Ukraine or in the staff of the Arsenal in handling such a large and complicated project. The people who worked at the Arsenal could not have been more committed, nicer or enthusiastic and it was this that saw the project through. Also, they were smart enough to adapt quickly even though, at times, the gradient of their learning curve had to be stratospheric.

But as the weeks passed I began to have the distinct feeling that outside the Arsenal no one really believed that the project was going to happen – in spite of the fact that it was under the patronage of the President and enjoyed the backing of the Ministry of Culture. The reason for this seemed to be that it was all happening so quickly and therefore could not possibly take place! This was a strange feeling and was all happening so quickly and therefore could not possibly take place! This was a strange feeling and was all happening so quickly and therefore could not possibly take place! This was a strange feeling and was all happening so quickly and therefore could not possibly take place! This was a strange feeling and was all happening so quickly and therefore could not possibly take place!

The aim of providing an equal platform on which the best artists from Ukraine and the region could be seen in a broad international context certainly worked and the show included established as well as emerging artists. A series of prizes were also awarded for the most significant and popular works. British artist Phyllida Barlow was honoured for her large three part installation and Kusama Yayoi, Song Dong, and Chiharu Shiota, among others, won the ‘people’s vote’ prizes. There was no paradox in two quite senior Ukrainians, the ‘folk art/Constructivist’ sculptor Mykola Malyshko and the Expressionist painter on carpets Andriy Sagaidakovsky, winning the emerging artists’ prizes.

This first Biennale was a considerable tour de force however you looked at it. As a result Ukrainian art has undeniably emerged on the international scene.
History is full of secrets and mysteries, and so is an individual human life. In Anna Shevchenko’s new novel many of them are solved, yet the thrill of secret-chasing isn’t the main raison-d’être of this pacy book. Journeys undertaken by the four protagonists aim at more than just revealing what exactly happened at the Yalta conference in 1945. Europe’s fate matters to them, yet each of the four has a personal drama rooted in the past to come to terms with, as well as a tragedy which unites them.

Tony, who used to mastermind the four friends’ games when they were at school together, summons them, now adults in their 40s, to Waterloo station in London to hand out new assignments. Except it’s not the same four friends any more — it’s three and a new...

A rich life

The First Oligarch
by Michel Terestchenko
Glagoslav Publications, £15

by Rostyslav Khotin

When at the age of 16 one becomes one of the richest men in the world, life might seem boringly comfortable. But that was not the case for Mykhailo Terestchenko (b1886-d1956) who, after the death of his sugar-baron father, inherited one of the biggest industrial empires in Tsarist Russia.

Although the book is a life story of Mykhailo Terestchenko (written by his grandson Michel), readers get to know how Artemiy Terestchenko (Mykhailo’s great-grandfather) founded his sugar empire in the old Cossack capital Glukhiv in northeastern Ukraine during the Napoleonic era. ‘As a real Cossack he had nothing except for his horse,’ the book tells us adding that, ironically, the initial capital for sugar refineries was made by the Terestchenko family from salt. Terestchenko’s salt works still produce salt in eastern Ukraine even now.

Mykhailo went into politics during the First World War and the Russian Revolution. He was an MP in the Russian Duma representing Kyiv and was an opponent of the Russian-style monarchy.

During the upheavals of 1917 Terestchenko was a member of the Provisional All-Russian government, and served as Finance Minister at the age of 30 after the February 1917 revolution. He was an architect of the so-called ‘Borrowing Of Freedom’ when his government borrowed money for rearming the Russian troops on the eastern front which resulted in Russian advance in the summer of 1917. During the war he was Vice-Chairman of the Russian Red Cross and visited the frontlines.

Later Terestchenko served as Foreign Minister in Kerensky’s government and was an enthusiastic supporter of the alliance with Britain and France. He opposed a separate peace deal with Germany. Responsible for collecting compromising material on Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin, Terestchenko exposed Lenin and his party’s close political and financial links with Berlin.

Terestchenko chaired the very last meeting of the Provisional government in the famous Winter Palace in St. Petersburg when Bolsheviks arrested him and his colleagues in what the Soviet historiography kept calling the ‘Great October Socialist Revolution’ but what for Mykhailo was simply a German-sponsored Bolshevik coup.

Shuffling hearts

The Game by A. K. Shevchenko
Headline, £9.99

by Kateryna Khinkulova

History is full of secrets and mysteries, and so is an individual human life. In Anna Shevchenko’s new novel many of them are solved, yet the thrill of secret-chasing isn’t the main raison-d’être of this pacy book. Journeys undertaken by the four protagonists aim at more than just revealing what exactly happened at the Yalta conference in 1945. Europe’s fate matters to them, yet each of the four has a personal drama rooted in the past to come to terms with, as well as a tragedy which unites them.

Tony, who used to mastermind the four friends’ games when they were at school together, summons them, now adults in their 40s, to Waterloo station in London to hand out new assignments. Except it’s not the same four friends any more — it’s three and a new...
player, whose part will prove key in the new game. Are they out to change history or to right wrongs committed 20 years ago?

Zigzagging between narrative voices, as well as between points in history and on the map, the novel switches between London, New York, Crimea and Brussels. World War II, Jewish pogroms and the HIV-epidemic in present-day Ukraine are some of the themes. At times it feels like a crash helmet is required — as well as an encyclopaedic knowledge of modern history — for the twists and turns of the plots, where one never knows when a cold hand will land on a hero’s shoulder: on a dark road in Transdniestria, or by the metro entrance in Paris.

Yet The Game is not a loosely shaken set of dice but a steady narration landmarked with humanising insights — some of which originate in a courtyard in Odessa criss-crossed with washing-lines, while others have a backdrop of a swanky Manhattan apartment. And these insights lead somewhere: a constantly looming question “Can one escape one’s past?” gradually turns into a “Should one..?” as the author gently manoeuvres the characters towards a heart-felt peace. If only European history could be dealt with like this...

One chapter reads like a thriller: imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in Petersburg for several months and expecting a death sentence, Mykhailo was visited in his prison cell by his wife disguised as a translator for a French journalist. She later met Lenin and his right-hand man Leon Trotsky and offered him the family diamond called ‘Terestchenko’ (the second-largest blue diamond in the world at that time). Lenin disagreed and wanted Terestchenko dead but Trotsky secretly made a deal and soon Mykhailo was quietly put in the cattle carriage and sent to the Russian north. He was found unconscious and alone in the closed carriage on the abandoned railway line by locals in Finnish Lapland who saved him. He escaped to Scandinavia and lobbied the West not to help or recognise new Bolshevik authorities in Russia. No wonder then, as book tells us, that Lenin sent hit men to Norway to deal with Terestchenko — but in vain.

The First Oligarch is a fascinating example of how fortunes could change literally overnight and how Mykhailo was able to start a new life from scratch in the West after losing all his enormous wealth. In the West he gained respect in the financial world and was involved in the off-shoring of one of Austria’s biggest banks just before the Nazi Anschluss. Hitler wanted to arrest Terestchenko who escaped from Austria and spent the war years in Portugal and Britain.

During decades of communism, the Terestchenko family was a half-taboo. People knew and remembered them but never publicly discussed them — and definitely not in a positive light. But walking around Kyiv one can count numerous Terestchenko family houses turned into museums with precious family art collections.

The Terestchenko dynasty built hospitals, universities, schools and countless churches all over Ukraine. They also built synagogues and Muslim schools. The beautiful musical Conservatoire right on Kyiv’s main Independence Square was also a gift from the Terestchenkos. No surprise then that the family’s motto was ‘The desire for public benefits’, written on the dynastical blue-and-yellow coat of arms.

Terestchenko had every attribute of a modern oligarch: a business empire, palaces, a villa on the French Riviera, one of the biggest private yachts in the world and even a media outlet (a publishing house for avant-garde writers — prior to the invention of TV). But interestingly, 80 per cent of family revenues went to the philanthropic ‘Terestchenko Fund’, and only 20 per cent were used for private purposes. We don’t know which percentage of their wealth modern oligarchs spend on public benefits but in any case this book is a must-read for every big post-Soviet businessman. With a print run of just 1,000 copies I wonder whether it will be enough for all.
Of all the majestic and exciting cities in Ukraine, none have more to offer than the cultural heart of the country – Lviv. Situated less than 100km from the border with their neighbours to the west, Poland, and with the Carpathian mountains further to the south, the city is rich in history, culture and Ukrainian traditions, yet until recently, has remained fairly unknown as a destination.

However, following its entry on to the wider European stage as a host city for the UEFA Euro2012 championships in June, word is beginning to spread and it is only a matter of time before the gradually increasing stream of curious visitors becomes a deluge of people looking to experience Lviv’s secret charms. With its improved infrastructure, several major recent restoration projects, and a new appetite for tourism, the city’s motto proclaims that Lviv is ‘open to the world’ – and there has never been a better time to visit.

Lviv was given its name by King Danylo Halytsky, who in 1248, gave the city to his son Lev (‘lion’) as a gift to mark his wedding to Princess Konstance of Hungary. Since then, the lion has been a symbol of the city and even the least observant tourist will notice the vast number of lion statues in and around the centre. Following a catastrophic fire in 1527, the city was rebuilt in Renaissance style, designed by Italian architects commissioned by the city council.
The view from Lviv's clocktower

In the main square today, each narrow building has its own distinct character, and the asymmetrical look and style of each facade have somehow masterfully been fitted together, complemented by more recent Austro-Hungarian influences, to give Lviv a unique but clearly European architectural feel — unlike any other city in Ukraine. In fact, over 50% of Ukraine’s UNESCO listed sites are in Lviv’s historical centre including some of its wonderful Catholic and Orthodox churches and cathedrals. Spectacular views of the city can be seen from the top of the clock tower, accessible to the public through the city administration building in the main square, or for the more adventurous, from the ‘High Castle’ – the former site of a fortress a few kilometres walk away (and on top of a rather steep hill).

When you want to take a break from walking and admiring, you are spoilt for choice for places to eat and drink. Local company ‘Fest’ has succeeded in creating a small empire of hugely memorable cafes and bars in which one could happily spend afternoons into evenings being well fed, watered and entertained. Recommended are ‘Kryjivka’, with its Ukrainian patriot army bunker feel, renowned for its honey vodka, live folk music and jovial anti-Russian sentiment; ‘Dim Lehend’ (‘House of Legends’) which boasts five individually themed floors, and on the roof, a flying car (and great views of the square and surrounding areas); and also needing a mention are the ‘Lviv Chocolate Factory’ for its freshly-made treats (try the chocolate and mint tea), ‘Masoch’ fetish cafe, where visitors (always willingly) take punishment from waitresses with whips, and ‘The Gas Lamp’ — a homage to the inventor of the paraffin lamp, housed in the very building where the idea was conceived. As well as Fest cafes, a favourite among locals in ‘Svit Kavy’ (‘World of Coffee’) for its wide range of coffee from around the world, and its selection of delicious cakes to accompany it. Combining culture and dining is ‘Dzega’ — a cafe/bar tucked away at the end of a picturesque cobbled street, with its own contemporary art gallery, and live piano music upstairs.
Once you have a taste for culture, the Opera House might be your next stop, with a weekly programme of classical opera and ballet performances (with ticket prices so reasonable you won't quite believe it).

Not far away is the theatre, and just a few minutes walk across the main avenue ‘Prospekt Svobody’ is the Lviv Art Gallery in Pototsky Palace, and next door, more contemporary exhibitions in the Lviv Art Palace.

Lviv is branding itself as the ‘city of festivals’ and it can feel like something different is being celebrated on a weekly basis – coffee, chocolate, beer, dance, cinema, and at New Year, a doughnut festival takes place next to the huge decorated Christmas tree in front of the opera house. The ‘National Museum of Folk Architecture’ offers a glimpse into the Galician way of life centuries ago, where visitors can walk around a vast collection of faithfully reconstructed traditional wooden houses and a wooden church.

It’s also the place where locals go to celebrate and socialise on special national holidays. And amongst the serene beauty of Lychakyvsky Cemetery you can spend hours looking at the ornate sculptures and headstones which spread out way into the distance.

British visitors will probably be surprised by the number of young people around town sporting the British flag on t-shirts, bags, shoes and jewellery. And while the iconic red, white and blue design has been making its mark on the fashion sense of the locals, the recently established ‘British Club’ offers its customers a distinctly British experience, with an exquisitely renovated bar and function room (complete with paintings of Churchill and Her Majesty The Queen hanging proudly on the walls) which can be hired for private and corporate events (with adjoining luxury apartments also available for rent).

In addition, on the ground floor, the club's own art gallery (free admission to the public) showcases the work of local artists.

Getting to and from Lviv can take some planning. With no direct flights from London, it may well be worth tying in a trip to another city en route (Krakow, Vienna, or Kyiv for example). However, this makes it all the more satisfying when you get there, and the city has maintained a more ‘untouched’ feeling than other popular cities in central and eastern Europe. New Year, Orthodox Christmas (7th January) and Easter are particularly interesting times of year to visit. Ukrainian families and friends in Lviv take every opportunity to dress in their traditional embroidered shirts and dresses, and head to church then home for
a celebratory feast. And, of course, they know how to enjoy themselves in town after their religious duties have been observed!

To find out what’s on in Lviv, and to get more of a taste for what Lviv city life is like, the local magazine Lviv Today’s website and recently launched ‘Lviv Alive’ have an abundance of listings and articles to help whet your appetite. Lviv stands ready and waiting, open to the world to finally be discovered for the jewel of a city that it is. So, what are you waiting for...?

"The lion has been the symbol of Lviv since 1248, and even the least observant tourist will notice the vast number of lion statues around the centre."

Andrew Lewis worked as editor for Lviv Today magazine, and as Head English Teacher at the Ukrainian Catholic University’s language school ‘Language Express’ in Lviv from 2010-2012.
Baltic’s unassuming entrance doesn’t prepare you for the vast, barn-like interior of the restaurant studded with huge ceiling fans; it’s an area which lies beyond a softly-lit bar tantalisingly stocked with every flavour of vodka you could possibly dream of and some that you couldn’t, too. Shown to your table, the airy space creates a sense of occasion — and expectation.

A basket of bread (pumpkin and challah) was immediately delivered to the table, along with butter, gherkins and a nice little pot of beetroot stuff. The menu is Eastern European, with a leaning towards Polish; blinis and dumplings have their own space on the page. While dithering over the menu, trying to pick the most Ukrainian dishes possible, we observe the ceiling fans; while they must bring a welcome breeze in the summer, they are whirring so fast they threaten to fly off their moorings at any moment. The conference centre-ish chairs are appropriate for the lunchtime crowd who are all business, and I imagine the plumage of evening customers lessens the effect.

I started with blinis with marinated herring, and got two large light and fluffy clouds, as they should be. The herring was saturated rather than marinated but the few thin slices of apple added a bit of crunch.

S’s golonka salad, which married cucumber, radish, kohlrabi and capers to the ham hock, was delicious. ‘Perfect: salty, meaty, crunchy,’ was S’s verdict.

M’s barszcz was the clear, consomméd sort, and after a spoonful I suffered from food envy. It perfectly balanced the rich, sweet earthy taste of beets with some very good beef stock.

Instead of the main courses — which looked tempting but also as though they might lead to head-nodding over our desks — we opted for more starters. I chose kaszanka, S. veal and pork dumplings; and M. pierogi. My kaszanka, a potato pancake with some soft apple and lots of soft onion topped with black sausage, was good. S’s dumplings (‘Siberian pelmeni’) were tasty, and swimming in melted butter — the starter portion was quite enough (15 dumplings, the main containing 25). Our side dish of beetroot was delicious, while a buckwheat side was satisfying in its combination of malty bitterness. A little more bacon, very crispy, would make it perfect.

We never tried any of the vodkas, being business-like lunchtime customers. I’m sure they are good, and the demi-johns behind the bar don’t look like they have much time to gather dust. I also think that this sort of food is much better served with a sharpener and rather regretted not having even a snifter when I waddled back to the office.

There were plenty of obliging and friendly staff for the tables that were occupied. Somehow time flew and we had to rush off without pudding. Looking at the list, I know which I would have chosen — the homemade sorbet, which comes in blueberry, apricot or plum flavour, and is served with a shot of frozen vodka. It doesn’t count as drink if it is part of a dish, does it?
In the middle ages, Lviv was conveniently built on the crossroads of the trade routes between Europe and Asia. Over the centuries Lviv was the territory of intersection of not only financial interests, but also languages, traditions and cultures... So when in 2009 in the very centre of so called Austrian Lviv, on 18 Nalyvayka Street, the British Club appeared, it all made historical sense. The British Club is not only a comfortable international venue for business meetings, but also a united hub of culture and art.

Gary Bowman, founder and owner of the British Club, is of Ukrainian origin and a patron of the arts. He lives in two cities — London and Lviv — and is ideally placed to coordinate and establish economic, cultural, social, educational and tourism links between Ukraine and Great Britain. During the last three years he has successfully run an art gallery within the Club, establishing contacts between Ukrainian and British cultures.

This year the British Club building will celebrate its centenary. Under Gary Bowman’s direction the building has been preserved, leaving its period features intact. Stone has been carefully restored and all authentic details have been conserved: the gratings, the staircase, tiles and the plaster relief on the walls and ceilings. Meanwhile, lost original plasterwork was replaced by appropriate copies. The British Club marries the style and traditions of Halych living with classic British comfort.

For business, the British Club has cozy meeting rooms and a well-equipped conference hall. All the furnishings are antique, or close substitutes. The drawing room and hall (available for receptions) are decorated with the Union Jack and portraits of legendary Brits such as Her Majesty the Queen with the Duke of Edinburgh, Winston Churchill and Diana, Princess of Wales and also traditional British icons such as red-uniformed royal guardsmen in their famous bear hats. Here, participants of VIP meetings, charitable balls and auctions, seminars, lectures, concerts and youth parties can immerse themselves in the classic atmosphere of British culture. Observant guests may notice the showcasing of cats (a hobby of the owner, who collects cat statuettes from all over the world).

Serviced apartments are located on the upper floors of the British Club. Its central location makes these especially alluring for business people and tourists; that’s why the Club has already been a Lviv base to diplomats, professionals, representatives of the British aristocracy, artists and writers. Combining democratic comfort with romantic views of the roofs and towers of old Lviv, every room is equipped with a kitchen, although breakfast (traditional English or Halych cuisine) is included. For sophistication in one of Ukraine’s most elegant cities, the British Club is the choice of the discerning.
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