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Ukraine

# Political Information on Ukraine on 27 October 2014

- Debate - 2022 - Ukraine -

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**Below is a short note on the first results of the parliamentary elections of 26 October.**

**There then follows an article by Alexandr Volodarsky, a Ukrainian anarchist who is a native of Luhansk, a city which is at present occupied city by militias armed by Russia, and who took part in the battles of the Maidan. This article dates from the beginning of July. I have accompanied it by notes, either to update or to add elements of reflection or information. These notes naturally reflect my point of view and not necessarily that of the author. V.P.**

## **A few quick lessons from the Ukrainian parliamentary elections**

1) The count is not finished, but the turnout is down compared to the presidential election in May this year: 53.27 per cent (taking into account that the official figure is proportional to all those on the electoral roll, including those in the South-East and in Crimea, who were unable to vote). In May, the turnout was quite high for Ukraine, no doubt because of the feeling of national defence associated with the fact of voting and because Poroshenko was not yet in power and gave some hope.

Now he is, and a "political offer" that was quite largely oligarchic, whereas the Maidan aimed at the destruction of the oligarchy, goes far to explain that discontent was this time much less constrained by the feeling, which remains, of national defence.

Participation is higher in the West, which is quite classic: 70 per cent in Lviv oblast, 68.3 in Ternopil, 64 in Ivano-Frankivsk, 65 in Volhynia, 55.7 in Kyiv; it falls to 39.5 per cent in Odessa. Donbass oblast is at 32.5 per cent and so is Luhansk, which is relatively high when we take into account the prohibition on voting imposed by the "separatists": the majority of registered voters were not able to vote.

2) The result of the supporters of incumbent President Poroshenko is bad compared to the forecasts. With 21.45 per cent of votes cast, the "Poroshenko Bloc" comes in just behind the "Popular Front" coalition of Turchynov, Yatseniuk and Avakov (president of the outgoing Parliament, Prime Minister, and Minister of the Interior respectively) with 21.82 per cent, which comprises all the forces that took power after the flight of Yanukovych, apart from, precisely, Poroshenko (and the Svoboda party); this can be seen as a serious symbolic failure, attesting to a rapid and quite understandable erosion...

3) Although the "Popular Front" can boast of having as many or slightly more votes than the " Poroshenko Bloc", it appears however as an addition of forces, each of which is just as contested and disappointing as the others. The fact that it has 10 per cent more than the polls had indicated appears to be a great success, but it is primarily an expression of distrust in Poroshenko and of a kind of manoeuvre of the electorate which, even while voting for not very appealing parties, did not want to concentrate all powers in any one of them.

The "Opposition Bloc", coming from the former Party of Regions, is at 9.73 per cent and the KPU (Communist Party), whose banning by the "Nazis" was recently announced for the umpteenth time by the "communist resistance" (if we can call it that!) blogosphere is at 3.9 per cent; therefore the forces that were in power until February have 13.66 per

cent, a vote which has little ideological content but is an expression of the slowness of the old clientele to reclassify themselves (it is still they who are concerned by the biggest case of vote-buying in this election, in Kirovograd ...).

Yulia Tymoshenko's Baktivshchyna ("Fatherland"), with 5.66 per cent, is lastingly marginalized and the Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko, which was being given 15-20 per cent by the polls and looked as if it was going to pick up Svoboda's vote, has only won 7.39 per cent.

Svoboda is below 5 per cent (4.72). Its collapse is even more pronounced in its historic stronghold of Galicia than elsewhere: it seems that the party will only keep 5 MPs, elected in constituencies by majority vote, of whom only two in Galicia. (50 per cent of the Rada is elected in this way, the other half proportionally, with a threshold of 5 per cent). Pravy Sector is at 1.87 per cent, but gets two deputies through this system, including its leader Yarosh in Dnipropetrovsk, although he is far from having won a majority of votes.

Naturally the blogosphere, agitated by the "Ukrainian Nazis", adds up the votes of Svoboda, Pravy Sector and the Radical Party (whose political nature is different, it is a mixture of demagoguery, nationalism and peasant populism), and still others, in order to say that with some 15 per cent of the vote or more, according to them, "the Nazis" multiply tenfold their score compared to the presidential election (1.6 per cent for Tiahnybok of Svoboda and Yarosh of Pravy Sector, combined!), which had upset many of them because it contradicted their delusional propaganda, and which up to now they had avoided talking about.

In fact, the scores of Svoboda and Pravy Sector are unsurprising; they correspond in the circumstances of the legislative elections to their presidential results and illustrate this political reality: the far right in Ukraine has not been strengthened but weakened by the Maidan movement and the fall of Yanukovich, having the upper hand only in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts with Russian help.

But more generally, the elections express weariness, rejection or disappointment with regard to almost all the political forces that stood.

4) The exception is Samopomich with 11.12 per cent of the vote, the only really victorious force in this election. Samopomich means something like "let us organize ourselves," best translated in English by the term "self-help".

This party was formed this spring by the mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovyi, hostile from the beginning to the rise of Svoboda in his region (Svoboda had conquered the majority in Galicia, but not in Lviv, hence the mobilizations against the administration appointed by Svoboda). On a programme that could be described as democratic and cooperative, it is an organization that relies on neighbourhood committees and sectors of the Uniate Church which are hostile to Svoboda and to it being taken over by ultranationalists.

But in fact, what gave Samopomich a real boost was the decision taken by "Semen Semenchenko" the pseudonym of the leader of the Donbass Battalion (a native of Donetsk, he wants to protect his family) to support the party and to put forward in the elections candidates coming from his battalion.

Semenchenko, who is hospitalized for treatment of war wounds, clashed severely with the government at the end of August and the beginning of September, advocating the use of volunteers rather than conscription (where those who dodge the draft give rise to waves of protest), demanding weapons and food for the volunteers and accusing the government of abandoning them, demanding the resignation of the Minister of Defence. In fact, his "Donbass battalion", the majority of whose recruits seem to come from south-eastern Ukraine, was largely abandoned and horribly massacred by Russian forces, just before the signing of a cease-fire, in the Ilovaisk pocket (it seems that photographs of victims of the massacres have been circulating on the "communist resistance" blogosphere and the

far right, to illustrate the "genocide committed against Russian-speakers" – it should be pointed out that the Donbass battalion is perfectly "Russian-speaking"!).

This battalion was precisely the principal formation of armed volunteers to be to be in practice not controlled by either the Ministry of Defence or the Ukrainian far right, or both. Needless to say, the blogosphere mentioned above was particularly well supplied with "information" making it into a kind of "SS division": such "information" is necessary for the non-understanding of what is really happening, and therefore the internationalist non-mobilization. It is therefore likely that in adding up the votes of "Nazis", the neo-Stalinist and neo-fascist blogosphere accounts in Samopomich so as to be close to 25 per cent!

Of course, there is no question of idealizing either the Donbass battalion or Samopomich, but of analyzing the political facts: the only significant political success of these elections is one that combines a commitment to national defence, contestation of the present government and refusal of the far right.

## Highly significant: Samopomich comes top of the poll in Kyiv.

Moreover, the political forces of the radical left, which the article below from Alexandr Volodarsky deals with, was not able to field candidates. There is therefore a gaping political vacuum, and the various "phenomena" such as Samopomich, but also Lyashko, and partly before him Svoboda, and even earlier Tymoshenko and Natalia Vitrenko, if you go back twenty years, bear witness in their fashion to this vacuum. Furthermore, it is not enough to take note of the existence of this vacuum in order to fill it!

Another interesting indication is given by the election, by an absolute majority in his constituency, of one of the very few independent candidates, without a sponsor, an established party or financial means: Volodomyr Parasiuk, who on the Maidan in Kyiv, by a decisive intervention, demolished the manoeuvre of the three party leaders of Baktivshchyna, Udar and Svoboda, coordinated with the German, French and Polish foreign ministers, to form a national unity government, maintaining Yanukovych in power. Very popular for this historic role, he was wounded and captured, without his real identity being discovered, during the terrible massacre of Ilovaisk at the beginning of September. In the hands of Russian military intelligence, who did not identify him, he was exchanged for separatist prisoners. He has just, all alone, won 54 per cent of the vote in a territory of Western Galicia.

We cannot at all say what will become of him politically, how he will turn out. But men of his calibre would have their place in a movement of emancipation, in order to drive out all the oligarchs!

## The Ukrainian left torn between Maidan and Anti-Maidan

Alexandr Volodarsky

**[The extensive notes and comments by Vincent Pr sumey are published on his blog as a separate article. We are publishing them as conventional footnotes in order to make it easier for our readers to find them via the footnote link.]**

The profound divisions between the various protagonists in Ukrainian politics have also affected the radical left. The fracture, which has its roots in the differing interpretations of the Soviet experience, was manifested in all its magnitude when the Maidan and Anti-Maidan movements led to the creation of the "people's republics" in the Donbass. [1] Today, any unity of the left, against the background of this bloody war, seems impossible. [2]

The Maidan movement has completely changed the previous relationships of forces in the political life of Ukraine. Many key players have left the stage, and others who were only minor pawns have become the kings of the stage. Parties that were previously outsiders, such as the "Oleg Lyashko Bloc" [now the Radical Party] and "Solidarity" [renamed the "Petro Poroshenko Bloc"] are currently leading in the polls. The influence of the "Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc," which had in reality taken power after the Maidan, but lost it in the course of the presidential election, has collapsed. Svoboda has lost its image as the most radical player in parliamentary politics and no longer has the possibility of repeating in the general election its success of 2012, when it won more than 10 per cent. The Party of Regions has disintegrated and fallen into a coma, its members actively supporting the separatist movements in South-Eastern Ukraine, or seeking to forget their past by attaching themselves to less discredited political forces. Vitaliy Klychko, who had appeared as the most likely candidate for the presidency, is now mayor of Kiev and will hardly be able to rise beyond that. [3]

The breaks in continuity do not only concern the main political forces, but also those, more marginal, about which the great masses have little information. This should not be underestimated and it is necessary to consider it carefully. Pravy Sektor, although not at all having received any broad support in society (it is stagnating at one per cent), has become a major media phenomenon and played a role of catalyst in the passage of Maidan from the peaceful period to that of street fighting. [4] The core of this movement is made up of far-right organizations which, compared to a larger force like Svoboda, seemed up to then to be small sects condemned to political death. Similarly, the far-right monarchist and pro-Russian organizations in eastern Ukraine, restricted until then to a narrow circle, have become an important factor, which can be described as the key factor, in the very formation of the separatist movement. [5] The small "Republic of Donetsk" organization, which had existed since the mid-2000s primarily in cyberspace, is now witnessing a life-size incarnation of its fantasies. Thus, even political sects of a few hundred, or even a few dozen activists, can in certain circumstances influence the masses and modify radically the political situation.

The organizations of the Ukrainian far left have also been very much shaken up by recent events. Today they play a secondary role and their voice has difficulty in making itself heard against a background noise which is predominantly on the right; but with rising social tensions, left orientations can reduce the relative weight of the nationalists, or even marginalize them, in the coming protests to come. But if the pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian right-wing forces have logically found their place on opposite sides of the barricade, according to their national and linguistic preferences, on the left the processes that are under way are more complex. The principal line of division flows from the relative positions on the USSR, which from being a historical and theoretical question, has turned into a subject of burning topicality.

## Red Maidan and black Maidan

The Left Opposition, which brings together democratic socialists [6] and Trotskyists, took part in the Maidan in Kiev from the first days. [7] They came down to the square with Euro-socialist slogans, brandishing a red flag with EU colours. [8] Also present on the Maidan were the anarchists, the most active organization being Terra Libera, which is eco-anarchist, associated with activists from all the organizations, and with the left artists of the Khudrad union and the student union Direct Action. Because of the symbols that they used, skirmishes occurred between them and Pravy Sektor, which was still little known. The left activists from various groups were able to assert their presence, not so much on the square as in occupied buildings; the students operated a film library, where meetings were held and where the left press was available. Although we cannot say that in Kiev these activists imposed themselves as

an integral part of the movement with their full political identity, we cannot say either that there was no left on the Maidan, or that it was "completely expelled." The anarcho-syndicalists of the Autonomous Workers Union of Kiev had initially taken a neutral stance towards the Maidan because they did not see the possibility of having an effective influence on the movement in the conditions of hegemony of the right, but they eventually gave it their support when Yanukovich passed the January 16 laws against the right to demonstrate and the right of assembly. For its part, the Kharkov cell of this organization took part from the beginning in the Kharkov Maidan, in which the influence of the far right remained very much a minority and where they could develop without obstacles, with their symbols, an orientation centred on social issues.

From the beginning of the fighting on Hrushevsky Street, many left and anarchist activists took part in humanitarian actions and it was a group of anarchists and left-liberals who organized the "Hospital Brigade", which intervened in the hospitals to prohibit the removal of the wounded by the forces of repression. The activists of Direct Action stepped up to the forefront on December 1, initiating the formation of the First Aid Brigade. Many of them found themselves on the front line, either as doctors and nurses or directly in the fighting. One of the tanks was burned by anarchists. The threats from the armed formations of the far right prevented us from going so far as to explicitly form an anarchist century, which would also have drawn in the ultras of Arsenal football club, who, unlike other supporters, defined themselves as "anti-racist". Anarchists, together with activists of the student movement, managed to take their small revenge [on Pravy Sector] following the storming of the Ministry of Education. Access to the building by activists of Svoboda and Pravy Sector was forbidden [9], and a series of demands was sent to the new Minister of Education, who could not get into his ministry as long as he had not signed. Some of the participants in the action felt this success to be a bit doubtful, because the choice of Sergey Kvit [Serhiy Kvit], because of his far-right past, was not acceptable. Despite the pressure of the anarchists, the professional "student leaders" were able to avoid an escalation of the conflict, preferring to work with the minister.

We must also recognize the role of the left nationalists of Autonomous Resistance. Until quite recently this organization was closely associated with Svoboda and more particularly with one of its leaders, Yuri Mikhalchishin. But a conflict opened up between the students and the teacher and Autonomous Resistance went into opposition to the influence of Svoboda in Western Ukraine. Part of the left saw Autonomous Resistance as a possible ally, another part kept its distance, since they still use a nationalist and conservative rhetoric. We must not underestimate its role in the Lviv Maidan, which was opposed not only to the Party of Regions, in power at the national level, but also to the local Svoboda government. Autonomous Resistance took an active part in the "night of anger," a series of attacks against the buildings of the Ministry of Interior Security Services (SBU) and the Chancery [in Lviv]. [10]

## The Anti-Maidan

The only significant left formation to have opposed the Maidan from beginning to end is Borotba, although its position actually evolved somewhat. [11] In November and December [2013] Borotba criticized the Maidan, but at the same time taking its distance from the Anti-Maidan (among other things they published a resolution for the formation of a Krasny Sector [Red Sector], which had only a virtual existence and claimed responsibility for burning some cars in Kiev). [12] With the radicalization of the situation, Borotba increasingly swung over to the side of the Anti-Maidan, described as "anti-fascist forces." At the end of February and the beginning of March [2014] Borotba demonstrated side by side with the pro-Russians of Oplot and Slav Unity, in Kharkov and Odessa. Furthermore, Borotba collaborates with the Communist Party of Ukraine, which for a long time has never been considered by radical activists as being in any way on the left. [13], fighting the Gestapo...

More seriously, the doings of the KPU (and more secondarily of Borotba, whose importance resides especially in its reputation with international "leftism") enable the Ukrainian government and the Right to launch attacks against "communism" and "socialism" which can rebound against, or especially be directed against, social struggles.]]

A serious and violent confrontation between left activists (even though each side denies to the other the right to call itself "left"), between supporters and opponents of Maidan, was triggered in March, starting from the occupation of the regional administration building in Kharkov . [14] The pro-Russians and Borotba, together, beat up local Euromaidan activists who had barricaded themselves inside the building, also hitting those who did not put up any resistance. Among their victims were anarchists, including the famous writer Serhiy Zhadan, who was seriously injured. Declaring on many occasions its support for the Anti-Maidan, Borotba included its explicitly right-wing components. Describing the Kiev regime as a "fascist junta", Borotba called for a "broad anti-fascist front." This broad front materialized in Odessa, where Borotba teamed up with Rodina and Slav Unity, two organizations that Borotba had denounced in its time for Russian nationalism. [15]

## A major fracture

Following the events of Kharkov, various left and anarchist organizations published an open letter taking their distance from Borotba (16). [16] The open wound was aggravated by the tragic events of the House of Unions in Odessa [17]: although some people sympathized with Borotba, others accused it of direct support to armed provocateurs [in the first phase of the events of 2 May] and attributed part of the responsibility for what happened to the leader of Borotba in Odessa, Aleksy Albu. However, during the first phase of the Maidan, the Odessa branch of Borotba had conducted joint activities with the local cell of Autonomous Resistance, without worrying about its Ukrainian nationalism. It is therefore not correct to simply talk about "pro-Russian" or "pro-Ukrainian" sympathies to explain this division, because the dividing line is not based on the national aspect.

This fault line has, moreover, an international character. In Germany we have seen activists taking action with the "Ribbon of St. George" and waving Russian flags, and others attempting to block such actions. There is no unity in the ranks of the principal left parties: thus, in Die Linke there are opposed positions, ranging from support for the "people's republics" of Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR) to an attitude fiercely critical of them. Rote Hilfe, an organization dedicated to helping political prisoners and victims of the far right, initially raised money for Borotba but then stopped doing so under the influence of the anarchists. Analogous tendencies can be observed in the left forces in Poland, Spain, Sweden, France, England and practically everywhere else in the world. We find in Russia this division between those who support the DPR and LPR and those who condemn them outright. [18]

## (It is not) our war

The resolution "Stop the war in Ukraine", adopted at the beginning of June at a conference held in the Belarusian capital Minsk, expressed through the blur of its formulations two antagonistic positions simultaneously, giving rise to different public interpretations by its authors. On the Russian left site Rabkor we can read an interesting debate between Denis Denisov (of the Left Opposition) and the editorial group of the site. The first sees in the Minsk resolution a call to lay down arms, addressing both the Ukrainian army and its opponents. The editors of the site see a call for the capitulation of the Kiev government and the recognition of the DPR (19). [19]

The manifesto of the anarchists, entitled "War on War" leaves less room for various interpretations and has received the support of a number of leftist and libertarian organizations from various parts of the world. In this document the regimes of the DPR and LPR are characterized as reactionary, and as oppressors who are consciously threatening the populations of the two regions, at the same time as are denounced the potential threats coming from the Ukrainian government and from the right which is receiving arms. The solution of the conflict must be based on the development of a movement of workers which starts from below.

A similar conception - condemnation of the far right in the two camps, support for workers' movements and for the unions, affirmation of the discourse putting the emphasis on social issues as a means of defence against the war - is also formulated by the Left Opposition. [20]

# After the Maidan

Despite these many problems, after the Maidan the political activity of the left has not ended, and has even intensified. The Autonomous Workers' Union (AWU) of Kiev frequently organizes actions against the present government and the authorities of the city. An anarchist demonstration on May 1 was attended by hundreds of people, although it had to change the assembly point at the last minute for security reasons. Such events were also held in Kharkov and Zhitomir.

The Kharkov AWU is actively engaged in supporting refugees. In the manner of European anarchists, they have occupied a municipal building that had been abandoned for several years and turned it into a social centre. The refugees who were forced to abandon Slovyansk have organized there independently, along with the anarchists. The local authorities are making threats of eviction, but are not willing to find a place for the refugees.

The representatives of the Left Opposition participated in the municipal elections in Kiev, and although they did not obtain significant results, they continue to act for a presence of the left in the parliamentary arena, now increasingly deserted. With this objective they have created the "Social Revolutionary Assembly", which brings together union activists and "left intellectuals" who want to find a point of support in real politics.

Borotba has chosen the path of integration into the structures of the "people's republics". The leader of this movement, Sergey Kirichuk, is at present in Germany, where he is seeking refugee status. He is acting there in close liaison with "anti-imperialist" left groups, especially those who support the "Monday demonstrations for peace." Part of the leadership of Borotba has transferred to Crimea, while the rank-and-file members have remained in their respective regions, where some of them have been arrested by the security services and the police.

We can say with certainty that in Ukraine there will be no more "left unity". The heirs of the Soviet political tradition and their opponents are now divided not only by their historical memory, but by still fresh blood, which could even flow more abundantly, as the conflict is far from over.

*This article was first published on the [Russkaya Planeta](#) web site, 10 July, 2014.*

*Translated from Russian to Italian by [Andrea Ferrario](#), 24 October 2014, on [Focus Ukraina](#).*

*Translated from Italian to French by [Vincent Pr sumey](#), 26 October 2014.*

*Translated from French to English by **International Viewpoint**, 28 December 2014.*

PS:

*From [Vincent Pr sumey's blog](#). Translated by **International Viewpoint**.*



[1] The main thesis of Alexandr Volodarsky is this: it is not in the beginning national affinities, pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian, which explain the positions taken by some in favour of the former and others in favour of the latter, but the relation to the "Soviet" past.

The currents for whom the USSR was more or less "socialist" and who think that its collapse is the only cause of the decline in the living standards of the broad masses, tend to see in Russia today, even when they admit more or less that its society is capitalist and that it has a police and oligarchic state, a sort of continuation of that valorized past. We find also the idea that the enclaves of national minorities which have been manipulated by Russia, indeed occupied by it (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria) or which could be (Gagauzia), as well as Crimea which is perceived as fundamentally Russian, and on condition of crushing those of their inhabitants who are opposed, are at the bottom pieces of the USSR, remains of the old icecap. Theories of this sort circulate about the Donbass.

But in fact, the only "left" organization, as explained below by Alexandr Volodarsky, which in Ukraine is completely within this cultural background, is Borotba.

In addition, the "positive" relation of these milieux to the "Soviet" past is now undergoing a rapid change, becoming transformed into adhesion to the "Eurasian revolution", advocated up to now by the Russian ultra-right, to which has rallied an old figure of the "left" Moscow intelligentsia, Boris Kagarlitsky, linked precisely to Borotba.

The "left" currents other than Borotba have a fundamentally negative view of the Soviet past: this vision is especially that of the anarchists, which may help to explain, moreover, their current importance in Ukraine.

[2] The whole demonstration of Alexandr Volodarsky leads to this conclusion: from an ameliorative or pejorative point of departure towards the Soviet past, both sides have come to compete directly on the terrain and to support opposing forces. The unity of "the left" is now a dream, since the term "left" covers things that are too different.

However, Alexandr Volodarsky criticizes in his article a statement adopted this spring at a conference of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian left groups held in Minsk, which seems to seek such "unity". And the temptation is great, in the Ukrainian "new left", represented for example by the Left Opposition (or Socialist League-Left Opposition), to "put aside" the "national question", to deal only with the "social question." This would tend to show that the fundamental separation is not, for young groups finding themselves in a fluid situation, with few resources and little political baggage, as obvious as Alexandr Volodarsky seems to affirm here.

But not addressing the "national question" in order to deal with the "social question" - is that not condemning yourself to impotence? A historical precedent deserves to be considered: the fate of the Irish left after the assassination of James Connolly by British imperialism; essentially falling back on trade unionism, and leaving the "national struggle" to the nationalists; and part of the left, in the North, also found itself tail-ending the Orangemen, who were subordinate to imperialism.

[3] This short description can now be completed by the first lessons that the legislative election of October 26 suggests, see above.

[4] What Alexandr Volodarsky writes here corresponds very exactly to the way leftists, who are in this respect no different from the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians, see the "Pravy Sector" phenomenon: primarily a media frenzy, and an organization that played a leading role at just one moment, in the street fighting when events on the Maidan became sharper. We could add a certain reputation among youth, where many people reject Pravy Sector as an organization because of its far-right leadership, its homophobia and indeed its suspicious links (remember that its leader Yarosh met Yanukovich shortly before he fled), but who adhere to a "Pravy Sector spirit", presenting itself as composed of patriotism, dedication, readiness to act in opposition to a failed, corrupt and ineffective state.

Ukrainians who discover that the Russian information channels covering the South-East of the country and the means of "information", particularly the Internet, have been saying for months that Pravy Sector is virtually in power and forms a kind of mass Nazi party, terrorizing everyone in their country, feel in general deep annoyance mixed with humiliation, but also some surprise, because it is as if someone explained that in France, the "Identitaires" and Dieudonné are making young people march in step every Sunday...

[5] Note the parallel that is made here between Pravy Sector and the Russophile far right in the Donbass: the same initial situation of being small groups, the same way of being propelled to the forefront when the revolution broke out and the state and oligarchic forces needed to create a diversion and exploit the threat of war, then the war.

[6] The Socialist League or Socialist Union was established in late 2011 by the merger of several small groups, including the "Tomato" group whose iconic tomato still appears on the site [Gaslo](#), including much of the Organization of Ukrainian Marxists founded in 2006, with between 100

and 200 members, the other part of this organization going to Borotba. It seems that the divide was the one that Alexandr Volodarsky indicates: the relationship to the "Soviet" past. The Socialist League brings together practically all the Trotskyists and those inclined towards Trotskyism in Ukraine, along with activists who define themselves in terms of socialism and democracy, or the global justice movement. The article actually states that we find there "Trotskyists" and "social-democrats"; however, the very "right-wing" connotation today of the term "social democrat" in Western Europe, as well as the existence of a small Ukrainian Social Democratic Party in principle linked to the Socialist International and especially organizing trade-union educational activities, have led me to prefer here the term "democratic socialist".

The Socialist League has significant international ties, especially with the Fourth International (International Committee, formerly United Secretariat), whose French representatives are in the NPA and in "Ensemble!

On the Maidan, it quickly called for the unification of all left currents, including the anarchists, in a Left Maidan. It seems that the term "Left Opposition" then emerged to designate it.

[7] Nina Potarska, one of the organizers of the Left Opposition, formed a squadron (sotnya) of women on the Maidan.

[8] Red flags with the stars of the European Union are in fact visible on various images of the Maidan: this kind of syncretism may startle more than one activist of the French "left". It would however be a reaction of chauvinistic ignorance: great social movements mix together symbols and make do with whatever comes their way. It should however be pointed out that the Socialist League (Left Opposition) came out against Ukraine joining the EU. It is therefore perfectly possible that those who carried these flags wanted to express a willingness to "redde" the whole of Europe.

[9] This brief account, which concerns the fighting in which the author of the article took part, shows that the anarchists of Terra Libera and the Autonomous Workers Union (founded in 2011), in particular, confronted both the Berkuts of the regime and Pravy Sector. They were joined by the Arsenal football supporters, whose core, the Hoods Hoods Klan, had emerged as "antifa" and marked itself off from most other "ultras" during Euro 2012. There was no lack of physical clashes with Pravy Sector; the anarchists failed to impose on the Maidan the full organization of an anarchist armed force recognized as such, but managed to physically ban Pravy Sector and Svoboda from the building of the Ministry of Education. The confrontation with the new minister, who came from the far right, should have led to his expulsion, which was, according to the author of the article, prevented by the student union officials, relying no doubt on the "unitary" feeling " of the crowd just after the flight of Yanukovych.

Allow me to note here that while for months and months a cohort of "anti-imperialists" whose enemy is no longer capital, but "America", has been describing as "Nazis", through long blogs and forums, all the fighters of the Maidan and those who support them, who are the ONLY ones to have physically confronted the far right, to have contested the terrain with it; these are the very ones at whom this fraudulent amalgamation is aimed. The ONLY convergence with the far right is on the contrary that of the neo-Stalinists and their allies, who are physically and materially involved in the struggle along with it and under its leadership, in the so-called "people's republics".

[10] Svoboda was late to develop, especially in Galicia and Volhynia, originating from racist and anti-Semitic ethno-nationalist groups, of which the main one was the Ukrainian Social Nationalist Party; they presented themselves as defenders of the oppressed and benefited from the image of victim provided by Stalinist, Brezhnevian and then Russian propaganda, which systematically depicted Ukrainians as "Nazis". At that time the double rejection of the pro-Russian oligarchs and the leaders of the "Orange Revolution" favoured Svoboda, which was supported covertly by Yanukovych: the Ukrainian far right has never been so strong as it was in 2012, and not today (at that time there was still no "anti-imperialist resistance" to declare war on the "Ukrainian Nazis" on the web); at that time Russia and Yanukovych were counting on its growth to maintain Yanukovych in power at the next presidential election. The revolution of the Maidan did not strengthen but weakened it, interrupting the progress of Svoboda.

Since Svoboda was, with its popular regional basis, virtually the only major party in Ukraine not to appear as a private enterprise, a part of the state, a clientelist network or all of them at once, but as a real mass party, serious contradictions traversed it when the revolutionary crisis opened up in the country. Its most "social" wing, up to then influenced by Yuri Mikhalchishin, an anti-Semite who openly took Nazism as his point of reference, in part turned violently against him. The founders of Autonomous Resistance (Avtonomia Opir), a split, perhaps the majority, from Svoboda in the city of Lviv (the birthplace of the movement), dropped the anti-Semitic discourse and gave prominence to old documents of the OUN (Ukrainian Nationalist Organization) from the 1940s and 50s, condemning capitalism and supporting social ownership of the means of production, and taking as their references both Stepan Bandera and Nestor Makhno. This movement does not define itself as "left", but as "identity-based nationalist" and has links with a minority fringe of the European far right (doubly a minority: in relation to Putin's supporters, and then above all, in relation to Svoboda's supporters). The rhetoric and imagery of this movement mix together libertarian, ecological and ethno-identity aspects (the latter are usually associated), and a discourse that we find elsewhere in far-left movements, such as "global Intifada".

Such a split would obviously not have happened without the radicalization of a section of youth that considered itself to be "on the right", engaged in clashes with the state and the oligarchs, and not having, or having lost, confidence in Western imperialism, at the same time rubbing shoulders with other young people who were hostile to racism or were anarchists.

Other important information given in this article of Alexandr Volodarsky: while in France we were being drenched with "information" presenting the Maidan as a movement led everywhere by Svoboda and Pravy Sektor, it seems that in reality in the "city of Svoboda", Lviv, where the party had taken over the administration and the local government (in agreement with Yanukovych!), the "Maidan" was a movement AGAINST Svoboda. Autonomous Resistance is far from being the only beneficiary of this: a flowering of social movements and associations in fact characterized the city of Lviv and the region, fantasized as the heart of "Nazism" in the demonology of some "left" activists in Russia and the West: associations coming from the Maidan, the trade union "Labour Defence" (pre-Maidan), rejection of the whole local administration, blockages of the private appropriation of public spaces, patrols against the mafias, organized reception of Tatar families fleeing Crimea... Thus, the spontaneous emergence of groups taking as their references both anarchism and nationalism is one piece of evidence of the search for a political solution in this ideological effervescence.

This political ferment has not gone so far as to directly manifest itself in the elections, which are not the preferred breeding ground of these movements. Or rather, it certainly played an indirect role in the breakthrough of Samopomich (see the previous article).

[11] Borotba was formed in 2011 by the merger of a sector of the youth organization of the KPU, the Ukrainian Communist Party, and probably the majority of the Organization of Ukrainian Marxists, in contrast to the currents that took part in the foundation, shortly after, of the Socialist League. I will come back specifically to the history and positions of Borotba in a future article, because this organization occupies a central place in the hallucinatory practice of a part of the Western far left, contributing to align it on pro-Russian imperialist positions, or at least to neutralize any hint of a concrete analysis of the revolutionary crisis called "Maidan".

Borotba means "struggle." Historically, this name was that of a Ukrainian party, much more powerful, the Borotbists, left nationalist Social Revolutionaries, the most powerful Ukrainian peasant party in 1918-1920. Borotba has nothing to do with this tradition.

[12] Several interviews with Borotba leaders circulating in the West have argued that any intervention from the left or the far left on the Maidan had proved impossible. The facts reported above belie this assertion. It seems to be true for Borotba, if it is the case that the group tried to install itself on the Maidan with a portrait of Stalin and, having been expelled, immediately complained of "Nazis": in that case, we would be seeing neither more nor less than a deliberate provocation, which the rest of the article, unfortunately, tends to confirm.

[13] Three parties which were sizable at one time or another, heirs of the former CPSU, have had a "socialist" or "communist" label in Ukraine since 1991. The Socialist Party of Alexander Moroz came from pro-Gorbachov sectors of the former governing Communist Party and became gradually very much weakened in the 2000s. The Progressive Socialist Party of Natalia Vitrenko, a split from the Socialist Party, had been the catalyst for part of the popular anger against the oligarchs in the late 1990s; it came to be funded by the "anti-system" US billionaire Lyndon Larouche (whose representative in France is Jacques Cheminade) and through it by Russian oligarchs; a small group, it is now incorporated into the "people's republics" of the South-East.

The third and by far the largest of these parties is the KPU, the Communist Party of Ukraine, whose best-known leader is Petro Symonenko. Established in 1993 in opposition to the apparatchiks who had rallied to the formal independence of the country, the KPU, involving real sectors of the state apparatus and the administration and a powerful clientele, had considerable influence in the 1990s. At that time it was the bogeyman, useful for getting the established oligarchs elected, that Svoboda tended later to become before the Maidan. The Party of Regions, a federation of oligarchic and mafia-like fiefs, became gradually reinforced by the defection of oligarchs leaving, or making those who served them leave, the KPU.

When Alexandr Volodarsky writes that nobody on the Ukrainian left, by a long chalk, considers the KPU as "left", he expresses something which is obvious in Ukraine. Not only is it not "left" on the ideological level - social conservatism, including as regards the family, hatred of homosexuals and anti-Semitism are widely cultivated by the KPU - but it has no close or even distant roots in the workers' movement; it comes entirely from the bureaucratic apparatus of the state, and is no more a "party", properly speaking, than the Party of Regions. Only its youth wing, for reasons of image and folklore and to cultivate contacts in the "communist movement" abroad, has gone back to having an ideological allure that is verbally "communist". It was precisely a sector of this youth wing that in 2011 took part in launching Borotba, which is therefore also, more partially but in a very real sense, one of the political forces that descend from the former CPSU.

On 16 January this year, the KPU, part of the coalition supporting Yanukovych, was at the forefront in formulating and voting for the draconian laws, suspending rights of demonstration and assembly, as a result of which the situation became radicalized.

The KPU is engaged today, along with the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, to which it is close, in the administration of the "people's republics" of the South-East, while maintaining an "anti-war" discourse, depending on the circumstances. Banning it has been regularly envisaged and never actually concretized by the Ukrainian government since February. It is even more often announced on the sites of the Western "communist resistance" in whose phantasms the KPU becomes the new FTP [[Communist-led resistance movement in France during the Second World War

[14] It was on the occasion of these first armed operations that the photograph of a young man replacing the Ukrainian flag by the Russian flag on Kharkiv City Hall was widely circulated on the sites of the Western "communist resistance", which saw in him some sort of hero of the Soviet Union. The man was however known to be a Russian citizen, a member of the security services and reputed to be linked to Russian National Unity - an organization whose references are to Nazism...

The principal group to which Borotba is linked in Kharkov/Kharkiv is Oplot ("Bastion"). Oplot developed, in January-February 2014, from the sports club of the same name and in the military schools and the police, organizing attacks against the Kharkiv Maidan under the direction of a chief of the FBU, Yevgeny Zhilin, who crossed over into Russia at the beginning of March. This group has played a key role in articulating the propaganda of the "pro-Russians" around anti-Semitism, centred on the denunciation of the governor of Dnipropetrovsk, the oligarch Kolomoisky, as the "Jewish financier of the Nazis". In its press releases, Oplot also attributes the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 to the Jews.

[15] Rodina is an organization of the Russian far right whose former leader, Dmitry Rogozin, has been since 2007 an important figure in the official discussions between Russia and NATO. Slav Unity is an organization of Russian Cossacks. Odessa is a Ukrainian and multinational city with many Russian inhabitants: even (especially?) as far as the latter are concerned, the local branches of these organizations are nothing other than gangs of thugs manipulated by the security services.

[16] [Avtonomia.net](http://Avtonomia.net).

[17] By writing "tragic events" Alexandr Volodarsky again perfectly expresses the common feeling of Ukrainians who are hostile to the "pro-Russian" operations concerning the affair known as the "Trade Union House" in Odessa on 2 May 2014. Let us recall that on April 17, Putin called for the formation of "Novorossia". On the morning of May 2, armed groups, with the support of sectors of the police and the presence paramilitaries who had come from Transnistria, attacked Ukrainian nationalist demonstrators in Odessa. They were crushed, with relatively few casualties, by a powerful spontaneous mobilization. The failure of this attempt to take a step towards "Novorossia", as in Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk, had of necessity, for the dominant imperialist power, to be hidden under the myth of a "Nazi" operation: it was in this case especially vital for the imperialist propaganda.

Borotba, associated with the armed attack on nationalist demonstrators in the morning along with Rodina, Slav Unity and the Christian Orthodox Scouts, launched the call to regroup in the Trade Union House, next to the camp of the Odessa Anti-Maidan. Many pro-Russian or anti-Maidan demonstrators piled in there, in the absence of the leaders who had called on them to do so. The building was besieged by counter-demonstrators and activists of Pravy Sector who were throwing Molotov cocktails; gunshots were fired, fire broke out - strangely, on the fourth floor- and there were over forty dead. From the end of the afternoon of the same day, the entire Western "communist resistance" blogosphere and the far right, fueled by the various branches of RIA Novosti, broadcast non-stop that "Ukrainian Nazis" had committed a "pogrom" against "trade unionists" in Odessa, announcing hundreds of deaths, rapes, etc. Borotba announced the death of one of its members in this affair.

[18] It is indeed a fault line that cuts across the organizations acting in the name of the socialist revolution throughout the world, gradually separating internationalist positions from positions preparing a possible world war between imperialist powers. However, the lack of information and the unprecedented role played by propaganda, and also the credulity towards it on the part of activists and currents led (rightly) not to believe the "voice of America" and to contest what it says, strongly skew this divide: correct information, a serious analysis, the re-establishment of exchanges between East and West and real internationalist practice must restore balance and make it possible for sensible people not to believe that the moon is made of green cheese and to recognize fascism wherever it is!

[19] And in fact; to proclaim that war is wrong and to ask for it to be ended – what does that mean in a war opposing an oppressed nation to an imperialist power and its local allies? All the more so as Russia declares that it is not at war and wants "peace", which is supposed to come about by responding to the demand for "federalization" of the "insurgent regions"?

Doesn't the conventional "pacifist" discourse making the "camps" equally responsible simply play into the hands of the strongest power, from a military point of view?

[20] The rejection of "all nationalisms" is really not at all surprising in the ideological tradition of anarchism (or of ultra-left and councilist currents). It does not prevent the vast majority of anarchists - Ukrainian, but also Russian - from supporting the Ukrainian revolution (rather than the Ukrainian nation) against Russian to be more exposed to positions that put everyone on the same level, which would greatly weaken its nascent influence. Taking responsibility for national defence, or the defense of the incipient revolution, if it is done from the point of view of the exploited and oppressed, does not in fact imply support for the existing government; nor does it imply restricting social struggles, on the contrary.