Revolution and anti-revolution in the post-Soviet space

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Once in power, revolutionary movements tend to stagnate ideologically, while circles around the defeated regimes undergo an intellectual revival -- witness the "anti-revolutionary" revival in Russia, or the faltering of the Orange Revolutionaries now they are in government. Revolutions can also cause a reactionary backlash abroad, says the Belarusian social scientist. The "coloured revolutions" have been a lesson on the formation of democratic, non-violent opposition for the Russian and Belarusian governments, who have developed sophisticated techniques for undermining the opposition. In the forthcoming elections in Belarus, the "denim revolutionaries" must prove they are effective.

On 30 June to 1 July 2005, an event took place in Moscow that was of extreme importance for understanding the ongoing political processes in the post-Soviet space. The First International Forum “Europe: The results of the year of changes” (also called “European Forum” by the organizers) defined its goals as the “support and development of the democratic fundamentals of the Russian policy, fostering of democratic developments in the post-Soviet space”. However, most of the forum discussions were focused on the evaluation of the political results of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution and other revolutions, and the consequences of these processes for Russia and pro-Russian forces in the post-Soviet space. The Moscow forum demonstrated the intellectual calibre of the political forces that have unified in opposition to democratic transformations in the post-Soviet space. It also demonstrated that after the bitter fiasco of outdated Russian projects in a number of the neighbouring countries, the Russian authorities perceive the post-Soviet environment as an object of thorough investigation.

Naturally, such collective analysis was not purely retrospective – it inevitably included the evaluation of prospects for revolutionary development in the future, and aimed at synthesizing new political strategies. The question for the overwhelming majority of the forum participants was: "How to prevent the continuation of the revolutionary wave?" Participants attempted to provide a practical answer from the point of view of their own situation, their political interests, and available resources. Speakers described everyday issues in their regions. The answers, which were pronounced in accents that included
Ukrainian, Belarusian, Central Asian, and even Baltic, were lapped up by the forum organizers. The latter did not hide their proximity to the ruling circles of Russia: public officials, politicians, political scientists, and analysts. The opinions expressed at the conference became the material for an analysis of future Russian policy towards its closest neighbours.

One of the peculiarities of the forum was its international scope: it was attended by representatives from Russia, CIS, the Baltic States, and Serbia. The organizers weren’t afraid of brickbats: subjective and biased opinions, and even fury at Russian policy could be heard there. Altogether, the contributions provided valuable material for an objective analysis of the situation in the post-Soviet space.

The event was the brainchild of Gleb Pavlovski, chairman of Effective Policy Fund. Russia was represented by Viacheslav Nikonov, president of the Policy Fund; Sergei Markov, director of the Institute for Political Research; Sergey Karaganov, chair of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy; Vitali Tretiakov, editor of Politicheski Klass [Political Class] magazine; Konstantin Krilov, political observer; Igor Ponarin, doctor of political science; Konstantin Zatulin, director of the Institute of CIS Countries; Modest Kolerov, chairman of the soviet of the Russian presidential administration responsible for contacts with CIS countries; and Alexander Troshin, vice-chair of the soviet of the Russian Federation. These are just some of the names of those who attended.

Some of the 150 politicians and experts invited proposed alternatives to the policy pursued by the Russian government in the post-Soviet space, the unsatisfactory result of which, according to the organizers of the European forum, has been the collapse of a number of regimes in the former Soviet republics. At the same time, the forum became an opportunity for the recruitment of potential counter-revolutionary forces from within the post-Soviet space. One of the aims of the forum was the development and coordination of counter-revolutionary ideology, along with the search for those who could implement it in practice.

Post-revolutionary Ukraine was represented by people who were mostly sceptical about the post-revolution regime: Dmytro Korchinski, the leader of the Braterstvo [Brotherhood] Party; Valeri Konovaliuk and Vladimir Sivkovich, the leaders of the Working Ukraine Party; and Leonid Hrach, chairman of the Bohdan Khmelnitski’s Heirs movement.

Kazakhstan was represented by Alikhan Baimenov, the leader of the Ak Zhol Democratic Party. Latvia was represented by Ianis Urbanovich, chairman of the People’s Consent Party, and the highly influential politician Oskar Kastens, chairman of the governmental European Committee. Estonia was represented by Anatoliy Egorov, the vice-chairman of the People’s Party. Azerbaijan was represented by Fatima Abdulla-Zade, the chairwoman of the humanitarian support department of the presidential administration. Armenia was represented by Armen Sagatalian, vice-president of the association on public relations. Kyrgyzstan, the latest link in the revolutionary chain, was represented by a varied delegation: former president Askar Akaev, who lost his seat as a result of the revolution; Alexander Korotenko, representative of the European Club; and Erkinbek Alimbekov, vice-speaker of the parliament. Moldova, where both pro- and anti-Russian forces tried to ride the revolutionary wave, was represented by Serafim Urekian, the leader of the opposition
parliamentary fraction of Our Moldova alliance. Urekian’s political campaign was the first attempt to use the techniques of Orange revolution to place in office a pro-Russian leader.

Thus, the forum participants could be divided into two categories, according to origin: citizens of the countries that have already experienced the revolutionary crisis (with different results), and guests from areas where this crisis may still take place. Russia, Kazakhstan, and, above all, Belarus, belong to the second group of countries. New anti-revolutionary techniques will be tested on them.

At the forum, Belarus was represented by the pretenders for the role of democratic opponent to the present authorities at the presidential election of 2006: Professor Aliaksandr Kazulin, former rector of Belarusian State University and new leader of the Social Democratic Party; Aliaksandr Vaitovich, academic; and Uladzimir Kolas, leader of the Council of Intellectuals. The forum was attended by Anatol Mikhai lou, exile and rector of European Humanities University (EHU); and Siarhei Haidukievich, MP and leader of the Liberal Democratic Party. The Belarusian independent sector was represented by Andrei Suzdaltsau, publicist; and Iury Shautsou, director of the EHU centre for European integration issues. Viktar Sheiman, one of President Lukashenko’s closest companions, was rumoured to have been included on the original list of participants; his invitation, together with that of opposition activists who keep away from the formal unified national opposition, was in line with the overall concept of the European Forum. Predictably enough, he did not attend.

Andrei Suzdaltsau, in Belarusian independent newspaper Svobodne Novosti, later accurately characterized this assembly as a “Russian humanitarian Davos”. In terms of intellectual representation, the meeting was beyond competition. The participation of experts and analysts from post-Soviet space was intended to make the event look like a discussion between interested experts, deprive it of the tone of simple political argument, and avoid finding guilty parties for the fiasco of Russian policy in the post-Soviet space. Yet this “Davos” was a purely Russian affair. Above all, it revealed existing and potential pro-Russian forces in the former Soviet republics, and attracted persons whose activity is, or could become, useful for those forces. For instance, Gleb Pavlovski’s attention was drawn to those in Belarus who do not cooperate with the unified democratic opposition, instead pursuing their own political projects.

The titles of the roundtables and plenary sittings that took place within the European forum were also significant, reflecting the viewpoint of Russian anti-revolutionaries in the post-Soviet space and Russia. The plenary sitting, “Legitimacy, democracy, and sovereignty in the post-Soviet space”, was to intended to set the overall tone of the discussions, and to point at the forum’s problematic: non-violent revolutionary transformation and “imported” or endogenous democracy. The roundtable “The EU in eastern Europe” was given over to discussion of the role of extraneous, non-Russian players in the policy of the region, including past and future revolutionary processes. Participants in panels such as “Dialogue and political reforms in Central Asia”, and the “Moldavian-Trans-Dniester matrix in the context of the problems of the Black Sea region”, analyzed the particularities of the local revolutionary challenges and the tasks of Russian policy in these regions. A separate roundtable was devoted to youth values and youth policy, considered the key issue in the theory of non-violent change of political
regimes. The reports and their subsequent discussion constitute valuable material for researchers of the current political processes and forecasters of public developments. No doubt, the opinions expressed there will be reflected in real political strategies.

The speakers (including the small number that sympathized with colour revolutions) either knew the reasons for such revolutions, or the factors that could prevent the repetition of such events. However, no Orange Revolutionaries were present at the forum, since none had been invited. Despite the fact that Belarus was not registered as a distinct object of analysis, the Belarusian situation and perspectives were an important part of the discussions. The concluding meeting and press briefing were intended to sum up the “results of the year of revolutions” and the “prospective development of EuroEast in the next political season”. The category “EuroEast” must be explained not in terms of geography, but as a euphemism for the territory that Russian geo-politicians conceive of as the area of the influence of Russia, as the space where a neo-colonial “liberal empire”, or even a Russian Lebensraum, can be built.

Anti-revolutionary entente

What unified all the non-Belarusian participants of the forum, and certainly all of its organizers, was their anti-revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary in countries where revolution has already taken place) ideology. Despite differences in their views and mentality, participants shared the same negative attitude towards contemporary non-violent revolutions. They were unified in the aspiration to break the chain of popular uprisings that began in 2000 in Yugoslavia, was picked up by Georgians in 2003, attained phenomenal success in the Ukraine, and led to clashes in Kyrgyzstan. The anti-revolutionary political current justifies the repression of human rights activists in Uzbekistan, considers the existence of anti-national dictatorial regimes to be necessary, and practices manipulative techniques in internal policy. This outdated political conception is gaining new ideological ground as intellectual anti-revolutionism.

Belarusian delegation of the forum could be characterized by another word: all its members were “non-revolutionaries”. They are people who see the development of events in Belarus in their “own” way, and were interesting to the forum organizers insofar as they could present in Moscow the variety of political projects representing an alternative to the imminent Belarusian revolution. Belarusian anti-revolutionaries, with President Lukashenko at the head, have close contacts with their Russian colleagues and need no extra public meetings. However, sometimes the interests of Belarusian and Russian anti-revolutionism mismatch and demand additional, secret coordination. Such coordination becomes known by the public during scandals such as the withdrawal of Russian Ambassador Ayatskov on the demand of Belarusian authorities for “hostile statements about Lukashenko”. But for all that, Russian anti-revolutionaries are on excellent terms with their Belarusian colleagues. They fight on two fronts: against the revolutionary threat inside Russia and against the spread of the “Orange plague” throughout the CIS countries.

The defeat of the Ukrainian sector of this front had a damaging influence on the position of reactionary forces of Russia. Lukashenko expressed this dependence at the council for issues of internal and foreign policy: “Revolution in Belarus is revolution in Moscow”. In saying this, he was evidently counting on foreign audience: listen, Kremlin! It differs
somewhat from the hysterical statements addressed to the internal audience: “There’s no basis for revolution”, “We know what to do in the case of intervention”, and so on. While on the one hand convincing the electorate and officials of the impossibility of revolutionary development, on the other Lukashenko is trying to blackmail Moscow with the threat of revolution and is selling his know-how to the East. He understands well enough that his main resource is not only violent and ruthless suppression of public dissent, but also the image of the ruler capable of such violence, who will not stop in his will to preserve boundless power. This image can help attract support and enable him to retain power without bloodshed.

The use of such a term as “anti-revolutionary” is based on common logic. Counter-revolution is a negative reaction to revolution in countries where it has taken or is taking place. The political current that wishes to prevent or control revolution, avoid the revolutionary situation in a non-revolutionary way, or organize a “tame” revolution or a safe “quasi-revolutionary” project, I call anti-revolutionism. [1] It is a serious phenomenon that is supported by massive intellectual resources, certain traditions, and a considerable corpus of texts. It deserves the close attention of investigators of revolutionary processes. Therefore, I will say some words about the general principles of ideological development related to revolutionary transformation.

**Revolution and dynamic of ideas**

Sometimes, great social upsets that lead to the polarization of society result in ideological paradoxes. The side that has won the revolution cannot present interesting ideas and produce new ideological conceptions – its ideological and intellectual creativity seems to have been suspended. The triumphant ideology does not change, even if the consequent steps of the winners mismatch their earlier ideological declarations. It is easier to adapt victorious doctrine to daily needs than to invent something new. The victors hold the view that everything has already been said by genial theoreticians and unsurpassed experts. In addition, revolutionaries are too busy with practical redistribution of the revolution’s benefits. They are building a new state and dealing with the fulfilment of the concepts that were elaborated before “time X”. The revolutionaries are busy at the expense of being inventive. As a result, there’s no common strategy among the new governing elite. Naturally, pre-revolutionary concepts are of little use to post-revolutionary state architecture; but instead of making essential changes, the authorities introduce only the small corrections dictated by visible practical needs. New theorization happens quite rarely, even within the limits of the victorious paradigm. Sometimes, the conservation of the pre-revolutionary ideological paradigm by the new regime leads to ridiculous practices: in the 1970s, white-collar party veterans standing on the Mausoleum tribune identified with worker and peasant movements throughout the world. The hymn of the Fifth Republic also sounds ironic when sung by the French president: what sense can Jacques Chirac give the lines, “To arms, citizens! Form your battalions!”?

On the other hand, the side that was overthrown as a result of the revolutionary events begins to produce new social and ideological theory. An explosion of creative thinking happens. It is less important for the victors to analyze why they won than for the defeated to comprehend the reasons and consequences of their defeat. Naturally, the political dominates this comprehension: it is important to find the sources of the revolutionary situation, to discuss the mistakes made by those in power, to define the essence of the
social reforms and the consequences brought by the change of elites, and to provide military-political, geo-strategic, and psychological interpretations. Evidently, the defeated camp has more complicated tasks, which are intellectually more attractive than those of the new rulers. The issues faced by the authorities draw theoreticians who are more inclined to conformism than creativity: there are no serious philosophical or theoretical problems – only staid and practically-oriented ordinariness is left. The victorious camp attracts people who specialize in practical and economic issues rather than abstract reflection. The losers’ environment produces the critical intellectual capital that turns from counter-revolutionary moaning into a programme of alternative development. If the new ideological conceptions prove to be effective, the losers “take revenge” and another generation of intellectuals become the ideological leaders of the next revolution. Such circulation of ideology is a factor of social progress, or at least creates its illusion. It pushes society to self-development, or at least prompts the invention of new social theories.

If the overthrown regime was of a violent authoritarian nature that suppressed academic and intellectual circles, liberation has double impact on reactionary intellectuals who worked for the former authorities. The drawbacks of the old ideological programme are evident to them, since they have been revealed by the real-life revolution, as is the need to correct them. Free from administrative pressure and the obligation to provide the authorities with one-dimensional ideological support, proponents of the old ideological programme increase their creativity. One example of this tendency is the revival of monarchic and conservative-protectionist thought in Russia after the events of 1905, which became even more noticeable after the February revolution of 1917, and later in émigré circles.

Another subjective factor is critical intellectuals who are inclined to oppose establishment positions per se, even the new establishment that is only just forming and defining its own rules. Being critical intellectuals, they oppose the dominant mass. Mass revolt brings with it quite a number of Ortega y Gassets, who expend all their intellectual efforts on proving the deludedness of the mass Weltanschauung.

History is full of such dynamics. The rough ride of theoretical Marxism after the socialist revolution has already been pointed out. Soviet Marxism and scientific communism will always remain a monument to the nonsense that human thought can produce, in contrast to the flowering of intellectual creativity and diversity in Western civilization. A considerable portion of the intellectual effort of Western theoreticians was directed at polemics with Marxism. They tried to formulate an attractive alternative to the “communist heaven”, and somehow managed to do it.

Having come to power in Germany, National Socialists actually backtracked on the intellectual environment that gave birth to their ideology and mythology: the ideas of the Thule-Gesellschaft and Karl Haushoffer were vulgarized, the activity of Germanenorden was limited and then prohibited, Rudolf von Sebottendorf was forced to leave the country. Nazis always pointed out the practical direction of their irrational policies: “to think concretely and work instead of theorizing”. They sought rational solutions for irrational problems and therefore burned out their own intellectual roots.

At the same time, the liberal camp was actively analyzing the basic concepts of liberalism
and creating conceptual works such as *The Road to Serfdom* by Friedrich von Hayek, or *Open Society* by Karl Popper – fiery polemics against all kinds of totalitarian theory – fascism, national socialism, and communism. At the same time, the triumph of liberalism, when radical forms of globalization and Westernization cover the world, has given rise to the intellectual nucleus of the new right wing. At first it formed as an intellectual group conscious of its political tasks and its mission to create a new ideological alternative. The new Right as a political force has resulted in the influence and conscious activity of the new rightwing philosophers, non-conformists, and dissidents, who dreamed of a revolution while living under the conditions of the liberal Western regime. “Our theoretical construction is an open system and our ideas are the means to achieve our aim”, say these ideologists. Their ideas have become international, blending surprisingly well with analogues even outside the West.

The intellectual and ideological capital of the French Revolution accumulated mostly before the revolution. Victory caused the formation of the conservative current in France and abroad. Were it not for revolution, would Conservatives have been able to publish Joseph de Maistre’s fiery manifesto *Considérations sur la France* in 1796, which convinced (and still convinces) readers of the “satanic” nature of revolution? The question is one of rhetoric – the horrors of the revolutionary regime evidently defined the conservative thought in France that later provided the intellectual ground for the Napoleonic regime and the Restoration. It is significant that the French revolution, the mother of all liberal revolutions, had an influence beyond the borders of France. Writing his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, one of the texts of classic conservative thinking, Edmund Burke knew much about the real events in contemporary France. His work was solely of a theoretical, ideological nature. This demonstrates that the destruction of the ideological bastions of a certain doctrine as a result of revolutionary change can have a positive influence on the development of similar philosophical currents in the region. Naturally, this impact is manifested not in the popularization of the losing ideology, but in its radical revision and development.

The chain of “collapsed ideals” and the simultaneous intellectual productivity of the defeated camp continues in the post-Soviet space. This includes Belarus. For instance, with every text of theirs, the creators of Belarusian state ideology prove their incapability of producing new concepts. Creative impotence and theoretical poverty, hidden by a scientific mask, rule official social science in Belarus. The ideological credo formulated by Lukashenko in the mid-1990s has already become bankrupt. It is no longer a lively revolutionary doctrine, but a deadly repetition of old clichés sanctified by academia. On the basis of the aforementioned ideological dynamics, one can predict that only after the success of Belarusian revolution will Lukashism finally rise above ideological freezing-point.

It is probably correct to conclude that the process described is an obligatory sign of real revolution, which doesn’t mean simply smashing shop windows or changing the head of state, but crushing ideologies, changing the conceptions of national development, radically reforming the public and political regime, and changing the vector of development in the entire region. The new ideological paradigm wins over the ruling ideology. After this change in the theoretical sphere, the revolution takes place in the political dimension, and the proponents of the new philosophy seize power. Such development in the ideological field indicates a real revolution: it is qualitatively different.
from a change of elites within the same public and political regime. Revolution can only be called such when it brings to power proponents of the new ideology and deprives of power representatives of the old ideological doctrine.

The aforementioned influence of revolutions should be a warning for Belarus: the ideology of Lukashism might finally have received grounds for development. The French Revolution indirectly contributed to the development of conservatism outside France; the triumph of the Orange Movement in the Ukraine could lead to the reinforcement of anti-revolutionary doctrine in neighbouring countries, including Belarusian state ideology.

**To understand and outfight**

The Orange Revolution in the Ukraine was a real revolution since it was accompanied by ideological overhaul. On the other hand, the events in Kyrgyzstan, despite their formal resemblance to those in the Ukraine and apparent place in the chain of the “coloured revolutions”, did not constitute a revolution. As a form of social dynamics, “coloured revolutions” can have real revolutionary content or not. “Coloured revolutions” have merged in mass consciousness and in the statements of political analysts. They are perceived as a part of one democratic wave, such as that predicted by Huntington, irrespective of evident differences in ideological content. The defeat of authoritarian regimes is analyzed in both the liberal-democratic and conservative-protectionist camps.

Prior to electoral revolution, the revolutionary bloc needs to be organizationally and ideologically uniform. The interests of the subjects who are dissatisfied with the present situation must be coordinated – the disparate must be unified. It has already become a principle of coloured revolutionism that the opposition comes to the election as a solid bloc. The unifying factor is the idea that can be fulfilled only through revolution. In the case of coloured revolutions, this is the idea of free and fair elections. It is the ideological factor that unifies the coloured revolutions in a single current; their class character and social nature can differ. The political forces that do not share the ideas articulated by the revolutionary bloc, or cannot join it for other reasons, such as the personal ambitions of the leaders, become the allies of the anti-revolutionary bloc. However, turning this simple idea into a part of the concrete political strategy requires great efforts – it must be done in a way that not only satisfies all the members of the revolutionary political bloc, but inspires the public too. That is why the formulation of the revolutionary idea, and the strategy of its implementation, are bound up with the invention of a publicly acceptable political and ideological project.

We have already pointed out that after a revolution, the former understanding of its essence becomes official and is not prone to major revisions. However, it is no longer possible to ignore the antagonisms that used to be latent. Thanks to the revolution of the masses, the real election has already taken place; however, the political interests of the members of the revolutionary bloc exceed the idea of justice. Various political interests rise above ideology. The end of the fair election means the disappearance of the factor that had unified the coloured revolutionaries. It is hard to find a substitute for it unless the revolutionary leader cements the new regime and makes his charisma the guarantee of its durability. The revolutionaries still pretend the revolution continues, but act outside the limits of the pre-revolutionary agreement. The old rules are no longer applicable in the new situation or, to be more precise, they act against the revolutionaries. The
durability of the new regime depends on its ability to adapt to the new situation; it can be defeated if it does not do so.

On the eve of the revolution, the anti-revolutionary camp is also unified, at least formally. It is unified organizationally rather than ideologically, which is its weakness. Its representatives are unified by the strategic goal to preserve the earlier rules of play; however, their vital interests are uncoordinated and allow room for contradiction. The elite groups are not cemented to an ideology. The unifying factor is power and the possibility of its use, played out according to the rules established by this elite and adapted in order to coordinate the diverging interests within it. In the existing political situation, every member of the ruling elite sees the possibility to reach their aims within the limits of the existing laws; aims which are different in their essence, partially incompatible, and uncoordinated. The groups only have the “agreement” about the rules of the game. Each of these clans, groups, unions, and lobby groups has its own aim; they expect existing trends to continue and plan accordingly. They see no need to elaborate the unifying idea. Why should they if they have power and legitimate violence on their side? However, the lack of ideological creativity weakens the ideological position of the elite and its inability to oppose an attractive alternative to the aggressive revolutionary ideology. The moment the revolutionaries transfer the unifying idea into society, the ruling elite is at a loss. The victory of the revolutionaries on the street level is possible only when society accepts the idea proposed by the revolutionaries. The energy of the Ukrainian Maidan Nezalezhnosti [Square of Independence] can be explained by the fact that people were unified by one idea. As a result, society starts playing by new rules; former rules lose their legitimacy and the ruling elite has nothing left to do but relinquish power. The only surprise it can prepare is a charismatic leader. Only his influence can save the ideologically impotent elite. Can this factor be described scientifically? Can it be artificially created in combination with the modern mass media? It differs from revolution to revolution.

After a revolution, the situation changes a lot. The forces that have been overthrown by it are atomized. The aforementioned process of invention of a counter-revolutionary ideology begins. While the winners solve internal conflicts and share the benefits of the revolution, the losing camp becomes the new opposition. The comprehension of the reasons for the revolution by adherents of the old order raises them to a new ideological level. In addition, as time passes, the former revolutionary idea starts playing off against the revolutionaries. The practical fulfilment of the idea usually falls short of the idea itself and cannot satisfy all members of the revolutionary bloc; when this happens, the bloc falls apart. People become disappointed with the policy of the revolutionaries, which helps the new opposition gain political authority. “The revolutionaries cheated you,” say the opposition, in some respects rightly. The post-revolutionary rules of the political game differ much from how most of the revolution’s participants anticipated it. The fair election has taken place, but it has not achieved the absolute justice that the public craved during the revolution. The inability to own up to the temporary and rhetorical nature of the revolutionary slogans inures the new opposition.

In line with this ideological dynamic, revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries have a different understanding of the revolution before it and after. It’s worth quoting Russian religious philosopher Berdyayev: “Revolution is irrational, it witnesses that history is directed by irrational forces […] and is always a symptom of the advance of irrational
forces. Revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries have only the smallest understanding of the sense of revolution. Revolutionaries usually don’t understand the sense of revolution.”

There is another way to analyze dramatic revolutionary transformations. This kind of analysis is made by the people who accept revolution as a phenomenon and experience it as a surpassing of the ordinary. Berdyayev analyzed the Russian revolution of 1917 apocalyptically, from the position of Christian pessimism. However, such a historiosophic view is not the only one possible – the coloured revolutions in neighbouring countries serve as an example. The events in Ukraine, Putin’s visits to Yanukovich, and Yanukovich’s insult to Lukashenko during the anniversary celebrations of Ukraine’s liberation can be become a topic for reflection on the essence of revolution.

Revolutions of ideals

The Ukrainian case gives many more reasons for such an analysis in comparison to other coloured revolutions. Here, we have a manifestation of conflict between East and West, a struggle between two empires for control over a debated territory, a popular uprising, the choice of democracy over tyranny, and the spectacle of “The birth of a nation”. People treated it in different ways: as a mass revolt, as a “revolution of NGOs”, or as a conspiracy of secret puppeteers. Some explained it with the social factor, others said it was a geopolitical issue, still others pointed out the languages each side used. There are different versions and different visions. All daily issues are reflected in the mirror of the analysis of the Ukrainian events. The Orange Revolution became not only the focus of revolutionary science, but also a polygon for understanding the notion of society at the universal level. The Orange Revolution is an excellent example of contemporary revolutions, closest to its ideal kind. Such examples always attract the attention of researchers, since they lend themselves to theorization despite the many arguable points.

Victory has many parents and defeat is always an orphan. Seven Greek cities used to quarrel for the right to be called Homer’s birthplace. Now, several American, Slovak, and Serbian research centres assert that they stood at the beginning of the Ukrainian revolution, forgetting the decisive role of the intellectual movement inside the country. In fact, there was no hope for fair election without its ideological foundation in society. The ideological background for the Orange Revolution was created by the nation’s intellectuals, but it was not scientific. [2]

According all existent laws, many years would be necessary for the nation to mature. Ukrainian historical novels of the 1970s are said to be a prediction that something like the Orange Revolution would happen sooner or later. Why the delay of ten to twenty years? Because of the timely appearance of Western scientists, engineers of civil society, and revolutionary managers. Politicians started fighting for the repartition of influence among different clans. At the same time, intellectuals presented an idea to the public. This was upheld by politicians, incorporated into a political programme, and implemented as political revolution. The preconditions for the revolution were created by the painstaking work of the Ukrainian non-governmental sector. Thousands of educational measures, and the study and application of Western theories of social activism, created the form, which was then filled with the ideology of nationalism and liberation from the
corrupt authorities. Even if the “import of revolution” really did take place, it happened in the most respectable way. That is why the Orange example attracted supporters abroad, and why orange became the colour of civil resistance all over the world, including in Russia, Romania, Israel, Ghana, and Zimbabwe.

The Orange Revolution formed the prototype of the contemporary revolution. This status is accepted both by its adherents and anti-revolutionary critics – the difference lies only in the evaluation of the facts. The events in Kyrgyzstan did not fit the prototype: muggings, violent clashes, the minor role of the youth movement, and the absence of a clear leader – all these facts departed from the model and demanded additional explanation. Within contemporary revolutionary theory, the Kyrgyz example is treated as an empiric fact that does not correspond to the common paradigm. The accumulation of such facts in similar crises elsewhere must finally lead to revision of revolutionary theory.

However, besides practical and reflective philosophical theorization on revolutionary processes, it is possible to evaluate revolutions from other points of view. For instance, the objective scientific analysis that attempts to find a rational sense or manifestation of “objective laws of historical development” in events. This is the position of people who wish to perceive the revolution rationally but do not participate in it. Their understanding of revolution will be considered and used by participants of the political process – in our times there is the widespread opinion that political processes and public moods can be governed and manipulated; that social science is the best means for social engineering. That is why various political analyses, prognoses, and political research enjoy such popularity. Participants of the game suspect that their irrational actions do indeed conform to objective laws that can be understood, explained, and used to one’s advantage. The sociology of revolutions is the most evident example of how scientific method is used to fulfil the political strategy of social influence.

The masses will also never recognize the irrational depths they feel during a revolutionary uprising. They like the idea that it can be explained rationally. The inexplicable joy of “creating history” during a popular uprising cannot but be defined with a political slogan. Few would say: “We carry out the revolution for its own sake” – this is psychologically uncomfortable. It feels better to say: “We carry out the revolution for the sake of freedom and democracy, and against lies and self-interest”. The task of the charismatic revolutionary, or his assistant, the shamanic political scientist, is to formulate the irrational wishes of the masses in a way that the leader is able to pronounce.

The situation as described enables a change in the attitude to manifestations of anti-revolutionary activity in Russia and Belarus. One anti-revolutionary strategy can become the formulation of pseudo-revolutionary slogans, as has been done in Russia by the architects of the *Nashi* [Our] youth movement. Nashi may not only be an attempt to seize control over the youth movement as such (something done by the Belarusian National Youth Union [BRSM] in Belarus): the ineffectiveness of compulsory organizations is evident to all former members. It may be something much more: an attempt to assume the right to provide rational formulation to the irrational moods of the society. In fact, the leaders of Nashi spend too much time stating their opposition to the present regime in Russia. Their message is aimed at the heart of the cheated people: “We are against the present elite. We want to bring back the charismatic way of governing! We want to
return fair power to Russia!”

Actions that demonstrate the senselessness and unreasonableness of revolutionary activity can effectively counteract revolution. For instance, during the explosion of the youth protest movements in Russia at the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, influenced by the Ukrainian events, certain organizations used original ways to demonstrate the senselessness of the revolutionary project. They came out with such “protest” slogans as: “Somehow Yes!”, “Alas!”, “Drag the blanket and divide the pancakes!”, “Peace! Work! Maya!” Who could then treat the Ukrainian “Pora!” [It’s time!] slogan seriously? These slogans resemble the “orange” ones and neatly reveal the emptiness that often stands behind protest slogans. Techniques such as “Pora!” work only under conditions of growing public and political tension. Here they can be used by anyone - they are only techniques and can be appropriated by either side.

Youth movements

It is a widespread belief that the activity of youth protest movements is the main catalyst of the revolutionary transformations. Many observers state that it was the Ukrainian “Pora!” movements, the Georgian “Kmara”, or the Yugoslavian “Opor” which started the revolutions in their countries using the science of non-violent resistance. This is the issue that attracts the attention of anti-revolutionaries in Russia. Gene Sharp’s books The Politics of Non-violent Struggle, Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation, and Non-violent struggle: A better means of resolving acute political and ethical conflicts? are studied attentively by revolutionaries and their opponents. Conclusions drawn from these texts influence the political situation. As the participants of the European forum confessed, youth can be the main carrier of the revolutionary threat, but is also the best force to prevent this danger.

At the beginning of 2005, patriotic youth movements in Russia were in a sorry state. Every large party had its youth wing - it was considered as a bare necessity, without which a party could not expect political success at the federal level. However, neither the youth union Za Rodinu [For the Fatherland], nor Molodyozhnoye Yabloko [Youth Apple], could boast any success. The number of their members was minimal, their activity was mostly formal, they were ignored by the mass media, and the political programmes resembled those of the “adult” section of the parties. These organizations attracted mostly people who wanted to make a career in SPS Youth, Komsomol, Molodyozhnoye Edinstvo [Youth Unity], Idushchiye Vmeste [Going Together], or the pro-governmental Edinaya Rossiya [Unified Russia]. Youth associations such as these were not considered a political force and could not have become the basis of the mass protest movements. One cannot but agree with the self-critical evaluation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation to the Union of Communist Youth in the end of 2003 concerning the electoral campaigns: “We observe the weak influence of the youth organizations [...] there is no hope that their role would increase during the electoral process”.

The crisis was also observed among non-party political youth associations. Despite greater activity and publicity in comparison to the party youth structures, the stagnation connected to absence of real influence on political life took place there too. The most noticeable in this situation was the activity of the National Bolshevik Party of Eduard
Limonov. This organization did not position itself purely as a youth movement, but really functioned as the radical youth opposition. The NBP concentrated on non-systemic activity: pickets, occupation of governmental offices, anti-Putin performances, scandalous statements, and counting political prisoners among the party members, added to its image as the most consequential alternative to the Putin government. Since 2000, based on its anti-Putin programme, the NBP significantly expanded the geographical distribution of its branches, grew in numbers, and gained experience in participating in electoral campaigns. However, it was legally cut off from the real struggle for political power by the absence of the appropriate status and influential allies (even attempts to cooperate with Anpilov’s radical communist party remained rhetorical). Gradually, the NBP started to function as canalization of the youth protest removed from the real power struggle. Its activity became more disturbing for dissidents and human rights activists than for politicians. Such extremist opposition ultimately satisfied Putin’s regime. NBP actions were sensationalist, presented no real danger to the regime, and simply scared off ordinary citizens. The Nazi image of this movement provided the government the opportunity to repress its activists without any objection from the international community. Step by step, the NBP was forced off the public policy field and marginalized.

Approximately the same role was played by Avangard Krasnoy Molodyozhi [Avant-garde of Red Youth], which was close to Anpilov’s Trudovaya Rossiya [Workers’ Russia]. This organization, established in 2000, was inspired by the NBP’s use of the youth protest, adding an extra ideological charge. The NBP had no distinct ideological doctrine and counted among its members Nazis, new leftists, and Trotskyites; the AKM meanwhile purposefully adheres to a radical variant of communist ideology. Frankly speaking, the ideological factor does not play the central role in youth movements: the structures of the NBP, AKM, and other radical groups often have the same members and target groups. Inspired by the Ukrainian example, both associations suddenly felt they deserved to occupy the niche of the mass youth movement on the eve of revolution.

Strangely enough, before the revolutionary events in the Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, Russian political activists and their advisors saw no need to intensify youth work. This deficit was commonly recognized but not considered to be anything dangerous in comparison to the general state of the Russian political regime. Of course, movements such as Opor were famous, but nobody seriously thought about the establishment of such structures in Russia. Talk of the Russian Kmara was prevailingly a refined intellectual mockery. Political analysts paid little attention as long as the “fist” of youth protest was considered to be only a problem of foreign policy. In winter 2004, while all Russian eyes were on the Orange carnival, the youth decided that they could decide the country’s fate. Why should it be impossible in Russia if it has happened in the Ukraine? This thought was a stab in the back of Kremlin political scientists, officials, and journalists. The practice shows that non-party youth movements, financed by grants and guided by Sharp’s principles of non-violent resistance, can attract a considerable number of young activists.

There then began a multi-directional activism. The analytical centres of Putin’s regime kept an attentive eye on the development of the events in the youth organizations, and took certain steps to regulate these processes. Youth structures began a real contest to become the best Russian analogue of Pora! The number of volunteers seemed to be enough to revolutionize dictatorial regimes the world over. The group with the best
chances of becoming the only anti-Putin brand was the new organization Oborona [Defence], which was to the centre right of the opposition. The nucleus consisted of SPS youth and Yabloko. Andiy Yusov, a coordinator of Pora!, stated Oborona was the most viable youth structure in contemporary Russia, but then bitterly added: “But the number of members is ridiculously small”.

While Kyrgyz youth from “Birge!” and “Kel-Kel” watched in surprise the unexpected success of their revolutionary programme, the search for equivalents of these non-violent resistance movements was going on in Russia.

The anti-revolutionary project: “Kremlin candies”

The strategy of the Russian authorities was elaborated by political scientists with Pavlovski at the head. Frustrated with the professional fiasco in the Ukraine, he conceived two important steps for the prevention of youth revolution in Russia. The first was guided by the following logic: if one cannot prevent the youth protest movement from forming, it must be masked by a dozen controlled ones. Several “radical youth movements” were created by the Kremlin in order to recover part of the radical youth. Of course, not all of the leaders were Kremlin agents; but the whole situation was evidently the result of manipulation ordered by the Putin administration. In Russia, several organizations shared a common name - Pora, Russkaya Pora, Orangevaya Moskva-Pora, and Krasnaya Pora. There was even a provocative movement that unified this word with the swastika. Organizations such as DA! [Yes! one of the Orange slogans], My! [We!], and Khvatit! [Enough!] were established. They distributed anti-Putin manifestos, created websites, but could hardly have been called active. This was also superposed by the struggle between real youth structures; for instance, the youth fraction of the Rodina [Fatherland] party chose the name Ura! [Hurray!], Irina Khakamada’s party Nash Vybor [Our Choice] established the youth wing Stop-kran [Emergency brake]. The situation resulted in the simultaneous functioning of dozens of oppositional brands, leading people to the conviction that none could be treated seriously.

Having split the youth movement, Pavlovki proceeded to the next stage: the creation of a strong player on the youth field completely subordinated to Putin’s administration. That is how Nashi, the ultrapatriotic, pro-Putin organization of Vasilii Yakimenko (creator of Idushchiye Vmeste, established in 2000 with Putin’s assistance) appeared. The Russian government adopted the federal programme, the “Patriotic upbringing of the citizens of the Russian Federation in 2006-2010”, according to which more than seventeen million dollars is provided for patriotic propaganda among the youth. Naturally, the majority of this will be directly or indirectly passed to Nashi. Research shows that awareness of Nashi among the Russian population increased from 4 per cent to 17 per cent between March and July 2005.

Nashi, and their radical difference to the Soviet-type organizations such as BRSM, lies in the use of the techniques elaborated by Opor and similar organizations. These are structures of organization, radical rhetoric, semi-military terminology (“commandants”, “commissars”), the creation of a mood of change and prospects of direct participation in the political life of the country. This organization has the image of “militant squadrons” that must protect Russia’s interests. They have no other ideological position other than to support Putin. The formal anti-fascist rhetoric of Nashi covers plans to make short work
Nashi are ready to support the Kremlin during future presidential elections and replace the old officials, some of whom are already “rotten and infected with defeatist moods” (another PR invention: “defeatists”).

Nobody knows who the democratic candidate in Russia will be; however, an oppositional youth front – the anti-Maidan – has been already created. There are grounds to assume that Pavlovski’s inventions will be used by the Belarusian authorities.

**State and anti-revolution**

The revolutionary political project in Belarus is trying to gain public sympathy. Naturally, the authorities have much larger political and economical resources. The whole state apparatus is on its side. However, the revolutionary project in Belarus has a trump card – the feeling of inevitability of revolution and change. According to the results of the cooperative Slovak-Belarusian poll distributed by the Bratislava Pontis Foundation in spring 2005, about one third of the country’s population is dissatisfied with the situation in Belarus and supports change. Thirty-nine per cent of Belarusians demonstrate various levels of support for persons who publicly protest against the existing regime, the same figure as in the Ukraine on the eve of the last presidential election. Meanwhile, forty-nine per cent of Belarusians do not believe a future election could be fair and honest. The opposition expects a revolutionary situation to have developed in the country by the time of the election.

On the other hand, sociology is only sociology. People, not percentages, take to the streets. The opposition plays bluff with the threat of revolution and its enemy accepts these rules. All political projects that do not support this disposition are off side. They can act only as an element of the fundamental revolutionary or anti-revolutionary strategy.

Belarus has also become the main target for anti-revolutionaries because revolutionaries have declared that the country will be the next step in the efforts of the international revolutionary-democratic International. Only in Belarus does the political opposition openly state the impossibility of changing the political regime in a non-revolutionary way. This principle is the foundation of the opposition’s strategy to attain power. The unified opposition considers the presidential election of 2006 not as an electoral race, but as a reason for non-violent revolution. The Belarusian opposition is preparing the revolution in advance because of the lack of belief in the possibility of a free manifestation of the will of the people in the presidential election of 2006. Lukashenko’s words about the impossibility of revolution in Belarus only emphasize the possibility of such events. The Belarusian revolutionary lobby has revolutionary science and political strategy at its disposal. The Belarusian revolutionary project is notable for its poor financial resources; but money is far from being the main factor of the coloured revolutions.

Anti-revolutionary currents in Belarus and Russia have their own particularities. However, despite differences in terminology and methods, the obvious difference between the political regimes, and economic conditions, the anti-revolutionaries of Russia and Belarus share the same ideological foundation. This was demonstrated in the speeches of the Russian anti-revolutionaries during the European forum. Like their Belarusian colleagues, they seek to manipulate mass consciousness when speaking of the “development of the democratic fundamentals of stability”. Belarusian anti-revolutionary
tactics include the prohibition of NGOs, non-transparent methods of counting votes, the imprisonment of political opponents, and worse. At the same time, peaceful protest and non-violent resistance to falsifications are called “manipulative sciences”. The very term “development of democracy” is understood by anti-revolutionaries in a purely instrumentalist way, as a process that can bring undesirable conditions if left to itself. “Support of democratic development” is a complicated task that demands thorough analysis of geopolitical and geo-strategic theory, the national interests of the leader state, and the use of the modern techniques of manipulation of public thought and electoral processes. In short, it is high time to proceed from brute sciences to refined methods of spreading “dirigible democracy”. Belarusian anti-revolution aimed at enforced dictatorship and the extensive use of repression, whereas the Russian way, along with limitation of liberties, provides more flexible ways to prevent revolutionary crisis. Belarusian democrats face the temptation to accept the allegedly milder and more democratic Russian project for Belarus. However, it too is aimed at preserving the status quo.

Belarusian anti-revolutionary forces understood the following from the previous revolutions: they happen when the authorities demonstrate weakness. Belarusian anti-revolution does not use repression alone; it also relies on “state ideology”. Stability has become the holy cow of the Belarusian regime, together with the slogans such as “relying on our own forces”, and rational arguments for Lukashenko’s dictatorship. After the revolution in the Ukraine, the Belarusian regime became more violent towards the opposition. Besides, events in Ukraine favoured the re-animation of the Belarusian-Russian project of integration. Now it is not only “gas for kisses”, but the union of the regimes that is in danger. As a result of the Orange Revolution, Russia began to pay more attention to its neighbours. This presents a real danger to the independence of Belarus, irrespective of the ambiguousness of Lukashenko’s integrative rhetoric.

The Orange Revolution in the Ukraine was a good lesson for Putin and Lukashenko, and they learned well. That is why the success of Belarusian opposition in 2006 will depend solely on its ability to act on its own methods, and to rely on national resources. Mechanical copying of foreign experience and sciences will lead to a crushing defeat. Only original and inventive action can bring success and thereby enrich the theory of coloured revolution.

Footnotes

1. Contemporary Russian anti-revolutionism has an "anti-revolutionary" site www.antirev.ru devoted to it (named after an article by the Russian publicist Vitali Ivanov).

2. Revolutionary leaders have not always witnessed their success: the repressive system creates the illusion of the totally controlled society. Many Ukrainian intellectuals were pessimistic about the chances of changing the regime through the elections in 2004. For example, the pre-election issue of "Ji" magazine from Lviv, the printing of which was finished after the revolution, was entitled "The language of the dumb country". The editors could do nothing but cross out the word "dumb" on the covers and turn the editor's foreword into an explanation for their scepticism: "While preparing the number about language in the beginning of autumn 2004, we chose the name 'Language of dumb
country' with bitter conviction. It seemed to us that we were living in a dumb society, that the Ukrainian language and everything Ukrainian has been hopelessly forced out of the majority of the public spheres -- from sport and entertainment up to business and science. I can't say for sure, but probably that's how most of our authors felt in these times.

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