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Legitimacy and the discourse of revolution

Abstract

The paper analyses the phenomenon of legitimacy crisis as a key factor for the revolutionary change. The latter opens the way to a new rationalisation of history, generating new political narratives and giving birth to a new system of laws. This system encounters resistance because of the old regime's legal heritage and it is established by counter-power and imaginary institutions. Hence, the radical metamorphosis of political imagination produces certain forms of revolutionary legitimacy. The author develops a theoretical conception of revolutionary legitimacy, taking into consideration the interpretations of revolutionary practices around the world along with the experience of the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity.

Keywords: *legitimacy crisis, revolutionary change, rationalisation of history, legislation of the old regime, political narratives.*

All the disenchantments of history won't alter the fact of the matter... the time of human beings does not have the form of evolution but that of "history" precisely.

Michel Foucault "Useless to Revolt?"

One of the greatest challenges for intellectually engaged contemporaries of revolutions consists in conceptualising the values of extreme civic action. There are no failure-free universal theoretical lenses that will facilitate a socio-philosophical analysis of this predominantly enigmatic phenomenon appearing as "the existential core" (François Furet) at the heart of a given historical period. However, types and ways of legitimising political power and certain patterns of con-

stituting social representations can serve as sufficiently distinct objects for analysis being made by careful observers of radical replacement of public conventions by a number of the society's proposals. It should be borne in mind that the three types of classical Weberian legitimisation – traditional, legal-rational and charismatic – are ideal types, or, as aptly defined by one of the founders of sociology, “research utopias”. The 2013–2014 Ukrainian Maidan is no exception in this regard. It would also be useful to emphasise that research utopias of that kind are not adequate for a researcher to comprehend the socio-political dynamics of contemporary societies drawn into the revolutionary maelstrom. The phenomena like “cold communication” and its “indifferent alterity”, “metamorphoses”, as originally defined by Jean Baudrillard, exert significant influence on today's political, cultural and even scientific processes.

In this case, metamorphoses relate to stunning changes in TV news narratives representing shocking surprises to the recipients of these messages. A clear manifestation of such “ecstasy of communication” (Baudrillard) can be seen, for example, in the strategy of deceit conducted by Putin's regime in the so-called “hybrid war”. The foot soldiers of the information war like Dmitrii Kiseliiov inject into mass consciousness all sorts of fabrications constantly shuffling them like a deck of cards and transforming true events into virtual, phantasmagorical TV reality.

They take into account the fact that human memory is configured so that it cannot retain all the consecutive stages of “the Big Lie”. A striking example of this technology is a story about a crucified three-year-old boy, which was told by a collaborationist woman from Donetsk. First, the news anchor prepares the audience to perceive this “crown jewel” of the Russian state-sanctioned propaganda: “The mind refuses to understand how that can be possible at the centre of today's Europe. The heart does not believe that such a thing can be done”. Then follows an interview with “a native of Transcarpathia”, who, in a tragic tone, talks about mythical great-grandchildren of the SS “Galicia” combat division soldiers (whose atrocities her grandmother had allegedly witnessed). In the interviewee's words, these great-grandchildren rose from hell where their ancestors reside – to commit the act of crucifixion. Here we have a set of narratives characteristic of information warfare. We are asked to “witness” the image of “hell raisers” sent by radical evil embodied in the mythical “great-grandchildren of the ‘SS’ Division” and the accompanying scene of infernal violence which provides the subtext; moreover, in the subtext of the manipulative technology “even fiction is never ‘just’ fiction”.

References to the SS “Galicia” division play a significant role in today's neo-imperial mythology of Russia, not least in order to cover up the irrefutable historical fact that there were six Russian military units within the structure of the SS, including two divisions, two regiments, one brigade and one corps totaling about 50,000 men: the 29th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS “RONA”¹ (1st Russian), the 30th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (2nd Russian), Volunteer Regiment SS “Varyag” (“The Varangian”), Volunteer Regiment SS “Des-

¹ Abbreviation for Russkaia Osvoboditelnaia Narodnaia Armiia (the Russian People's Liberation Army).

na”, the 1st Russian National Brigade SS “Druzhina” (“The Squad”), and the 15th SS Cossack Cavalry Corps. Furthermore, the 29th Waffen Grenadier Division participated in the suppression of the Warsaw uprising and the 30th Waffen Grenadier Division fought against the Maquis in France. The Russian mass consciousness is also freed from the “harmful” knowledge of the existence of local Waffen-SS units in most countries occupied by Nazi Germany. Suffice it to say that the notorious 33rd Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS “Charlemagne” (1st French) was positioned in combat zones around the Reich Chancellery, fiercely defending Hitler’s bunker as Soviet troops were storming into Berlin in April 1945.

The story of the “crucified” boy serves as an illustration of suggestion techniques used in Russian information warfare, namely in the “war of archetypes”, as it was precisely defined by Pavel Lobkov, a well-known journalist working for a Russian TV channel “Dozhd” (“Rain”). [“Rain” TV Channel]. It was of the same nature, according to Lobkov, as a story of the “White Tights” squad consisting of female snipers from the Baltic countries who supposedly fought on the side of “anti-Russian” forces and volunteer units during armed conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, Chechnia, Dagestan and Nagorno-Karabakh (Upper Karabakh) throughout the 1990s. This fictitious image produced by Russian imperial propaganda had been readily taken up by Russian journalists, conservative writers and chauvinistic politicians.

The “crucifixion” story eventually turned out to be “invented” by a wife of a DPR (Donets’k People’s Republic) militant. There are enough reasons to believe that this fake tale was consciously composed according to the strategies of psychological warfare designed by Russian security services (it should be also noted that the boy’s age and details of his “execution” varied from one story-teller to the next). These strategies often involve various discursive shocks and preparatory manipulation of story-listeners’ consciousness by using phrases like “one’s mind refuses to understand”, “one’s heart cannot believe”, etc. These narratives function as preventive legitimisation for the fabricated news to follow. The preventive legitimisation, in turn, is used to mobilise the demons of archaic consciousness, thereby gaining victory in conquest campaigns.

Propaganda techniques like these serve as a prerequisite to combating the discourse of revolution and are, actually, a kind of verbalised resistance of informal institutions. The fact is that each destroyer of “the old regime”, whether a radical trouble-maker or a moderate reformer, is bound to deal not only with the system of formal political institutions but also with a system of virtual informal institutions that often serve as a social basis for the regime’s existence. Public discourse often presents these virtual institutions as a universal meme also known as corruption. Characteristically, the society customarily feeds the stereotype according to which corruption predominantly signifies different forms of bribery. However, corruption cannot be limited to a system of bribery, nepotism or clientelism. Corruption is primarily a failure of state institutions to properly perform their functions; moreover, this failure has an entirely planned and intentional nature being an integral part of the state’s privatisation.

As a rule, any revolution is supposed to generate a new legal order which serves as a basis for the emergence of a new law. However, any attempt to reconcile law and order results in the former’s takeover by the existing order of things

which has been in place for decades or even centuries. It is against this order that people actually rebel and demand that it be rejected because it is no longer legitimate, especially with regard to informal institutions. This mainly concerns corporate solidarity in the law enforcement system, public prosecution, judiciary, fiscal service, customs, etc., in other words, the administrative hierarchies acting as a tool for carrying out criminal activities based on organisational, informational and financial resources of formal institutions.

As a matter of fact, revolutionaries gain the right to produce a new rationalisation of history which gives priority to narratives related to the exercise of the right to rebel and serving as a basis for legitimising a newly emerging political reality.

The Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity is no exception in this regard. Suffice it to say that for a long time we have been witnessing the deployment of a grand simulacrum called “the fight against corruption”: the established order of mutual corporate cover-ups repeatedly undermines any attempt to change things through legal action. It was no coincidence that the former Head of the Security Service of Ukraine Valentyn Nalyvaichenko insisted on establishing a special tribunal for the prosecution of both terrorists and corrupt officials. Born by philistine¹ nature of shady dealers, such things as discussions, negotiations and coordinated search for the benefit present an obstacle to the fundamental revolutionary renewal of law and hence – to the new legitimisation. It should be emphasised that what the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity demanded was not just a rotation of the political elite but putting an end to degeneration of the state’s political institutions. During the period of Ukraine’s independence, the state’s institutions were actually privatised, which resulted in losing their national role and turning into an enforcement unit of the criminal corporation. The struggle for the state as an instrument for pursuing purely corporate interests does not abate even now, at the time of war.

A radical renewal of public discourse is an integral part of the revolutionary change which is inconceivable without bringing innovations to language and reformatting the symbolic space of collective action. Regarding the discourse, the author primarily means the aggregate of power-knowledge whose basic principles were outlined by Michel Foucault. It is strictly revolutionary changes in conditions and forms of social and political communication that provide the strongest support for the idea of discourse as an aggregate of power-knowledge advanced by Foucault. It is interesting to note that there is an old restaurant in Paris, which represents one of the symbolic topoi² of the French Revolution. The restaurant called *Le Procope*³ is still running today. It was frequented by such US envoys to France as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, who edited the text of the “Declaration of Rights...” at the dinner table. The future leaders of the Montagnards Danton and Marat also met there. The floor of the restaurant is covered with red carpets ornamented with royal lilies; therefore, all the visitors

¹ A person who is guided by materialism and is usually disdainful of intellectual or artistic values.

² Greek for “places”.

³ Located at 13 Rue de l’Ancienne Comedie, 75006 Paris, France.

have to walk over the trampled symbols of the abolished monarchy. Le Procopé's waiters wear leather aprons as a symbol of the Freemasons who played a significant role in the French Revolution. The doors of the restroom are marked with the plates "for male citizens" and "for female citizens". The ceiling of the restaurant features a chandelier decorated with a piece of carmine red cloth in the shape of a Phrygian cap, a famous symbol of liberty and reason.

Revolutionary discourse undoubtedly remains an integral part of modern social imagination of the French, being an important constituent of legitimisation of the nation-state's values and institutions. Taking a closer look at its historical modifications, one can see how all of the social developments and changes in established social structures relate to the latter's conservative inertia and the temptation of guaranteed power.

It would also be advisable to mention Alexis de Tocqueville who perfectly demonstrated in the essay "The Old Regime and the Revolution" that the French Revolution accelerated the development of institutions of the absolutist state and administrative centralisation by destroying the French nobility and creating a modern administrative state. The Montagnards ardently campaigned just for this kind of a nation-state in the *Assemblée Nationale Législative*. But eventually, the revolution served as a transition from a traditional monarchy to the Jacobin dictatorship [Furet, 1978: p. 283].

It brought about new forms of legitimisation whose development primarily depended on the so-called *sociétés de pensée*, or "communities of thinking" better known as Masonic lodges. François Furet refers to these numerically small but militant groups as intermediaries in the process of constituting an imaginary historical reality by the egalitarian society, calling them "the experts in ideological surrealism". It was they who contributed to the establishment of consent between anonymous oligarchs, various go-betweens, companies created by shady persons and such interchangeable characters as Brissot, Danton and Robespierre [Furet, 1978: p. 278].

This process was quite similar to what is going on in post-Maidan Ukrainian society today, where a mechanism of latent governance keeps functioning and it is repeatedly associated with different nouveaux riches having a criminal record, all kinds of heroes and crooks, politicians known as "birds of passage" since they have changed their party affiliation too many times to count. The facts of theft of voluntary donations during the war with Russia, bribery of MPs¹; heroic warriors and fearless defenders of the country who are at the same time smugglers, tycoons-patriots profiting from the war — all this constitutes the current social and political landscape in post-Maidan Ukraine. In contrast to "communities of thinking" popular in the era of the French Revolution, the projects of legitimisation and social consensus in today's Ukraine are put forward by consolidated groups of corrupt officials and oligarchic clans. They do not produce historical surreality. Instead, they exploit such symbols of democratic legitimisation as rights and freedoms of citizens, the concept of "the rule of law" and a competitive market economy. In doing so, they rely on the etatist institutions, mainly on law

¹ A member of parliament.

enforcement agencies, as well as on the existing structure of government and corporate solidarity of the Soviet era mindset.

The trans-historical validity of the above structures can be clearly seen in the configurations of a given period's linguistic landscape. Revolutions generate clashes of symbols and contests between linguistic strategies. These processes were analysed by Karl Marx in the essay "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" as early as the mid-19th century (1852). An innovative vocabulary indeed encourages revolutionary change. However, leading actors of revolutions quite often resort to historical analogies. Recalling how Martin Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul or how the leaders of the French Revolution draped themselves alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, Marx compares them to a beginner who is learning a foreign language and always translates it back into their mother tongue. The beginner is unable to assimilate the spirit of the new language until it replaces their native tongue [Marx, 1987: p. 8].

Marx's critical pathos can be attributed to his commitment to the stereotypes of his project of socialist revolution meant to erase the "original sin" of the society based on the principles of economic liberalism. Alienation and enslavement of humans can be overcome through the liberation of the proletariat from the chains of exploitation, through a leap from prehistory into the realm of history. However, in the 20th century the world witnessed numerous examples of blatant exploitation of new slaves in the countries which had experienced the socialist revolution. It is evident that Marxist concept of modernity and post-modernity arranges historical events in a diachronic dimension constituted by the very "principle of revolution" (François Lyotard). According to Lyotard, modernity always contains the promise of self-overcoming by simultaneously marking the end of a given period and the beginning of a new era. That is why the post-modern is a priori woven into the fabric of modern temporality which carries the momentum of entering a completely different state [Lyotard, 1988: p. 34].

Appealing to an outdated social project in its historically expired forms of aestheticised ideology, to the past-oriented equivalent of domination is in fact, an attempt to re-legitimize this project. Such re-legitimation is conducted through the restoration of linguistic structures and mythologems of the old regime. The will to power emerges as recollection, which in turn emerges as aggregate knowledge of political legitimacy. In this instance, parasitic discourse of the revolution's beneficiaries should be distinguished from the discourse of reactionary forces.

The former represents a form of governance strategies comprising the values of the revolution's grand narrative, as well as its sacralised basis of values and its rationality of domination. In reality, what is concealed under the guise of revolutionary rhetoric is the etatist imagination of the political elite and party bureaucracies. In this respect, the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity shares some common features with the French Revolution which had no extra-social basis – in contrast to the American Revolution which was rooted in religion and English Common Law, not to mention the Bolshevik Revolution based on the prophetic project of scientific communism or the Nazi Revolution which emerged from the racist utopia of National Socialism. Revolutions always constitute a discourse wherein an institutionalised truth strives to prevail over public dialogue. In this

respect, one should say that the concept of dignity belongs to the system of universal revolutionary codes that very quickly turn into memes. One can mention here the dignity of religious communities during the Protestant Reformation, the dignity of the Third Estate at the time of the French Revolution, the dignity of colonists during the American Revolution, the racist dignity in the Nazi Conservative Revolution, the dignity of the proletariat in the socialist revolution, etc.

On the other hand, as was noted by Cornelius Castoriadis, the revolutionaries of all time periods have been obsessed with the idea of rational domination over history and society considering themselves to be the true subjects of social change — a stance that already contains the germ of totalitarianism [Castoriadis, 1990: p. 164].

By usurping the right to be the main representatives of either progress or divine providence, the commissars of history essentially devalue the re-institutionalisation generated by the society's collective activity. To legitimise their project, for example, the Bolsheviks resorted to destruction of language and devaluation of the inner form of words (i. e. the motivation behind the names of objects and phenomena), as well as to creation of prophetic sacral jargon, implementation of pidgin vocabulary, trivialisation and profanation of Marxist discourse. A Russian prose writer Andrei Platonov aptly represented the fundamental characteristics of this process in the story "Kotlovan" ("The Foundation Pit") and in the novel "Chevengur" which feature two competing discourses: that of the Bolshevik experiment and that of the original utopian improvisation, ideological jargon of modernity, "the new language" and the archaic "matter of being/existence". The utopian worldview generated by the power of imagination predominates over the world of language which is closely connected to the organisation of everyday life. Just this world destroys the illusion of absolute stability cherished by the utopian mindset. Little by little, ideological ritualism, the schizoid nature of the public dialogue, the art of imitation and the prevalence of manipulative technologies are becoming the epiphenomena of the above-mentioned discourse war.

These manipulative technologies have become "flesh and blood" of the present-day oligarchic regimes exemplified, in particular, by Putin's propaganda with its mind-boggling changes in ideological priorities, such as a recent switch from the "Novorossiya" project to that of "Syria as a cradle of the Orthodox Christianity". The jargon of authenticity (Adorno) inherent in authoritarian regimes recurs. A large number of narratives and symbolic gestures characteristic of the Byzantine theocratic absolutism starts to form the core of the Kremlin's offensive discursive machinery. To illustrate how this machinery works, it is sufficient to recall Putin's visit to St. Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos in May 2016, when he requested to be officially received in the ceremonial stall in the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God — in the place reserved for Byzantine emperors during the Middle Ages.

In the case of the Revolution of Dignity, the power-wielding fellow travellers of Ukrainian society's passion-driven rebels became possessed by the demon of enrichment and oligarchic strife. Ever since, they have been treating the ideals, art forms and illusions of Maidan as a rhetorical device for their dominance over others. They do not lay claim to power over history — instead, they lay claim to power over society, which guarantees their further enrichment.

Today, power's capacity for striving for legitimacy has been essentially increased due to new knowledge and psychological instruments aimed at fomenting fears, phobias, illusions, as well as owing to the tools for "mobilisation" of existentials (such as anxiety, concern, etc.). The pathos of grandeur and certainty present in all kinds of televised evocations is implanted into the minds of turmoil-stricken individuals. Simultaneously, the style of social behaviour characteristic of the period of post-communism continues to be emulated and reproduced, with its main features including unbridled electoral demagogy, the diplomatic jargon of political scientists and the use of language that hides more than it reveals.

On the other hand, the discourse of "restoration" fights its way. The new language is being attacked by trolls coming from the camp of Ukraine's strategic enemy, Russia, from the overt and covert collaborators, as well as from the politicians representing the party of revenge. Only the ongoing war and dangers associated with "gentle" collaborationism can prevent this revanchist political journalism's discourse from rearing its ugly head.

However, the formal institutions that embody democratic values are starting to work slowly but surely — just as the narrative of revolution and pivotal linguistic changes do, drawing individuals and society at large into the orbit of the new world and mirroring the same trend in the original unfolding of European bourgeois revolutions. At that time, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that the peculiar language of Diderot and Rousseau (the intellectuals who prepared the minds for the French Revolution) gradually began to penetrate into the circles of administrators, including officials of the finance department, only after it spread over and dissolved in the spoken language [De Tocqueville, 2000: p. 62].

The socio-political structure is consolidated by relying on a certain standard of legitimisation, as well as on the symbolised and sanctioned ways of reconciliation with the existing political regime which even the vicissitudes of revolution fail to neutralise. However, the change of linguistic drapery regarded as just a way of changing the representation of social structures may, in fact, become one of the turning points during their historical transformations. It turns out that linguistic innovation, even as a revival of the vocabulary of an old epoch, brings about "genetic" and irreversible changes in the social imaginary — and the more radical such innovation is, the greater opportunities for transformation are instilled in the functioning of a social institution.

The trials conducted during the French Revolution could serve as a good example here. For instance, once the lawyers used the expression "an enemy of the people" at the trial of Louis XVI, which ended with death sentence to the king of France, the concept of the divine origin of royal supremacy was buried forever, although the definition itself had been taken from the justice system of Ancient Rome. In the famous speech made at the session of the National Convention on 3 December 1792, Robespierre disseminated the idea of a new law turning upside down the legal casuistry and traditions of monarchical justice. From then onwards, proper physical violence became a means of legitimising the French Republic and the values of revolutionary changes. In this case, the form and matter of legitimisation were one and the same. Even today, the above speech remains an example of unsurpassed eloquence and a ruthless game of legitimisation. The motto of the speech was determined by the desire to place the King not only outside the law but also outside justice. Robespierre demanded that the National

Convention proclaim Louis XVI a traitor to the French nation and convict him of crimes against humanity. Courts and judicial proceedings, as Robespierre argued, existed only for the citizens (*membres de la cité*): “When a nation has been forced to resort to the right of insurrection, it returns to a state of nature as regards its tyrant... The effect of tyranny and insurrection is... to throw them into mutual war... People do not judge like judiciary courts. They pass no sentences; they hurl the thunderbolt. They do not condemn kings: they thrust them back into oblivion; and this justice is not inferior to that of courts”. So, Robespierre correlates revolutionary legitimacy with the justice of the mind supported by political power [Robespierre, 1792].

Step by step, discourse innovations reshape “the imaginary institution of society” (Castoriadis). In today’s post-Maidan Ukraine, this process is greatly facilitated by renaming streets, squares, cities, towns and villages across the country, being implemented as a part of the de-communisation law. As an important element of the new legitimacy, the process of reshaping is going on despite a flood of simulacra and revanchist political publications. Political and social apathy along with the massive chaotic anomie, which are the prerequisites for oligarchic domination, seem to be gradually becoming things of the past due to the rise of volunteerism, self-sacrifice and heroism, especially after the recent tragic events.

Like all revolutions, the last Maidan testified to the fact that all actors of revolutionary creativity are the bearers of new imaginary institutions. It is not limited to a new consciousness but represents infinite production and self-reproduction of social structures and strategies of communication originating from the volcanic activity of agonistic dialogue. History has always featured the situations where the creation of the new collided with a self-perpetuating vicious circle of dominant social structures; that was, in fact, what happened here in Ukraine. It would be advisable to note that the basis of all profound national revolutions forms due to the ability to create such social structures. Moreover, as each revolution bears the marks of a given national entity, non-national social revolutions do not exist. Whatever can be said about their characteristics, revolutions mostly presuppose the creation of a national state on a new basis — which is the case with revolutions in the United States, Netherlands, Mexico, France, the Italian Risorgimento¹, etc. The author means, first of all, an imaginary nation and a contingent community. Also, he would like to emphasise the total failure of all attempts to find a legitimate way out of a self-perpetuating cycle of social structures. For example, Catalonia and Scotland have been striving to do this legally for quite a long time, but they still do not have their own national states. However, the Great French Revolution is another matter: possessing no sacral basis, it assumed the form of a religious revolution despite knowing neither God, nor worship, nor the afterlife. One of the distinguishing features of national revolutions happening at that time was the fact that, prior to the emergence of Christian Universalism², they had a national, often municipal, colouration and were customarily limited to

¹ Risorgimento (Italian: “Rising Again”) is the 19th-century movement for Italian unification that culminated in the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861.

² As a Christian denomination, Christian Universalism originated in the late 18th century with the Universalist Church of America.

their specific areas outside which they hardly ever broke out [De Tocqueville, 2000: p. 23].

What made the French Revolution unique was the fact that, by striving to establish a national republic, its actors created an intellectual homeland for all Europeans. Similarly, by liberating the territories of today's Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador and Peru from Spanish rule, Simon Bolivar gave impetus to the development of Republicanism in South America and thus contributed to the creation of an "intellectual homeland" for Latin Americans. The form of his revolutionary project was strongly influenced by leading ideas of the French Revolution, as well as by social and political universalism of institutional changes in France. For example, while working on the Bolivian constitution, Bolivar extensively studied Montesquieu's "The Spirit of the Laws" [Lynch, 2006: p. 33].

In the early 19th century, the French model of social change became an integral part of political thought while the concept of "liberty" started to be actively used in the Latin American public discourse. However, the legitimisation of power in the southern parts of the New World continued to function in reliance on the patchwork of traditional values (sacralisation of family and personal ties existing within large family groups and religious communities, privileged status of military corporations, cult of charismatic and authoritarian leaders, etc.) and those of modernity (political freedom, equality, legal rights and anti-clericalism).

This composite nature was emphasised by Simon Bolivar himself when he blamed his subordinates for the fall of the First Venezuelan Republic¹, noting that, in their imitation of an eternal republic, they did not heed the harsh political reality of South America and its historical and cultural particularity [Bushnell, Langley, 2008: p. 136]. In fact, this concerns the fundamental individualisation of each social form which actually determines the course of revolutionary events unfolding on the basis of the right to rebel. Rebellion, in its turn, often involves different forms of violence, including physical. The "Molotov cocktail", an indispensable instrument of the driving force of recent history, emerges as a distinctive symbol of this violence.

However, every revolution carries the danger of legitimising terror because of either massive *ressentiment* or authoritarian arrogance of the revolution's top commissars. The political elite's transformation into exclusive clubs or managers' sects that prevent ordinary people from participating in public affairs is one of the main factors coercing them through terror into revolutionary reforms. Depriving their own decisions of legitimacy, the political elite essentially destroy the very foundation of revolutionary creativity and constitute a danger to the project of radical democratic changes.

The institutional fantasy which became realised in today's volunteer movement and other self-organising structures, such as the Right Sector², represents the promise of social changes in Ukraine, which could lead to the establishment of new values and serve as a basis for the society's self-development.

¹ Existed from 5 July 1811 to 25 July 1812.

² A far-right Ukrainian nationalist political party that originated during Euromaidan events.

To implement the revolutionary legitimacy means to think of the historical process in reliance on the category of the possible, likely trajectories of development, experimental discourses and a laboratory of new values. The category of the possible actualises the values of seemingly outdated messages, as has been the case with the salutation “Glory to Ukraine!” – “Glory to the Heroes!”, once common among the Kholodnyi Yar¹ insurgents, OUN and the UPA militants². The salutation has organically entered the vocabulary of the present-day Ukraine’s governing elite, becoming a part of the legitimisation ritual. The likelihood of revolutionary action quite often depends on the process known as “creeping legitimisation”, which allows for a gradual inoculation of the governing elite weakened by political, geopolitical and economic problems. What is meant here is the transformation from moderate political narratives (as reflected in the slogan of “We demand a fair election!”) to the radical ones (e. g., “Away with the gang!”).

History has remembered the slogans that emerged during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920: “Long live free Ukraine in free Russia!”, “Long live the Federal Republic!”, “Autonomy to Ukraine!”, “Long live an independent Ukraine headed by a hetman!”, etc. It would be expedient to compare this discursive dynamics to one’s desire to pull Leviathan’s tail before the decisive battle, to a military cunning of the revolutionary mind. However, it is impossible to imagine a revolution unfolding without its fundamental principle – people’s willingness to risk their lives (despite multiple threats and organised state violence), instead of enjoying the stability of obedience and the comfort of social conventions. Because of the risk of death, the person who rebels against the existing order devalues and de-legitimises the established historical narratives. Without awareness of this law underlying all uprisings, public opinion is bound to devolve into such tragic platitudes as reflected in the questions like “What did the Heavenly Hundred Heroes die for?” In the essay addressing the Iranian Revolution of 1979 “Useless to Revolt?”, Michel Foucault argued that the ability to take risk is an integral part of the nature of power itself: “... the power that one man exerts over another is always perilous. I am not saying that power, by nature, is evil; I am saying that power, with its mechanisms, is infinite (which does not mean that it is omnipotent, quite the contrary). The rules that exist to limit it can never be stringent enough; the universal principles for dispossessing it of all the occasions it seizes are never sufficiently rigorous. Against power one must always set inviolable laws and unrestricted rights” [Foucault, 2000: p. 453].

Meanwhile, one of the characteristic features of modern political imagination as a basis for legitimisation remains impregnable: it is a purely modern dichotomy between the imaginary political values of the state and those of society in which the former always represents “them”, and the latter always represents “us”. This feature is considered to be a kind of Achilles’ heel and a source of risks for representative democracy. Hence comes the destructive resentment towards the governing elite that emerge as the authorised agents for implementing the so-

¹ The Kholodnyi Yar Republic lasted from 1919 to 1922, fighting for Ukrainian independence and against the Red Army.

² Abbreviations for Ukrain’ska Povsatns’ka Armiia (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) and the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists.

ciety's demands. Cornelius Castoriadis contrasted the above dichotomy with the political imagination of the ancient Greek polis guided by the principle "the law is us and the polis is us". [Castoriadis, 1990: p. 167–170].

However, it seems practically impossible to revive the political imagination of the Greek polis, let alone to make it valid. The socio-historical heritage and economic structure of today's European societies, as well as contemporary geopolitical landscape and innovation-based development of communication technology, completely prevent the revival of political imagination common among the Greek city-state's citizens in the heyday of the Athenian democracy. For example, the idea of justice (note that it is a constituent of modern social and political imagination) was based on property qualifications introduced by an Athenian statesman, lawmaker and poet Solon. Property qualifications stipulated one's right to occupy certain public positions in the polis.

Every revolution is a product of a legitimisation crisis and represents a challenge to the state's monopoly on violence. The goal of every revolution consists in the establishment of new social and political institutions, or in a re-institutionalisation; however, the experience of all revolutions proves that the establishment of such institutions is not usually the result of a rational and premeditated action. Most of them emerge due to stochastic changes and in the process when people exercise their right to revolt and overthrow the system of established laws.

There is a classic example of re-institutionalisation represented by "sotnias" (groups of about 100 people) organised during the Revolution of Dignity, in the maelstrom of the struggle between the state structures of an authoritarian regime and rebelling citizens of Ukraine. Conscious revolutionary action always implies the existence of parallel structures of counter-power that establish themselves primarily in the form of political imagination. Whenever revolutions unfold, this fundamental feature of the political imagination becomes solidified into the narratives about the relationship between society and power; and this is an indispensable part of revolutionary legitimisation.

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