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On the anniversary of Maidan

Dmitry Mrachnik

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In 2013, Kiev found itself in the midst of that most inexplicable, unreadable and irrational force that turned the political life of Ukraine upside down. The regime of Yanukovich, and before him – Yushchenko, for years, had crushed the remnants of rights, provided, if only on paper, the well-being of ordinary citizens of Ukraine. One after the other, “reforms” poured in, carrying the costs from the accounts of the state and employers’ budgets to the shoulders of those who work for wages, and all this patiently, except for the lonely sparks of discontent, was accepted. It would seem that nothing makes people’s anger stronger than the prospect of sweating for slave wages for 60–65 years, and and still end up with nothing? As it turned out, the reason for the riot was the refusal of integration agreements with the European Union. Ordinary people don’t care about interstate, intermarket, and intercapital system of arrangements.

And yet, the dreams of the European Promised Land acted more strongly than the gloomy prospects of harsh reality. When disturbing thoughts about blood and bread become a

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habit, the cause for rebellion becomes something irrational. Something completely meaningless for people in whose interests it would seem, the struggle for freedom and contentment, and not for myth and worship. It is the passing of twenty years from the myth and cult which was a slap in the face, which the most active, and secondly, the inactive part of Ukrainian society were unable to endure.

It is quite true that the power of bourgeois society, which has been growing for years and the whole host of its ideologies, has reacted predictably. It would be strange to expect something different from the public consciousness, led by organic intellectuals of the bourgeois vector. It is for this reason and other experiences about the weak influence of the left that I am overcome by bitter tears. Society can not jump a hurdle that it can not even imagine, and the mere existence of capitalism does not imply a socialist agenda in the emerging revolutionary moods. This is not a dispute between the theories of the world-system or the linear development of socio-economic formations, whose dogmas, unfortunately, cannot help us much in the retrospective analysis of the Ukrainian revolution.

Maidan appeared in form and content as a bourgeois-democratic revolution in a society “not completely au fait with fair” capitalism. This same trait also ruined it as a mass force capable, it would seem, of fundamentally changing the social life of the country. It should be understood that Ukraine built in a solid world economic system in 2013, is not France of 1793, innovatively standing on the threshold of the world political avant-garde. The self-organization and direct democracy of Maidan managed to do even less than, in its time the analogous institutions of revolutionary France. The ruling classes know their business, so they occupy their leading position, they are well aware of their interest and are able to quickly and impartially analyze the historical experience of their predecessors.

The grassroots fraction of Maidan did not fulfill its revolutionary tasks, being unable to go beyond the demands “to change power” and the repetition of the bourgeois-democratic ideology. Not that “intellectuals” were drowning their sorrows, while the people vainly exercised their minds, secretly praying for help. Everyone who knows anything about the issues of the revolution and its tasks has long said everything that can be said, however, their words did not particularly affect the course of events. The reason for this failure is not the weak voices of connoisseurs or the silly heads of the active participants and participants in the occupation of the city center and street fighting.

Awareness of one’s own strength is a process not only lasting, but also frightening. When one realizes that here it is in front of us, the long-awaited power, but there is no real understanding of what to do with it, and even less willingness to answer for it. There is only one thing to do — step back and wait until someone comes forward, someone who’s brave. In this situation, the appearance of an authoritarian helmsman who, with knowledge, would undertake a strong leadership would be a kind of relief. Thanks to this immature approach, revolutionary Ukraine warmly greeted the nationalists, and post-revolution not only let in the bosom of the supreme authority, the old “new” corrupt official and bourgeois cynic Poroshenko, but also continues to endure it. Ukraine has swallowed and dispersed Maidan, and now has a never ending exhausting war, and is shifting military spending onto civilian shoulders, and even less dreams for ordinary people. The revolution ended with the victory of the bourgeoisie and part of the old bureaucracy, those forces that did not particularly complain about life before.

Of course, Ukraine will not be the same, despite the victory of the counter-revolutionary faction of Maidan. To roll back the shift in the public consciousness which occurred is impossible, and hardly anyone will allow such attempts to happen.

The grassroots movement that took shape during Maidan will continue to live in other initiatives and seek new ways of translating its understanding of justice while learning on the go. Political culture has evolved from the “seizure of power” by Maidan in 2004 to uncontrolled bloody battles for it in 2014. A society that survives like this will no longer be able to return to the role of passive electorate, unable to defend its opinion outside the kitchen or polling station.

As for us anarchists, our role in the initiated process is the same as before — to go to work where the class agenda may be in demand, to squeeze out right-wing ideas with faultlessly honest and consistent argumentation, and insist on changes that improve the situation of the working people. Actually, this is what we have been doing all the time before the Maidan and during it. I would not extol the influence of the leftists on the agenda of the initiatives around Maidan, since it was exactly as miserable as the Ukrainian society is ready to accomplish the social revolution. We were fellow travelers of this revolution, in which we managed to save face and tone.

It’s unlikely that we will be the vanguard of social changes in future years, but we have the strength to prevent reactionary rolls and all the opportunities for building up our influence in an audience that Maidan mantras can no longer satisfy. Anarchy will not be born from the mere “folk creativity” in politics, nor will it be born from the naked schemes and programs of revolutionary organizations. We are waiting for global political action, from which we have no right to shirk .