

METAPHYSICS OF THE AZOV MOVEMENT IN UKRAINE

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CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION

Fascism, with the intellectual world that surrounded it, and Communism, with the intellectual world that surrounded it, are so intrinsically woven into the European intellectual tradition that attempting to cancel either, or both of them - declaring them to be irredeemably evil and therefore untouchable - inflicts on Europe a wound so deep that at the time of writing it seems impossible that Europe should recover - which is to say, any chance that it might become a moral entity, knowing its own mind and capable of standing up against the influence of, say, the United States - or indeed the Soviet Union or China in the days when they had the ambition to reshape the world in their own image.

It was partly with this in mind that some eight years ago I developed an interest in the Russian geopolitical thinker, Alexander Dugin, and in particular his evocation of the 'Conservative revolutionaries' in Germany in the 1920s - thinkers who undoubtedly contributed to the success of National Socialism but who nonetheless lived in a state of tension with it. To quote Dugin himself:

*'From the very beginning, we emphasise that we are fundamentally not interested in the so-called "moral" side of the issue related to the Conservative Revolution, since any idea can be discredited in the course of its implementation, and the sphere of political life itself is not free from propaganda vilification. No matter how many bloody crimes "communists", "capitalists" or "fascists" commit, their ideological concepts must be analysed objectively, impartially and without any "party" pathos, if, of course, we want to understand these concepts and explain them to others, and not to "expose" or "refute", which is the task of agitators or propagandists, but not of researchers.'*¹

In this respect Dugin was continuing work already begun in France by Alain de Benoist and the 'New Right', going back to the 1960s, but Dugin casts a wider net than Benoist who is resolutely hostile to anything suggesting either Christianity or Bolshevism.

Dugin's interest in the intellectual world out of which Nazism emerged may seem surprising in a Russian writer, given what Russia suffered at the hands of the Nazis and also Russian pride in the victory of the Great Patriotic War. It is perhaps less surprising that the same - or a very similar - interest has developed in Ukraine. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the 1914 war was a disaster for the West Ukrainians, placing them first under their traditional enemies (in the Austro-Hungarian context) the Poles and then under the Soviet government which they held responsible for the massacre of their fellow Ukrainians during the forced collectivisation of 1929-33. In these circumstances - circumstances in which the only truly motivating political ideas in the New Europe of the nation states were Fascism and Communism - it is quite understandable that Ukrainians anxious to break free from the Soviet Union should look on Nazi Germany as a potential liberator and regret its subsequent defeat.

In Ukraine, though, so far as I can see, the interest in German Conservative Revolutionary thinking developed relatively late, perhaps inspired by Dugin's example. The name most prominently associated with it is Olena Semenyaka, described in a broadly hostile but

¹ Alexander Dugin: *The Conservative Revolution (a brief history of third way ideologies)*, Moscow 1991, accessible at <http://elements.lenin.ru/1konsrev.htm> Dugin of course doesn't always maintain such a superior attitude to agitation and propaganda.

informative account by Adrien Nonjon, as 'The "First Lady" of Ukrainian nationalism.'² Following Nonjon's account:

'Olena Semenyaka (b. 1987) is the female figurehead of the Azov movement: she has been the international secretary of the National Corps since 2018 (and de facto leader since the party's very foundation in 2016) while leading the publishing house and metapolitical³ club Plomin (Flame) ... In the second half of 2019, she was in the media spotlight of the British investigative journalism consortium Bellingcat, which accused Semenyaka of promoting a far-right International. She is indeed seeking to impose her ideology in Western metapolitical debates, successfully rousing interest in her conservative revolutionary vision of European geopolitics.'

THE ROLE OF 'TRADITIONALISM'

Dugin has declared that the two major influences on his thinking are René Guénon and Martin Heidegger.⁴ Semenyaka could maybe claim that the two major influences on her thinking are Julius Evola (who presented himself as a disciple of René Guénon) and Ernst Jünger (and she has shown a particular interest in the relationship between Jünger and Heidegger⁵). Guénon was the founder, together with the Anglo-Indian Hindu theologian and art historian, Ananda Coomaraswamy, of the school of thought known as 'traditionalism.'¹ Together with Coomaraswamy, Guénon got control of the French occultist-theosophical journal *La Voile d'Isis* in 1936, renaming it *Études traditionnelles*.⁶

The 'tradition' in question was a teaching believed to be lost in its integrity but still existing in hidden, fragmentary form in different religious traditions, especially Islam (Guénon lived in Cairo and converted to Islam) and Hinduism. Guénon was suspicious of Buddhism, partly because of its egalitarian nature, but seems to have been won over by Coomaraswamy and by the English mountaineer and convert to Buddhism, Marco Pallis.

² Adrien Nonjon: 'Olena Semenyaka, The "First Lady" of Ukrainian Nationalism', *Illiberalism Studies Program Working Papers*, September 2020, accessible at <https://www.illiberalism.org/olena-semenyaka-the-first-lady-of-ukrainian-nationalism/> Nonjon is a Ph.D. candidate, Department of History Europe-Eurasia Research Centre (CREE) at the Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales de Paris (INALCO), and Associated Research Fellow at the Illiberalism Studies Program at the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at the George Washington University. He gives his interests as Ukrainian far-right, Azov movement, nationalist counter-cultures such as 'eco-nationalism', white rock and neo-paganism.

³ The word 'metapolitical' occurs a lot in these circles. It refers to a work of preparing the way for practical politics, through establishing intellectual and cultural dominance, following the recommendations of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci.

⁴ Alexander Dugin: *Martin Heidegger - The Philosophy of Another Beginning*, Arlington VA, Radix/ Washington Summit, 2014, p.29.

⁵ According to Nonjon: 'Since 2010, she has been preparing a PhD at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy ... on Ernst Jünger's hermeneutics of metahistory, including his dialogue with Martin Heidegger.' I don't know if this has been completed.

⁶ I have some discussion of Guénon and Coomaraswamy in an article on my website: Peter Brooke: *Albert Gleizes, Ananda Coomaraswamy and 'tradition'*, accessible at <http://www.peterbrooke.org/form-and-history/coomaraswamy/> Guénon features prominently in the later chapters of my book *Albert Gleizes - For and against the twentieth century* (Yale UP, 2001). When I was living in France in the late 1980s and 90s I had a lot of dealings with people who were if not disciples at least admirers of René Guénon. On the rare occasions when Evola was mentioned in those circles it was always with contempt.

In what the 'traditionalists' would regard as a 'normal' society there would be a caste equivalent to the Hindu concept of the Brahmin or the Guardians of Plato's Republic, who possessed this knowledge and exercised a spiritual authority on the basis of it. In society as we know it, however, the existence of such a caste is virtually unthinkable. All our knowledge is utilitarian in nature, oriented towards the creation of practical applications:

*'these practical applications constitute the only effective superiority of modern civilisation - moreover a superiority that is hardly to be envied and which, developing to the point where it has smothered every other preoccupation, has given this civilisation the purely material character that has made of it something that is truly monstrous.'*⁷

We have no possibility of even imagining the disinterested 'intellectuality' of a true spiritual authority. Guénon argues that some such spiritual authority still existed in the West in the 'Middle Ages' up to the fourteenth century (he finds it in Dante) but has since been totally lost, its loss rendered absolute in the philosophy of René Descartes and its starting point in individual experience (rather than objective, revealed, principles). Our time is unique in human history in its total lack, and refusal, of any spiritual authority and as such it must end in catastrophe.

Guénon's *Crisis of the Modern World*, published in 1927, is a thundering denunciation of the ideas of progress and democracy. Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, in their polemic against all the 'esoteric' currents of twentieth century thought, *The Morning of the Magicians*, defined Fascism as 'Guénon plus tanks.'⁸

It's a definition I'm almost tempted to accept given that tanks are obviously quite incompatible with Guénon's thought. 'Guénon plus tanks' is a horrible deformation of Guénon's traditionalism yet that is what we find in Julius Evola and, incidentally, in Alexandr Dugin. It is quite clear that what Guénon is aiming at is the reconstitution, if such a thing is possible, of a 'Brahmin' caste - nothing resembling the grotesque parody of the old idea that we find in modern India but a caste with a knowledge of the fundamental principles which Guénon was trying to develop in, for example, his books: *Oriental Metaphysics* and *The Multiple states of being*. The Guénonian Brahmin caste does not act. It is the 'unmoved mover' at the centre of Aristotle's metaphysics. It is obvious that if the likes of Evola, Dugin or Semenyaka are anything in the Guénonian scheme of things, they are part of the 'Kshatriya' - warrior, active - caste and as such they may possess physical - 'temporal' - power but in the absence of a spiritual authority their actions have no more validity than any of the other forms of the much despised 'modernity.'⁹

I think that should be borne in mind when we encounter the almost universal presence of something calling itself 'traditionalism' throughout the 'alt-right' in the US and the 'far-right' in Europe.

Continuing Nonjon's account of Olena Semenyaka:

'She joined the Ukrainian Traditionalist Club (Ukraïns'kii Traditsionalistichnii Klub, UTK), which was founded in 2010 by the young (geo)political analyst Andriy Voloshyn, receiving the support of her professors, Serhiy Kapranov and Yurii Zavhorodnii. As a participant of the political and cultural project "Politosophia," launched by her colleague Sviatoslav Vyshynsky, which aimed at spreading the themes of the conservative revolution and traditionalism among the Ukrainian student youth, Semenyaka published several studies in the International Almanac of Tradition

⁷ René Guénon: *La Crise du monde moderne*, Paris (Eds Bossard), 1927, p. 39, my translation.

⁸ I don't have a copy of *The Morning of the Magicians* to hand and it appears, rather surprisingly, to be out of print, but different variations on the quote are quite common.

⁹ One of Guénon's books is called *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*.

and Revolution (Mezhdunarodnyi al'manakh Traditsii i Revoliutsii) and the departmental journal at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.'

At that stage, Semenyaka and her associates, trying to develop an idea of what a post-Soviet Ukraine could be, were quite close in their thinking to Dugin and his associates, trying to develop an idea of what a post-Soviet Russia could be. Continuing Nonjon's account:

'Semenyaka rose to popularity in the Duginian Traditionalist movement thanks to her article, Conservative Revolution as Mythological Modernism, published in volume 4 of Aleksandr Dugin's anthology, In Search of the Dark Logos. She was invited to speak at the international conference Against the Post-Modern World, which was organised at Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU) in 2011 by the Tradition Center chaired by Dugin.'

'KSHATRIYAS' AND 'BRAHMINS'

In June 2013, the Ukrainian Traditionalist Club organised an 'All Ukrainian monarchical conference' in Kyiv, addressed by, among others, the UTK's Voloshyn, Semenyaka and the monarchist theorist Eduard Yurchenko. Semenyaka spoke in praise of Geydar Dzhemal, who had been one of the original members of the 'Yuzhinsky Circle' in Moscow, the circle which had initiated Dugin into traditionalist teachings. In the first edition of his first book, *The Ways of the Absolute* (Moscow, Arktogetia, 1989) Dugin had called Dzhemal his 'spiritual guide'. This was removed in the second edition, by which time Dzhemal had become an advocate of militant and exclusivist Islam.¹⁰ What Semenyaka admires in Dzhemal is his advocacy of an aristocratic (kshatriya) caste acting in support (but not at the behest) of the mass of the people:

'For G. Jemal, the hero of the Peasants' War of the Reformation era, Florian Heyer, is a symbol of such a union - a nobleman who led grassroots social protests and who was valued by both the left (Friedrich Engels wrote about him in the work "The Peasant's War in Germany") and the right (the 8th SS Cavalry Division was named after F. Heyer, as well as a modern intellectual club headed by G. Jemal).

*'In this context, O. Semenyaka drew attention to the fact that Ukrainians are particularly lucky with their historical traditions, given that the union of traditional and radical forces has always been natural for Ukrainian society, which is especially clear in the example of the Cossacks, an aristocratic military class that, on the one hand, all the time received support from the Church, and on the other hand, rose to the defense of the lower social strata (peasants) and the Church, performing both military and cultural protection functions. Thus, the Djemalian contrast between the "religion of the prophets", which appeals to the kshatriyas (warriors) who are called to lead the uprising of the oppressed masses, and the "religion of the priests", who conceal the truth of liberation from the lower classes by entering into an alliance with the Vaishyas (merchants), also does not work in the case of the Ukrainian clergy, which has always been on the side of the radicals.'*¹¹

Following my own reading of Ukrainian history I don't know what clergy she is referring to. On the one hand the West Ukrainian Greek Catholic clergy were supportive of the people, providing

¹⁰ Jafe Arnold: *From Traditionalism and Sufism to "Islamic Radicalism": The Peculiar Case of Geydar Dzhemal (1947-2016)*, p.5. The article is dated 2018 but there is no publisher. I have it off Arnold's Academia.edu page where it is described as a 'Paper (rough draft) written for the seminar "Sufism, Islamic Mysticism and Western Esotericism" at the University of Amsterdam, supervised by Profs. Marco Pasi and Richard van Leeuwen.'

¹¹ Olena Semenyaka (Ukrainian Traditionalist Club): Account of the Second All-Ukrainian monarchical conference in Kyiv, 10 June 2013 00:02. Accessible at <https://politosophia.org/page/ii-vseukrainska-monarkhichna-konferentsia-u-kyevi.html> (machine translation)

for widespread general education and showing some sympathy for the nationalist cause. But they had little to do with the Cossacks concentrated in the 'Wild Fields' to the East and generally Orthodox and hostile to them (to the point of open warfare). On the other hand, I don't see much support for Ukrainian radicalism on the part of the Orthodox clergy. Ukrainian Orthodoxy in the days of the Cossacks did, however, have its own historical importance. The Kiev-Moghila Academy (where Semenyaka was a student) was formed under Cossack patronage to develop the skills necessary to combat Catholicism. At the time, Ukraine was still part of Poland, the Orthodox clergy were still under Constantinople not under Moscow and the founder of the academy, Peter Moghila, was a Moravian nobleman. The academy therefore had a very 'Western' feel to it. The teaching was in Latin, the arguments in favour of Orthodoxy were framed in terms of scholastic theology, and exotic subjects such as 'poetics', which would have been regarded in Russia as unthinkably profane, were part of the curriculum.

When the area East of the Dnieper (including Kiev) was incorporated into Russia, Peter I ('the Great') saw the Kiev-Moghila Academy as a means of westernising the Russian Church, initiating a process the emigré Russian theologian, George Florovsky, calls the 'ukrainisation' of the Russian Church. But this of course also contributed to the cultural merging of Ukraine and Russia and is therefore regarded with disfavour by Ukrainian nationalists.¹²

Semenyaka's interest in Dzhemal has a slightly ironic twist to it. When she fell out with Dugin she criticised the 'Eurasian' part of his 'Fourth Political Theory' on the grounds that it created a common cultural space with the Islamic and Buddhist parts of the old Russian Empire. She would remain faithful to the 'third way' (the Conservative Revolution - neither Communist nor Fascist) which requires a certain cultural homogeneity. Here we might note in passing a recent speech by Vladimir Putin on the solidarity that the different peoples of the Russian Federation have shown in the present conflict with Ukraine:

'The extent of identification as Russian nationals (where a person primarily identifies as a citizen of Russia, as opposed to a representative of a particular ethnic group), has been growing in recent years in direct proportion to the mounting pressure on our country.

'The stronger the sanctions, the nastier the slander, the higher this manifestation of general consolidation. Over the past five years, this measurement has grown by a third, and by the beginning of 2023, it exceeded 94 percent. According to unbiased statistics, in 2017, 63 percent identified primarily as Russian, and in 2022, 94.2 percent.

*'That is, again, the vast majority of people primarily identify as citizens of Russia, putting their national affiliation, and inclusion in Russian society before that of a certain ethnic group.'*¹³

But we should perhaps keep in mind Dzhemal's view that Islam is a religion of the Kshatriyas - the warriors - and his contempt for the Brahmins - the priests. In an online discussion that followed Semenyaka's account of the monarchist meeting, she refers, I think approvingly, to 'the "religion of priests" who defend "the immanent truth of being."' I would guess she has Guénon and Heidegger in mind. In an article on the relations between Ernst Jünger and Heidegger published in 2012 (and citing Dugin favourably in the footnotes) Semenyaka indicates her awareness of the difference between them which could be expressed in terms of the difference between the Kshatriya as activist and the Brahmin as guardian of being. She has it that

¹² I discuss this in my essay *A church history of Ukraine* accessible on my website at <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/ukraine-2/> See also the ongoing series on Ukrainian history originally published in *Church and State*, accessible at <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/solzhn/ukraine/>

¹³ Meeting of the Council for Interethnic Relations, May 19, 2023. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/28/71165>

Heidegger's initial enthusiasm for National Socialism was in part at least inspired by Jünger's essays *Total Mobilisation* (1930) and *The Worker, dominance and gestalt* (1932) in which:

'instead of the "horizontal" dialectic of the individual and the mass, E. Junger introduces the "vertical" dimension of the metaphysical gestalt of the Worker, which, according to the key formula of E. Junger, mobilises the world by means of technology and the direct "imprint" of which is a new type of person. At this point, the parallelism with the Nietzschean figure of the Overman as "conqueror of god and nothingness" becomes obvious. Thus, the Worker consciously enters into an alliance with the most revolutionary and destructive force - technology, whose "victorious march", in addition to war fires, "leaves behind a wide trail of destroyed symbols"'¹⁴

Heidegger, according to Semenyaka, saw in Jünger's worker 'a chance for an effective counteraction to nihilism.' However:

'After the hopes for epochal changes associated with National Socialism did not come true, the disappointed M. Heidegger finally joined the conviction about the futility of the metaphysics of the will to power, in which he recognised simply the "will to will". And since the question of authority, domination and legitimation constitutes - in addition to Gestalt metaphysics - the main philosophical line of The Worker, which Martin Heidegger singled out right away, his conclusion that E. Junger's philosophical project is the culmination of Western European metaphysics in all its flaws is not surprising.'

She sees this development manifest in Heidegger's study of Nietzsche:

'in the research literature, it has become a common place to point out the fact that M. Heidegger considered the legacy of F. Nietzsche through the lens of Junger's philosophy. The proof of the latter is that Heidegger's qualification of F. Nietzsche's philosophy was not always so unambiguous. Thus, in his first "Nietzschean" lecture, "The Will to Power as Art" (1936–1937), he assigns F. Nietzsche the diametrically opposite role of a successful fighter against nihilism, returning to the origins of Greek philosophy ...' However: 'since 1938, the philosopher adopts a second, different interpretation of F. Nietzsche's thought and surprises consistent and attentive readers with the practical identification of the Nietzschean Overman with the Jungian Worker.'

I single that out because I am one of the 'consistent and attentive readers' who were surprised at the way Heidegger's approach to Nietzsche changes, though I didn't draw the connection with Jünger. As I wrote in my review of Dugin's book on Heidegger: 'Most of the massive four volume book on Nietzsche appears to be written with enthusiasm. We have to get quite far into the third volume before we realise that he really detests what Nietzsche represents in the history of being. He sees it as in perfect conformity with the age in which such huge machinal resources are poured into serving what are essentially only basic bodily needs.'¹⁵

THE EUROMAIDAN 'REVOLUTION'

The break with Dugin occurred in 2014 when, in the context of the Euromaidan 'revolution' (as she sees it), Semenyaka appeared as Press Secretary for the Right Sector. She describes what

¹⁴ Olena Semenyaka: "Across the Line": Ernst Jünger and Martin Heidegger's Dialogue on European Nihilism, published on September 16, 2012 at <https://politosophia.org/page/chez-liniu.html>. Machine translation.

¹⁵ Peter Brooke: Absolute beginner - a review of Alexander Dugin: *Martin Heidegger - The Philosophy of Another Beginning*, Arlington VA, Radix/Washington Summit, 2014. Article published in the Heidegger Review No. 3, October 2016, accessible on my website at <http://www.peterbrooke.org/politics-and-theology/heidegger/>

happened in a podcast discussion with Dugin made for Countercurrents, the website of the American White Nationalist, Greg Johnson:

'I can fully agree with the portrait of the overthrown president Victor Yanukovych as described by Alexander Dugin in the preceding Guide to Kulchur podcast: just like all the other presidents of "independent" Ukraine, he was not particularly pro-Russian, he simply served those who paid the most. It was him who initiated the EU association agreement. Under his rule was held the first secret gay pride parade, which was protected by the special riot police "Berkut" (disbanded after the revolution). However, he repressed Ukrainian nationalists (among others, Yanukovych imprisoned the leader of the future National Corps movement Andriy Biletsky, as well as fabricated the case against the members of his organisation, The Patriot of Ukraine, who were detained for plotting the explosion of the monument to Lenin)¹⁶ and suppressed Ukrainian small and medium business. Yet, when Putin forced Yanukovych to freeze the EU association negotiations (after all, not so beneficial for Ukraine even purely economically) and start integration into the Eurasian Customs Union, we did not pay any attention to the protests of the middle class which considered the EU an economic paradise.

'But, when the students were violently beaten by Berkut, Ukrainian patriots perceived it as a chance to transform the peaceful pro-EU protests into the anti-governmental national revolution, and succeeded in it. When the phase of violent clashes between the police and hired thugs, on the one side, and nationalists, on the other, began in the streets, the liberal pro-EU opposition played zero political role. One could say that it was a backup for the nationalists who were throwing molotovs at the police and were capturing administrative buildings, but, on the other hand, by "supporting" the protesters, the West tried to hijack the revolution and, in fact, has always disapproved of the national-revolutionary methods. So the rivalry between the "Euromaidan" and the national-revolutionary Maidan is obvious enough to understand what side is worthy of and requires your support, especially if you wish to weaken the other side.

'As a result, the overthrow of the regime was successful, however, the national revolution is far from complete. Just like the socialist revolution, which failed in 1905 and succeeded only in 1917, the Ukrainian national revolution might take decades. Right Sector, as a broad national-revolutionary movement, failed to produce a new political class that would be ready to take power after the fall of Yanukovych's regime; consequently, the power vacuum was filled by liberals, oligarchs from the previous political era like Petro Poroshenko and even rebranded members of Yanukovych's Party of Regions.

'This drawback is currently being corrected by the National Corps / Azov Movement as the fastest developing nationalist movement in Ukraine: it has a parliamentary wing, the National Corps party which is represented in every region of Ukraine and counts in its ranks over 10,000 activists, a paramilitary structure, National Militia, often described by the globalist media as the modern "SA," over 30 social and cultural projects as independent NGOs which allow National Corps to practice entryism in all social fields, and, last but not least, the military wing unseen

¹⁶ According to [Vyacheslav Likhachev and Hanna Hrytsenko]: *Reporting Radicalism dossier on the National Corps*, <https://reportingradicalism.org/en/dossiers/groups/national-corps-political-party>: 'On December 21, 2011, Biletskyi was arrested for his alleged involvement in an assassination attempt. On August 23, 2011, a fight involving weapons occurred at the Patriot of Ukraine office in Kharkiv. The dispute emerged over ideology and left Serhii Kolesnyk, who himself wielded a less-lethal "traumatic" pistol during the fight, with stab wounds and a head injury. Although Biletskyi was not involved in the fight itself, the official investigation asserted that he had incited members of the organization to kill Kolesnyk and promised to help resolve any proceeding issues with law enforcement agencies.' Reporting Radicalism is an initiative aiming to provide 'high-quality reporting and analysis on the groups and individuals who pose a serious threat to democratic development and pluralism in Ukraine.' It is 'implemented and managed by Freedom House ... a US-based non-governmental organization' which gives 'promoting U.S. Leadership' as one of its main purposes: <https://freedomhouse.org/issues>

since the times of WW2: the Azov Regiment of the National Guard of Ukraine (subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs), the only volunteer battalion that was expanded to the level of the regiment and the most combat-ready unit of the entire Ukrainian armed forces. A special attention is paid to the educational programs: military ones aimed at the modernisation of the Ukrainian army, political ones preparing the future political leaders and metapolitical structures closely cooperating with the international department; the clash between the liberal and the nationalist flank will continue on a larger scale as we are striving for power and are ready to implement different scenarios.¹⁷

Semenyaka is insistent that the Azov movement is not anti-Russian:

'At the same time, the cultural difference between Eastern and Western Ukraine is much exaggerated. I say it as a bilingual person and a member of the Azov Movement which was born in the Eastern Ukrainian industrial city of Kharkiv and is dominated by mostly Russian speaking activists from Eastern Ukraine. Moreover, there are many ethnic Russians in the ranks of our movement. Furthermore, even my parents have a kind of cultural nostalgia for Soviet times and would never believe that the war with Russia is possible, but they would never enter the streets to oppose the Ukrainian government and soldiers either ... The biggest Eastern Ukrainian cities (Kharkiv, Odessa, Mariupol) remained Ukrainian precisely thanks to the efforts of Ukrainian nationalists and ultras who expelled relatively small groups of "professional separatists." That's why we never use the expressions like "the civil war in Ukraine." Activists of our movement from Donetsk and Luhansk observed the developments since the very beginning and could tell the difference between the local newborn "separatists" who did not know how to handle weapons and single out the political enemies and silent Russian military who supervised them.'

I quote that not because I agree with it but simply as an alternative view of the matter. Likewise she insists that the movement was not, unlike Zelensky, reliant on the support of the oligarch Igor Kolomoisky:

'In times of the Maidan revolution, pro-Putin media associated Ukrainian volunteer battalions with the Jewish oligarch Igor Kolomoisky who supposedly funded them. In reality, he was a governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region, which was the last Ukraine-controlled central region bordering on the so-called zone of ATO (anti-terror operation), which means that the city administration provided transportation to units on their way to the front and nothing else.'

She concludes:

'This naturally leads us to the geopolitical program of National Corps as a vanguard of the Ukrainian nationalism of the new generation which offers the alternative both to the West and Putin's Russian Federation, basically, two forms of globalism which relate to each other as the late Roman Empire would have related to Carthage if the latter had not been ruined by that time.

'While many understand why non-critical Westernisation is not good to Ukraine, our rejection of Putin's Russia requires additional explanations. Practically, it is hard for Ukrainians and Eastern

¹⁷ Olena Semenyaka: Maidan Revolution: Nationalists vs. "Euromaidan", accessible at <https://interregnum-intermarium.tumblr.com/post/183139437749/national-corps-attended-etnofutur-iii-conference> It seems to be part of a conference report delivered to the 'Etnofutur III conference' in Tallinn, hosted by the youth organisation of Estonian People's Conservative Party (EKRE), Blue Awakening (Sinine Äratuse), 23rd February 2019. The following quotes all come from this same very informative website.

Europeans in general to idealise Russia simply because the Intermarium region¹⁸ is comprised of mono-ethnic countries each of which has preserved its national identities and has a titular nation, whereas the Russian Federation is a multi-ethnic state with huge migration tendencies from the non-Russian parts of the Russian Federation and neighbouring Eurasian countries. As opposed to Intermarium countries, including Ukraine, the Russian Federation signed the UN global migration pact, having underlined a positive role of migration for its state building ...

'Therefore, at the moment, the Russian Federation in no way may be seen a hope for Europe, and even Alexander Dugin admitted in the latest issues of his TV program "Expertise of Dugin" that the foreign political triumph of Russia in Ukraine and Syria is useless, for the liberals only strengthened their positions in Russia, and the best thing Russians can do now to preserve themselves in the history is to retreat into the inner emigration and develop the narrative for the future, when the conditions for the patriotic activities will be more favourable [Dugin of course sees those conditions as having been created by the Ukraine war - PB].

'In contrast with his verdict, there are unique conditions since the times of WW2 in the post-revolutionary Ukraine. The Ukrainian national-revolutionary movement can be compared to the Freikorps movement after WW1 that had to counter the Bolshevik threat in the Baltics and inside Germany and at the same time oppose the treacherous Weimar government. However, we do not complain, for the war gave us the opportunities unseen before, both on the Ukrainian and all-European level. While the West and Russia are too busy fighting each other and dividing Ukraine into their zones of influence, we strive to restore the geopolitical sovereignty of Europe starting with the modernisation of the Ukrainian army and the creation of the Intermarium defense union, which demands the rearmament of Europe and the rebirth of its security system instead of the search for the dubious Russian protectorate. The collapse of the euroatlantic solidarity and abandonment of Ukraine by the "world community" are very helpful in this respect.'

This was written in 2019 when the war in question was the confrontation over the Donbass and Crimea, before the outright war that began in February 2022. I don't know how Semenyaka views the current dependence of Ukraine on Euro-Atlantic support.

FROM THE 'RIGHT SECTOR' TO AZOV

As previously stated, Olena Semenyaka, prior to the Maidan 'revolution' in 2013-4, was a frequent contributor to the 'political and cultural project *Politosophia*, launched by her colleague Sviatoslav Vyshynsky, which aimed at spreading the themes of the conservative revolution and traditionalism among the Ukrainian student youth.¹⁹ So far as I can see the last piece she wrote for *Politosophia* was dated 31st March 2014.²⁰ It is a short account of a meeting held on the 29th March 'at the Kyiv headquarters of the C14 organization (the seized office of the Communist Party of Ukraine) to listen to the two-hour lecture by Ihor Garkavenko "Right Yellow" by the light of torches, while politicians and theoreticians like Dugin, who finally started to take Ukrainian nationalism seriously and to give advice to the "Right Sector", invent the fact

¹⁸ The 'Intermarium' is the region lying between the Baltic and Black Seas - Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. Ideally it would also extend to the Adriatic, taking in Croatia and Slovenia. Semenyaka envisages this as a hard core on the basis of which Europe can be reconstructed as a coherent moral entity. More on that later.

¹⁹ Adrien Nonjon: *Olena Semenyaka, the "First Lady" of Ukrainian Nationalism*, Illiberalism Studies Working Papers, September 2020, obtained off the Illiberalism website, so unpaginated.

²⁰ The *Politosophia* website lists the contributions of its different writers. Semenyaka at <https://politosophia.org/page/olena-semenyaka.html>

that we are ready to "bend under the new government". It was about the transition from a national to an actual nationalist revolution, which we must carry out now, deepening and bringing to a logical conclusion the sharp split between the current Maidan and its political representatives in the parliament...'²¹

The meeting was held about a month after the overthrow of the President, Viktor Yanukovich, on the 24th February. The 'sharp split between the current Maidan and its political representatives in the parliament' is described in some detail in Richard Sakwa's book *Frontline Ukraine*:

*'The Maidan now constituted itself as a "people's parliament", acting not just as a check on the new authorities but also to advance policies of its own, notably the lustration of officials considered too close to the old regime or corrupt, or both. The "square" of people's power sought to control the "castle" of government. The square as we have seen was far from homogeneous, and the various contradictions would ultimately be fatal for the revolution. The key contradiction was between the idealism of the middle class "revolutionaries", fighting for dignity and responsible government, and the militants who tended to come from the margins of society and drew on the ultra-nationalist traditions of interwar Galicia. Both groups aspired to overcome the obvious political and economic stagnation of the country, yet their alliance was trapped in a palpable dilemma: if unity was maintained, then the whole revolution would be tainted by the "fascistic" features of the right wing militants; but if it fell apart, then the revolution would be usurped by the restoration of bureaucratic-oligarchic power or diluted by concessions to the pluralists (by now considered tantamount to capitulation to the Kremlin). With the country's territorial integrity under threat, the militant part of the square prevailed over the more pacific "bourgeois" element - although the territorial threats were in large part a response to the militancy of the square in the first place. The alliance was maintained, but the square ultimately brought to the castle little more than a reconfigured form of bureaucratic-oligarchic power, although now espousing the rhetoric of civil society and its ultra-nationalist inflections.'*²²

The name of the group Semenyaka was addressing - C14, or S14 - is, according to its Wikipedia entry, a play on the Ukrainian word 'Sich', traditional centre of Cossack organisation. The word in Ukrainian - Січ - looks like C14 in English. It has also been claimed that the '14' represent the 'fourteen words' of a US White Nationalist, David Eden Lane - 'We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children' or 'Because the beauty of the white Aryan woman must not perish from the earth.'

Be that as it may, C14 (which later, in 2018, made a name for itself terrorising a Romany camp²³) was part of the loose alliance of what might be called traditional Ukrainian nationalist groups - chiefly the political party, Svoboda - gathered together under the umbrella label The

²¹ Olena Semenyaka: *"Right October" and the Second Nationalist Revolution of Igor Harkavenko*, <https://politosophia.org/page/pravy-zhovten-i-druha-natsionalistychna-revoliutsia-ihoria-harkavenka.html>, machine translation.

²² Richard Sakwa: *Frontline Ukraine - Crisis in the Borderlands*, London, I.B.Tauris, 2015, pp.93-4. The 'pluralists' mentioned in the article are those who were willing to make concessions to the Russian side of Ukrainian culture. This, and the conflict with the Ukrainian exclusivist 'monists', will be discussed in more detail further in the present article.

²³ See eg Christopher Miller: *Police Break Silence After Video Shows Far-Right Attack On Kyiv Roma*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26th April 2018 - <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-police-break-silence-after-video-shows-far-right-attack-on-kyiv-roma/29194216.html> See also *ibid*: *Ukrainian Militia Behind Brutal Romany Attacks Getting State Funds*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 14th June, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainian-militia-behind-brutal-romany-attacks-getting-state-funds/29290844.html>: 'C14's Educational Assembly and a C14 Sich children's summer camp will receive 440,000 hryvnia (about \$16,900) from the ministry for three children's events.'

Right Sector. It was The Right Sector who had come to dominate the events on the Maidan in 2014, including most probably the sniper fire against both police and demonstrators which finally brought about the flight of Yanukovich.²⁴ It was they who were responsible for the large portrait of Stepan Bandera which dominated the Maidan protestors' headquarters. Semenyaka was working for them as a press officer but later in 2014 she transferred her affections to Azov. According to Nonjon: 'the divorce was completed in 2015, when Semenyaka joined the Azov Regiment's National Guard unit.' It is important to stress the distinction to be drawn between Azov and the Right Sector. Nonjon goes on to say ("First Lady" of Ukrainian Nationalism): 'That decision was not just an instance of opportunism. Rather, it was driven by shared ideology and ambitions: war is omnipresent in the political discourse of the Azov movement. Building on the soldierly ideal of German revolutionary conservative authors like Ernst Jünger and Ernst von Salomon, war is a constant reference for Semenyaka, too: war justifies the need to design a new form of society where the interests and protection of the people are absolute priorities.'

SVYATOSLAV VYSHYNSKY - RIGHT WING PLURALISM

Given that Semenyaka's contributions to *Poliltosophia* cease at this point one might imagine that in the course of the Maidan events there was a rupture between herself and Vyshynsky. But in fact Vyshynsky appears later at Azov sponsored conferences organised by Semenyaka.²⁵ I'm not in a position to know what importance, if any, Vyshynsky has in Ukrainian intellectual life but I find him interesting. His articles prior to 2014 cover much the same territory as Semenyaka's - the overlap between traditionalism (following on the work of René Guénon) and the German Conservative Revolution of the 1920s, territory held in common with Alexander Dugin, whom they both seem at that time to regard favourably. Perhaps Vyshynsky leans more to the traditionalist side, Semenyaka to the Conservative Revolution side. Vyshynsky has an article comparing Guénon and Heidegger, Semenyaka has the article I quoted earlier on the relations between Ernst Jünger and Heidegger. There is a long, almost unreadable (perhaps due to the machine translation) dialogue between them - 'About "Body and Law in Ap. Paul"', December 23, 2011, apparently based on the book 'Saint Paul, The Foundation of Universalism' by the French philosopher Alain Badiou. But after Maidan, Vyshynsky begins to comment much more concretely than Semenyaka on the actual details of Ukrainian politics and he takes positions that might appear surprising in someone associated with the Ukrainian right.

In *Frontline Ukraine*, Sakwa draws a distinction in Ukrainian politics between those he calls 'monists' and those he calls 'pluralists'. The monists want a monolithic, monolingual Ukrainian state, a tight identification of state and national consciousness. The pluralists want to take account of and give space to the different peoples and languages in the Ukrainian population, most obviously the Russian but there are also substantial Hungarian, Romanian and Polish minorities, not to mention the Tatars in Crimea. Following Sakwa one would see the monists as

²⁴ This is the argument developed by the Canadian researcher Ivan Katchanovski in eg *The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: Revelations from Trials and Investigation*, Paper presented at the virtual 10th World Congress of the International Council for Central and East European Studies, Concordia University, Montreal, August 3-8, 2021, updated November 29, 2021.

²⁵ eg Olena Semenyaka: *The Azov Movement held the Inaugural Conference of the Intermarium Support Group* account of a conference held in Kyiv on July 2nd 2016, 'on the initiative of Andriy Biletsky, the leader of the Azov Movement, MP of Ukraine, the founder and the first commander of the Azov Regiment' - <https://intermarium-support.com/en/the-azov-movement-held-the-inaugural-conference-of-the-intermarium-support-group/> - 'Speeches by other Ukrainian participants on the geopolitical, educational, scientific and cultural topics (Olexandr Maslak, Olena Semenyaka, Edward Yurchenko and Svyatoslav Vyshynsky), among others, made especially clear that the "eurointegration" line of the current Ukraine's government was artificial and untimely.'

the right wing of Ukrainian politics and the pluralists as the left liberal wing. Yet the apparently right wing Vyshynsky is a thoroughgoing pluralist, to the extent of calling for a federalisation of Ukraine:

*'Analysis of the political discourse of the most influential Ukrainian right-wing parties - the All-Ukrainian Association "Freedom" [Svoboda - PB] and "Right Sector", which after their defeat in the parliamentary elections on October 26, 2014 (4.71% and 1.80% of the vote, respectively), expected, already in the next election cycle they will create some kind of block - indicates the general "dead end" into which the nationalists have entered. Their demands, reduced to the formula "One nation, one language, one state", are increasingly difficult to fulfill in the real situation, which will inevitably lead to the marginalization of the right-wing movement, and in the worst case - to its transformation into a destabilizing factor of domestic Ukrainian politics. The impossibility of restoring even formal control over Crimea and Eastern Donbas in the foreseeable future only deepens the negative perception by society of these about the need to reduce Crimea to the status of a region, repeal of the legislation on local languages and, in general, all specific nationalist rhetoric, associated for the majority with colonial "Western" influence and such that is perceived at bayonets even in the western Ukrainian regions. The images, topics and actions peddled inertially by nationalists at best play the role of indestructible fantasies, at worst - become a means of media intimidation from the outside, but they clearly preserve the movement, not allowing it to formulate adequate answers to real, not virtual, political challenges.'*²⁶

The 'legislation on local languages' referred to is legislation passed under Yanukovich allowing the regions latitude in using different languages (chiefly Russian) for official business. It repealed legislation passed under Yushenko imposing Ukrainian as the sole official language. Vyshynsky is referring to the programme of Svoboda which includes the following under the heading 'Preservation of identity and development of culture':

'6.1. Protect the status of the Ukrainian language as the only state language.

6.2. Ensure the functioning of a full-fledged national information space by de-Russifying it and guaranteeing information security. To prevent the dissemination of content that poses a threat to the national security of Ukraine, and to provide for strict criminal liability for the dissemination of such information.

6.3. Introduce a mandatory Ukrainian language exam for civil servants and candidates for elected positions. Create a network of licensed institutions for taking Ukrainian language exams and issuing international certificates under the name "Ukrainian language diploma". Oblige all civil servants to use the Ukrainian language at work and during public speeches.

*6.4. Deprive media outlets that violate language legislation, demean the national dignity of Ukrainians, spread disinformation or carry out anti-Ukrainian propaganda.'*²⁷

Vyshynsky goes on to argue that:

'A conventional, "traditional", monolithic Ukrainian nation can exist incontrovertibly only within the specified framework [the traditionally Ukrainian speaking areas broadly West of the Dnieper PB] — outside of these frameworks, Ukrainian identity acquires unconventional features. It does not mean, that the southeastern lands are not ethno-politically Ukrainian - but they are related to Kyiv and northwestern Ukraine as colonies with the metropolis, which in itself should not be

²⁶ Svyatoslav Vyshynskiy (Institute of Western Ukrainian Studies): *Ukrainian (Con)Federation. Integral separatism*, 20th April 2015, <https://politosophia.org/page/integralny-tradytsionalizm-i-problema-samokrytyky-modernu.html> (machine translation)

²⁷ 'The Svoboda Higher Education Program is the Program for the Protection of Ukrainians', <https://svoboda.org.ua/party/program/> (machine translation)

evaluated either negatively or positively. The territory of the Wild Field, "New Russia", Novorossiia from Bessarabia to the Kuban is the "New World" of Eastern Europe, a nomadic space conquered in the East, which historically never took shape in a stable and independent national organism, but was oriented either towards Ukrainian or then to the Russian project, always choosing between the metropolis-Kyiv and the metropolis-Moscow.'

I find this argument interesting. The model he is employing is not the model of the nation state but the model of Empire. 'Novorossiia' is disputed territory between two Empires - the Ukrainian and the Russian. To refuse to recognise the cultural specificity of the area is to lose it. Svoboda and the Right Sector are heading towards the 'fate of the Communist Party.' By insisting on the purity of the 'usual "nationalist" agenda' they are driving themselves into a political ghetto, they are 'a threat to the peaceful coexistence of the Ukrainian - and Russian - speaking parts of the state.'

But Vyshynsky is no mere pacifist. There is a war to be fought between Kyiv and Moscow over the possession of colonial territories - territories without a clearly defined ethnic character of their own. In this war it is 'first of all the Russian-speaking vanguard of the Ukrainian right-wing movement who are able to take responsibility for reformatting the ideological mainstream in accordance with the situation that has developed in the field of *Realpolitik* [with the separatist revolt in Donetsk - PB]...

'if Ukraine is experiencing difficulties as a national unitary state, then it should turn into a supranational federal state. The destructive tension of permanent defense and resistance must be turned back - into the energy of permanent expansion, offensive, both in the humanitarian and economic and geopolitical spheres ("either us or them"). "Squeezing the spring", freeing public forces and state resources to solve a big problem - can only be done by the most ambitious and radical groups, capable not only of heroic deeds , but also of fundamental thinking.'

Indeed, the 'permanent expansion, offensive' envisaged goes beyond the Donbass since the Don Basin and the Kuban are also regarded as colonial territories.

SEMENYAKA AND THE NEW HUMAN TYPE

I haven't found such an explicit statement in Semenyaka but she does stress the fact that the Azov movement is largely Russian speaking, it originated in Russian-speaking Kharkiv and the first of its men to fall in combat with the Donbass separatists was an ethnic Russian.²⁸ My impression is that the main thing for her is the war itself - the mere fact of war providing the pretext for the development of Azov as a military elite, an aristocracy. Something of this can be found in her essay 'The transformation of Ernst Jünger's alternative to the bourgeois individual.' Summarising Jünger's book *The Worker* (1932), she says:

'Jünger contends that ruin of the individual implies a change of domination. The bourgeois individuals do not vanish without leaving a trace — they are compulsory replaced by the new human "type" which manifests its will to power now. This type is the Worker. Here Jünger makes a series of crucial remarks. He emphasizes that, unlike the bourgeois, the Worker is not an estate ... Neither is it a class in the sense of the revolutionary dialectic of the XIXth century. What makes Jünger's position rather special, the Worker should not be confused with the proletarian. He claims that it is necessary to forget the legend about the economic quality as the main feature of the Worker. It is not surprising that the Worker uses bourgeois vocabulary and

²⁸ 'Olena Semenyaka on the Ukrainian Crisis Part II for Guide to Kulchur podcast', <https://interregnum-intermarium.tumblr.com/post/183139437749/national-corps-attended-etnofutur-iii-conference>

sets the questions in outmoded notions, for the rebellion of workers was prepared in the school of bourgeois thought.

*'However, now the Worker's primal task is to quit thinking, feeling, and existing in the old bourgeois forms. Jünger carefully separates this gesture from romantic disobedience ... the bourgeois, irrespective of their approval or disapproval, have always treated the worker movements as movements of the slaves. However, Jünger's central point is that now it is undoubtedly the movement of the masters. After the Workers have left their anarchic roots behind, their demands can be fulfilled only by a new aristocracy.'*²⁹

She continues:

'The projection of work as a particular way of life is technology. As one of the most cited formulas from "The Worker" declares, technology is the means by which the gestalt of the Worker mobilizes the world.

'This corresponds with the new state of society which Jünger calls the state of total mobilization in his essay with the same heading. It means that all domains of life all over the world fall under character of war prepared by the rapid development of technology. As Alain de Benoist remarks:

"At the same time as war becomes a technical undertaking, the traditional distinction between combatant and non-combatant breaks down. Even the notion of war and peace gives way to the reality of permanent global conflict. Even the pacifist has to be ready to fight for his beliefs! The decisive aspect of the new state of affairs is the fact that all are potentially involved in war and all are available for mobilization."

'Similarly, the type of the Worker displays far more militant sides than those of the bourgeois individual. It is notable for much more casual treatment of death. It is close to the elemental. And it is endowed with radically different sense of freedom which leads to new hierarchy.'

One might question whether this is an accurate description of the working class as we know it today but we might also remember the posters of heroic workers produced by both Communists and Fascists at the time Jünger was writing, posters that would look ridiculous if produced today. The 'bourgeois' idea of the worker which Jünger was criticising has triumphed spectacularly. But we can still read in Semenyaka's essay something of what she thought the Azov movement might be. I began this essay quoting an address she made while still part of the Right Sector in the context of the conflict between the Maidan 'revolutionaries' and the Parliament. She continued:

'this revolution was not an explosion of Ukrainian authenticity itself - it was the locus where the pan-European revolution sprouted and the almost extinct type of warrior - a person, whose main and most valued by society virtue consists in his military and historical existence, because world history is primarily the history of wars. Time to act — the longer we delay, the more legitimacy those people [the parliamentarians - PB] have.'

DIGRESSION ON PRIGOZHIN'S MARCH ON MOSCOW

Here we might note a similarity with Dugin. Dugin has long been fascinated by the *oprichniki*, the personal guard formed by Ivan IV ('the terrible') in order to counter the power of the elite of his time - the 'boyars'. At one point he seems to have imagined that the Wagner Group could fulfil this role. In May 2023 he had this to say about its founder, Yevgeny Prigozhin:

²⁹ Olena Semenyaka: *Transformation of Ernst Junger's alternative to the bourgeois individual*, 12th November, 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160602204720/http://uktk.org/transformation-of-ernst-junger%e2%80%99s-alternative-to-the-bourgeois-individual/#more-480> This comes from the Ukrainian Traditionalist Club and is in awkward English which I have tidied up a little bit.

'For Russians, he has become the main symbol of victory, determination, heroism, courage and resilience. For the enemy a source of hatred, but also of fear and terror. It is important that Prigozhin not only leads the most combat-ready, victorious and undefeated unit of the Russian armed forces, but also provides an outlet for those feelings, thoughts, demands and hopes that live in the hearts of the people of war, completely and to the end, irreversibly immersed in its elements.

'Prigozhin took this war to the end, to the bottom, to the last depths. And that element is shared by the members of the PMC "Wagner," all those who move in the same direction and towards the same goal—the difficult, bloody, almost unattainable, but so longed-for, desired victory. PMC "Wagner" is not a private military company. The money has nothing to do with it. This is a brotherhood of war, the Russian guard, which was assembled by Yevgeny Prigozhin from those who responded to the call of the Motherland in the most difficult time for her and went to defend her, being ready to pay any price ...

'Inside Russia, people accept Prigozhin unconditionally. He, without any doubts, is the first in this war. Whatever he says or does, it immediately resonates in the heart of the people, in society, in the broad Russian, Eurasian masses. It is one of the many paradoxes of our history—an ethnic Jew, an oligarch, and a man with a rather turbulent past is transformed into the archetype of a purely Russian hero, into a symbol of justice and honor for all people. This says a lot about Prigozhin himself and about our people. We believe deeds, eyes, and words when they come from the depths. And this dimension of depth in Yevgeny Prigozhin cannot be overlooked.'

And as the Oprichniki stood in relation to the boyars of Ivan's time, so Wagner stands in relation to the 'élites' of Putin's time:

'Russian elites are another matter. It is precisely because Prigozhin has made a pact with the Russian people, with the Russian majority, on the blood—his own and that of his heroes from Wagner—that he is most hated by that part of the elite that has not accepted the war as its fate, has not realized its true and fundamental motives, has not yet seen the mortal danger that hangs over the country. It seems to the elite that Prigozhin is simply rushing to power, and, relying on the people, is preparing a "black redistribution."³⁰ For this part of the Russian elite, the word "justice" itself is unbearable and burns with the fires of hell. After all, Prigozhin is himself from this elite, but he found the courage to renounce the class of the rich, exploiters, cynics, and cosmopolitans, who despise all those who are less successful, and to move to the side of the warring, country-saving people.

'In such a situation, analysts who belong to these elites as a kind of domestics wonder: how can Prigozhin afford to behave with such a degree of determination, audacity, and autonomy? Isn't he an experiment by much more influential—indeed, simply the highest—forces in Russian politics, who are testing, by his example, the readiness of society to introduce stricter rules and a more consistent patriotic, people-oriented policy?

'In other words, are not Yevgeny Prigozhin and Wagner PMC the forerunners of a full-fledged oprichnina? After all, even in the era of Ivan the Terrible, the oprichnina army was formed precisely in battles and also, as in the case of Wagner, from among the most courageous, courageous, desperate, strong, reliable, active – regardless of pedigree, title, status, rank, position in society.³¹

³⁰ The 'black redistribution' refers to the idea of a peasant uprising to seize control of the land such as actually occurred in Ukraine in 1919.

³¹ Alexander Dugin: *The Wagner Factor and the Fairness Principle*, 1st May 2023, <https://www.thepostil.com/the-wagner-factor-and-the-fairness-principle/>

If we imagine Prigozhin reading this, or at least having similar ideas in his own head, we may have at least one possible interpretation of his recent revolt and also perhaps an explanation of why Putin on the one hand slapped it down so severely (telling Prigozhin he didn't want an *oprichnina*) and on the other treated Prigozhin with such apparent leniency (recognising Prigozhin's good intentions). Dugin's Katehon website was slow in responding to the revolt but eventually yielded a short piece by Dugin and a longer piece by Natalia Melentyeva, who runs *Arktogaia*, Dugin's publisher. According to Dugin:

*'the problem of passionarity has essentially become clear. When it is fatally lacking in the center of the system, it begins to spontaneously concentrate on the periphery. At one extreme, we see a clear excess of passionarity [Prigozhin - PB]. But on the other, there is a clear lack of it [the élites - PB]. This, apparently, is the main energy problem of the authorities. And it needs to be addressed. without delay.'*³²

The immediate problem, he agrees, has been handled very well by Putin and Lukashenko. But the basic problem - lack of commitment to the war on the part of the Russian élites (the boyars) needs to be addressed. Melentyeva develops a similar case at greater length. Suggesting that the response of the Russian people and military to Prigozhin's venture was ambiguous she concludes:

'Prigozhin's march is the culmination of deep processes taking place in our society. It would be a terrible mistake to reduce it to some secondary reasons, motives and grounds.

'Prigozhin's march on Moscow is more than Prigozhin's march on Moscow.

'In fact, this is an ultimatum of our society, presented to the authorities, which, restoring sovereignty, does not pay any attention to the fundamental basis of our Russian identity, which is associated with a heightened sense of Justice, an ineradicable will to build a solidary, friendly, communal society. The Soviet period, socialism, was not an accidental period in our history. It is irresponsible to consider this period a deviation. A Russian person will never be happy individually, in a society where there is no justice, equality and love. And attempts to build an unjust society and preserve capitalism are doomed to a historical failure in our country.

*'Prigozhin's march on Moscow is not the end, but a new beginning. And it would be better if this was the beginning of a REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE, with the preservation and strengthening of our state, and not the opposite.'*³³

BACK TO SEMENYAKA

Now let us consider Semenyaka as a woman at one point deeply influenced by Dugin. Dugin talks tough, but Semenyaka has an army - a potential *oprichnina* - at her disposal. 2016, when

³² Alexander Dugin: *After the rebellion: bifurcation point*, 27th June 2123, <https://katehon.com/ru/article/posle-myatezha-tochka-bifurkacii> (machine translation). 'Passionarity' is a key term in the thinking of the ethnosociologist Lev Gumilev, son of the poet Anna Akhmatova, arguing that the part of society that feels strongly on certain matters has more weight than the mere numbers of a democracy.

³³ Natalia Melentyeva: *Trip to Moscow: Prigozhin's left march*, 29th June, 2023, <https://katehon.com/ru/article/pohod-na-moskvu-levyy-marsh-prigozhina> This section of the article was written before Prigozhin's death. Katehon have responded quickly to the death giving him a mythical status. For example, Alexey Chadaev: 'For me, there is no doubt that Prigozhin belongs not to political or military history, but to a much deeper and more significant, folk-mythological history of culture; he is somewhere in the same place where Ermak, Khmel'nitsky, Razin, Pugachev, Makhno, Kotovsky, Chapaev, Kovpak, or much less well-known, but his direct "forerunner" is the free Cossack Ashinov, who at one time helped the Abyssinian Negus to kick out the Italian colonialists from Ethiopia, to the bewilderment of his own sovereign, the emperor.' - <https://katehon.com/ru/article/deystvuyushchee-lico-russkogo-mifa>

Semenyaka became the leading theorist of the Azov movement, coincided with the departure of the previous leading theorist, Oleh Odnorozhenko, who had served for two years, since the beginnings of the movement, as the 'deputy commander for political affairs'. The overall commander was Andrei Biletsky. Odnorozhenko claims that 'during a conversation at that time [2015]. [Biletsky] dismissed [nationalism as] "rightism", and described himself as a national-level politician who should unite the whole community regardless of ideology.' (Reporting Radicalism dossier on the National Corps)

Andreas Umland, in an article on 'The Prehistory and Emergence of the "Azov" Battalion in 2014' quotes Odnorozhenko as having said:

*'Limitation and control will be implemented on all foreign ethno-racial groups and followed by deportation to their historical homelands. Based on the fact that we social nationalists regard the so-called "human races" as separate biological species, and the intelligent human being (Homo Sapiens), in the biological sense, only the White European Race (not including the notion of so-called "southern Europeanides," i.e. the Mediterranean, Caucasian, Pamir-Fergana or other races who are biologically different from our biological kind) and consider our main duty to prevent any kind of inter-racial contacts (between species) that leads to inter-racial mixing (between species) and ultimately to the death of the White Race.'*³⁴

He gives (p.112) a number of similar quotes from Biletsky himself, including one that is quoted very often: 'The historic mission of our Nation in this crucial century is to lead the White Peoples of the world in the last crusade of their existence. A crusade against the sub-humanity led by the semites.' Biletsky in an interview given in Summer 2015 claims that these quotations are fabrications of Russian propaganda. Without going into Biletsky's colourful career prior to 2014 it seems clear that a change, or re-orientation, of his thinking occurred some time around 2015. I'm not suggesting that he ceased to be a 'white nationalist' (though I do have my suspicions that the sentence about subhumans led by semites might have been fabricated). We have already seen Semenyaka criticise the Russian Federation on the grounds that it accepts in principle the desirability of immigrants, and all her international activities are directed towards the anti-immigrant right. And in particular her enthusiasm for Black Metal music - she has been closely involved with the annual "Asgardsrei" Black Metal festival in Kyiv and organised a number of Black Metal reunions under the quite jüngerian title 'Pact of Steel' - brings her into contact with "National Socialist Black Metal", in particular the Russian Group M8L8TH. 'Molot' in Russian (as in 'Molotov') means 'hammer'. 88 is Neo-Nazi code for Heil Hitler. The leader of the group - Alexey Levkin - has another group called Adolfovlt and runs a 'mini-university for supporters of right-wing ideology' under the name 'Wotanjugend'.³⁵

Nonetheless, Odnorozhenko's dissatisfaction indicates that some sort of change of priorities was taking place. We might also note that the National Corps did not adopt the well-known Azov insignia - the 'wolfsangel' (reversed so as to spell the letters NI - National Idea) superimposed on a 'black sun' - the 'sunwheel' which could be described as a sort of speeded up swastika. Instead they use a variant of the standard Ukrainian symbol of the trident.

³⁴ Andreas Umland (2019): 'Irregular Militias and Radical Nationalism in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: The Prehistory and Emergence of the "Azov" Battalion in 2014', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31:1, pp.115-6, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1555974. Umland is an academic who has taught in Oxford, Stanford and Kyiv. Oddly enough he is a member of the Valdai Discussion Club, which has the support of Vladimir Putin - <https://valdaiclub.com/about/experts/496/>

³⁵ Michael Colborne: 'The "Hardcore" Russian Neo-Nazi Group That Calls Ukraine Home', 4 Sept, 2019, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2019/09/04/the-hardcore-russian-neo-nazi-group-that-calls-ukraine-home/> Nonjon (First Lady) refers in a footnote to an article Semenyaka has written - 'On my connections to Alexei Levkin' - but unfortunately I haven't been able to access it.

According to Nonjon ("First Lady" of Ukrainian Nationalism) it was in October 2015 that Semenyaka unveiled her 'Reconquista' project. Nonjon doesn't give a source for this but rather suggests that that was when a corresponding blog was established on Tumblr. This is a pan-European project - the 'reconquest' of Europe, not militarily but morally, winning it from economic and cultural liberalism, from the domination of the United States, and from what she sees as the fake pan-Europeanism of the EU. The starting point, however, was the 'Intermarium' - the territory between the Baltic and the Black Sea, chiefly Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States.

THE INTERMARIUM - A BRIEF HISTORY

The Intermarium corresponds more or less to the old territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and also to the territory identified by the English geopolitical theorist Halford Mackinder writing in 1919 as the 'middle tier of Eastern Europe', which could be used by British interests against either or both Germany and Russia.³⁶ The idea of an 'Eastern European League of Nations' - Belarus, Ukraine and Romania in a military and political confederation with Poland, Finland and the Baltic states - was put forward by Josef Piłsudski when he became the first head of state of the post-war independent Poland, 1918-22, resulting in March 1922 in a 'Warsaw contract', though this was never ratified. Although the Ukrainian Military Organisation, which was to become the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, had been formed in 1920 as a Galician opposition to being incorporated into Poland, Simon Petliura and his Ukrainian Democratic Republic in Exile - representing the more Eastern Territories eventually incorporated into the Soviet Union - was in alliance with Piłsudski.

Laruelle gives a quite fascinating account of the ways in which the Intermarium idea was used by a succession of anti-Communist bodies backed by British and American intelligence agencies - the Central European Federal Club (established in Britain in 1940), the Congress of Delegates of Oppressed European Nations (1946, convoked by the Scottish League for European Freedom), the rival US controlled Continental Union, the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN, founded in 1946 with British, US and German support, which brought many old Fascists groupings under its umbrella). Then, more recently, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the idea was revived by George Friedman, the Hungarian founder of the strategic studies think-tank Stratfor; and also by the Institute of World Politics, founded in 1990, where the Intermarium was advocated by the Polish-American Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Director of the Centre for Intermarium Studies.

In 2015, the Polish President, Andrzej Duda, announced a 'Three Seas Initiative', the three seas being the Black Sea, the Baltic and the Adriatic, supported by the US-based Atlantic Council in a publication co-authored by the Atlantic Council Chairman, former Supreme Commander of NATO, General James L. Jones and Pawel Olechnowicz, CEO of the Polish Oil and Gas giant Grupa Lotos.

³⁶ Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, London: Constable and Co, 1919. This account of the Intermarium is taken almost entirely from Marlene Laruelle and Ellen Rivera: 'Imagined Geographies of Central and Eastern Europe. The Concept of Intermarium', *IERES Occasional Papers, no. 1, March, 2019 Transnational History of the Far Right Series* - obtained off the internet at <https://www.illiberalism.org/imagined-geographies-of-central-and-eastern-europe-the-concept-of-intermarium/>, so unpaginated. Marlene Laruelle has also written on Dugin. 'Illiberalism' as the name suggests, specialises in studying anti-liberal political tendencies. Adrien Nonjon also writes for it. Laruelle and Nonjon are distinguished among anti-liberal writers by what appears to be a genuine interest in the ideas they are discussing.

Laruelle sees a connection between these very pro-Western Intermarium initiatives and the Ukrainian development through Yaroslava Stetsko (1920-2003) who succeeded her husband Yaroslav Stetsko at the head of the ABN when he died in 1986. Yaroslav Stetsko had been the leader of the Bandera wing of the OUN who had marched into Lviv in June 1941 and had displeased the Germans by immediately declaring Ukrainian independence. She gives an account of Viktor Yuschenko's rehabilitation of the OUN, incidentally telling us that Yuschenko's wife, Katerina Churnachenko, had been a special assistant in the US State Department and in 1988-9 in the Office of Public Liaison in the White House. Nonetheless, I don't think she really establishes a link between this very atlanticist line of development and the (at least theoretically) anti-atlanticist Intermarium Support Group launched in July 2016 by Biletsky and Semenyaka. Yaroslav Stetsko's private secretary, the U.S. born Roman Zvarych, was briefly head of staff of the Central Committee of Azov but the source Laruelle gives for this is an interview with Biletsky in which he is quite dismissive of the connection: 'I think that we gave Roman and Svitlana Zvarych more of the necessary acquaintances than they gave us.'³⁷

BACK AGAIN TO SEMENYAKA

The whole thrust of Semenyaka's activity in the field, organising and speaking at conferences of people from the Intermarium countries, is aimed at the anti-liberal right, and her own contributions to these conferences are often quite academic elaborations of what she calls the 'third way' in politics.

Semenyaka outlines what she means by the third way in an article posted on the website of the Ukrainian Traditionalist Club in May, 2017. She begins by talking about the French 'new right', associated with the names Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye, for whom she retains a lively admiration, despite the fact that their sympathies lie (or lay - Faye died in 2019) with Vladimir Putin and Russia:

*'Faye's concept of Archeofuturism is a significant contribution to the 'general humanities' of postmodernity, and de Benoist's excursions into European political history or Indo-European mythology are impressive. This is at least an intellectual level that most of those who criticise these thinkers for their pro-Kremlin orientation do not reach, which, however, does not negate the validity and urgency of criticising this unhealthy alliance with post-Communist élites.'*³⁸

She goes on to say that;

'the defining thesis of the New Right, which is about the need to unite European nations in the face of the threat of globalization of one kind or another, and "never again" with regard to fratricidal wars, which is sometimes seen as the source of the pro-Putin "Konintern," was actually formed during the First World War. The deeper roots of the new right-wing idea of a united Europe and, in the language of geopolitics, "autarky of large spaces" (Friedrich List's concept, revived in twentieth-century German politics by the conservative revolutionary, lawyer, and political philosopher Carl Schmitt) should be sought in the tradition of Romano-Germanic

³⁷ 'Andriy Biletskyi: Avakov is a system man, and I consider this system extremely negative', *Ukrainian Pravda*, 18th October, 2016. https://pda.pravda.com.ua/articles/id_7123983/ (machine translation)

³⁸ Olena Semenyaka: *"The Third Way" and Pan-Europe: What is the New Right and the New Right?* Entry posted on the website of the Ukrainian Traditionalist Club on May 16th, 2017 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20190701091254/http://uktk.org/third-way-paneuropa/> Unpaginated. Faye's 'Archeofuturism' aims to reconcile traditional values with advanced technology, in opposition to the anti-technological traditionalism associated with Guénon. Though Faye's 'traditional values' tend to be quite pagan and libertarian

universalism and the supranational institution of chivalry, which was forged in the battles for European cultural identity ...

'The classics of the conservative revolution and, at the same time, the new right that grew out of it - Ernst Jünger, Julius Evola, Oswald Mosley, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle - think this way. They were the first theorists of a united Europe of Nations in the postwar period, when the need for their early work on this topic increased dramatically. The developments of German conservative revolutionaries, including the most radical national revolutionary wing, not to mention the young conservatives of the Herrenkreis, in turn were based on the symbols of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation and the already effective statecraft traditions of the Second Reich - the Prussian "gathering" of German lands within the framework of the Little German approach, supplemented by the Great German geopolitical projects of the First World War, which already then envisaged the unification of Western and Eastern Europe under a German protectorate.'

She then elaborates in some detail on the cases of Jünger, Drieu La Rochelle (leading French supporter of collaboration with Germany during the occupation), Mosley and Evola with a particularly interesting account of 'the Waffen SS and Léon Degrelle's "separate reality"'.

Léon Degrelle was the founder of the Belgian Catholic-Fascist movement 'Rex'. The 'reality' that separates him from the the others Semenyaka discusses is his continued affection for Hitler, and his conviction that the third phase of the development of the Waffen SS, when it was opened to all the different peoples of Europe, including the Muslims of Bosnia, was genuinely intended as the force that would establish the conditions for a pan-European civilisation from Lisbon to Vladivostock. She does say that 'other members of the SS movement have argued that Degrelle's idyllic picture was exaggerated in every respect' but she nonetheless quotes him at length and if she's sceptical about the reality she obviously finds the ideal quite thrilling.

Degrelle died in 1994. I was living in the South of France at the time, in the Alpes de Haute Provence. I remember one time seeing at a distance of perhaps thirty or more miles a cliff face with the words emblazoned in huge, white, clearly readable letters: 'Degrelle - Immortel.'

Semenyaka finishes by explaining what she is trying to do in invoking these names. She quotes the Italian right wing theorist Adriano Romualdi (who died at the age of 33 in a somewhat suspicious car crash):

*"...while the man of the left has also elements of the culture of the left and reads Marx, Freud and Salvemini, the adherent of the right hardly possesses the cultural consciousness in the spirit of the right. He is unaware of the importance of Nietzsche in the critique of civilization, has never read any novel by Jünger or Drieu La Rochelle, is not familiar with Spengler's *The Decline of Europe* and has no doubt at all that the French Revolution constituted a remarkable page in the history of human progress. While he is in the realm of culture, he is a nice liberal and only maybe a little nationalist and patriotic ... It doesn't take too much to make it clear that the right has no culture because there is no genuine right-wing ideology, an aristocratic and anti-democratic worldview that values quality and a coherent worldview over certain interests, nostalgia and any oleography."³⁹*

So, for Semenyaka, the new right, despite its sympathies with the Kremlin, is 'the resuscitation of European great-power traditions under the sign of Twentieth Century geopolitics and attempts to embody conservative and revolutionary visions of a united Europe'. She goes on to quote Nietzsche evoking figures 'who were able to productively transcend their own national determinants. From these and only these positions Nietzsche ridiculed "atavistic" nationalism

³⁹ Oleography, also known as chromolithography, was a means of reproducing the appearance of oil paintings using lithography. Romualdi is using it to indicate a fake antiquity. I've seen some beautiful reproductions in chromolithography of old Egyptian or South American art which leaves me regretting that the technique has been abandoned.

with its attachment to the native land.' In looking at Europe as a whole he distinguished between 'old' peoples (notably the French) and young peoples (the "central European type"), seeing, I might add, virtues in both of them. In our own time, Semenyaka suggests, the Western European right is interested in the Intermarium project because 'they perceive the Eastern European peoples (a view professed by Nietzsche, the "descendant of Polish aristocrats") as "young" and the Intermarium as a kind of laboratory for the revival of Old Europe, a chance for Spengler's Abendland⁴⁰ to dawn again.'

I would like to have been able to finish with commenting on how Semenyaka is coping with the situation that has developed since the Russian intervention, the loss of so much of Ukraine's Black Sea coast and the obvious dependence on support from the despised countries of the West but I haven't yet been able to lay hands on any relevant material. It may be, though, that from her point of view it doesn't matter very much. The main thing in her eyes is the promotion throughout Europe of the ideology of the 'third way,' and a demoralised rump Ukrainian state in a permanent state of military tension with a great empire that (assuming Dugin gets nowhere) has no clearly defined idea of its own, will be ripe for takeover, hence becoming a useful base from which to operate.

⁴⁰ 'Abendland' - evening land, the place where the sun sets, is German for 'the West'.