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West-oriented choice of Ukraine one year after the Orange Revolution from the Polish perspective

Стаття розкриває особливості Помаранчевої революції в Україні та її зв'язок з подіями в Польщі. Подаються припущення подальшого розвитку цього процесу.

The article opens the peculiarities of Orange Revolution in Ukraine and its connection with events in Poland. The suppositions of the next development of this process are also shown.

The end of 2004 brought in great emotions in Ukraine and Poland. With our breaths taken away we were observing the great history happening on Majdan Niezalezhnosti. Dozens and hundreds of people, including both these on the front pages of newspapers and the ones unknown, rushed in crowds to support the Ukrainians gathered in Kiev, in an important historic moment. In any case, on Majdan the were representatives of numerous countries and nations. We are proud of the fact that the Poles were present there, but we cannot disregard the Georgians, Belorussians, Russians and many, many others. I remember a deep conviction of mine and many other Poles that Ukraine was given a second chance and that time it would not waste it. This conviction arouse even more in the Poles, strengthened by TV transmissions from Kiev and voices of acquaintances on the other side of the border, showing their enthusiasm and excitement. I also remember a lot of young people mainly who left their families in Poland during Christmas- the most important Polish holiday- and got on buses to work as observers during the repeated third round of the presidential elections. Our hearts were orange then and we were convinced that hearts and minds of the majority of Ukrainians were this colour, as well. We thought the colour was a symbolic appeal to hope, to an injection of

new, fresh blood, to arousal of new amount of social and political activity of the residents of this large country. We were also convinced that this activity could mean only one thing – close relations not only between the Poles and the Ukrainians, but also through us with the whole uniting Europe, both with its culture and its structures.

Today we must admit that our optimism was excessive and resulted probably from three reasons. Firstly, from enthusiastic comments which appeared in the Polish media, secondly from the lack of knowledge of realities of the Ukrainian domestic policy and from the lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian foreign policy and above all from so many times pointed out a problem of geographical location on the border of the two powers or the two cultures, as Samuel P. Huntington wrote in his “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”¹. The illustration of this problem, unnoticed by the Poles at that time are the words written by Antin Borkowskyj: ‘On the Majdan nobody asked if Juszczenko would manage to lead Ukraine to enter the European Union. The question was asked in a different way: “Will Ukraine return to Russia? Will it preserve sovereignty and independence?”²’. However we, Polish people did not notice it then. An additional cause we should also point to is our and probably the Ukrainians’ excessive optimism as to the reaction of the European Union.

The first of the issues showed by me, namely the image of the events from Kiev in the Polish media must be considered further in future. The already proverbial strategic partnership and close acquaintance of the presidents Kwasniewski and Kuczma were a superb background of building the atmosphere of waiting and optimism as to the development of the situation in Ukraine. With quite a high frequency the Polish media informed about success of the next visits of the members of government, and above all about the meetings of both presidents. The complementation of these pieces of information in a media dimension was a common battalion or a common zone in Iraq. As a matter of fact the only negative information concerning bilateral relations which pushed into the Polish media was the issue of lengthening the pipe Odessa-Brody to Piock as well as continuous arguments about the Lvov Eaglets Cemetery. From time to time the media transmitted the information about the protests concerning functioning of border checkpoints, which however went to show that the mutual visits were more frequent or there were difficulties in a small-scale (tourist) trade (smuggling) rather than there were real arguments. So it was rather a structural issue, not psychological. Generally, we can say that although there were some cracks like the Gongadze's matter, yet the atmosphere for Ukraine was favourable.

In such situation the first reports about arising Ukrainian revolution took root. The Polish media suddenly became full of analyses and comments trying to answer the questions: What results will the second round of elections bring? How will the president Leonid Kuczma and his team behave if Wiktor Juszczenko wins the elections? How will Russia react? And at last the question which might not be most important but highly emotive: Who poisoned Juszczenko? Especially this last question providing feelings of sympathy and possibly disbelief caused an enormous growth of liking for the leader of the Orange and for the issue of democratisation of Ukraine. Liking was additionally caused by the closure of investigation into this matter by the Ukrainian General Public Prosecutor's Office on 22 October, with the justification that there were no traces of poison in the candidate's body and there was no evidence as to its use.

At that time the Orange Revolution was beginning to rise. As early as 23 October the media informed about 100 000 demonstrators at the Central Election Commission on Lesia Ukrainka square and about attacks of the government on the only independent Channel 5. Our Polish liking was unambiguous and gave voice to the debate on Ukrainian events initiated by Polish Euro-MPs or the open letter signed by over a hundred outstanding figures of the world of politics, media and science, in which it was written: "We follow with close attention a dramatic course of election campaign in Ukraine. We are aware of the fact how important is

the support of the public opinion in the world for the Ukrainian society (...) We owe it to the Ukraine, ourselves and the world. Ukrainian democracy needs our solidarity. Feel positive about it! Do not let the hope disappear."³ The most important fact was that the official results of the first round of elections pointed to a narrow victory (0.5% voices) of Wiktor Juszczenko, which gave our hearts some comfort and hope. Thus, the issue faded a bit until 22 November, when yet unofficial results pointed to the victory of Wiktor Janukowycz and the crowd of dissatisfied and disappointed people began to gather and grow on Majdan. The people before whom Wiktor Juszczenko took a presidential oath the very next day, the oath unimportant from the formal legislative point of view, but so much important symbolically.

Polish society and politicians were overcome with stronger and stronger emotions. In Kiev, Warsaw, Poznac, Lublin and all other cities enthusiastic people created chains of solidarity, went on marches, took part in mass meetings and gatherings. The political membership and views did not matter. That only time Lech Kaczynski and Marek Borowski were marching side by side and the voices of Jerzy Buzek and Bronisław Geremek harmonised with the voices of Marek Belka or Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz. Among all the excitement one could hear a very important slogan: "Kiev-Warsaw! Common matter! ("Kijów-Warszawa! Wspólna sprawa!")"⁴. Polish politicians were initiators and active participants of the actions in Poland and got involved in the situation in Ukraine. In Kiev appeared Lech Wałęsa and Zbigniew Bujak, but above all a special group headed by Jacek Kluczkowski, whose task was to prepare the ground for the arrival of Aleksander Kwasniewski to Ukraine. Aleksander Kwasniewski along with Valdas Adamkus and Javier Solana and later also Borys Gryzłow became a group of mediators leading to and taking part in the talks at the Ukrainian 'round table'. In Poland the transmission in the media was very simple and quite unambiguous. After 15 years Ukraine again took a civic challenge to leap up and in the minds of Poles appeared some associations with the scenes of the Fall of the Berlin Wall and memories of the enthusiasm which accompanied the first yet not entirely free elections in 1989. When finally the decision to rehold the second round of elections was taken and Juszczenko spoke to the crowds: "Since today Ukraine has been democratic. I congratulate free residents on a free country. We showed we are not "billy-goats" and there is a nation which will not allow to be cheated!"⁵, we felt proud of our engagement and rejoiced at the success.

On December 26, following the third round of negotiations the results of exit polls gave a clear victory to Wiktor Juszczenko and on Monday president Aleksander Kwasniewski was the first to phone to congratulate him, after the results from

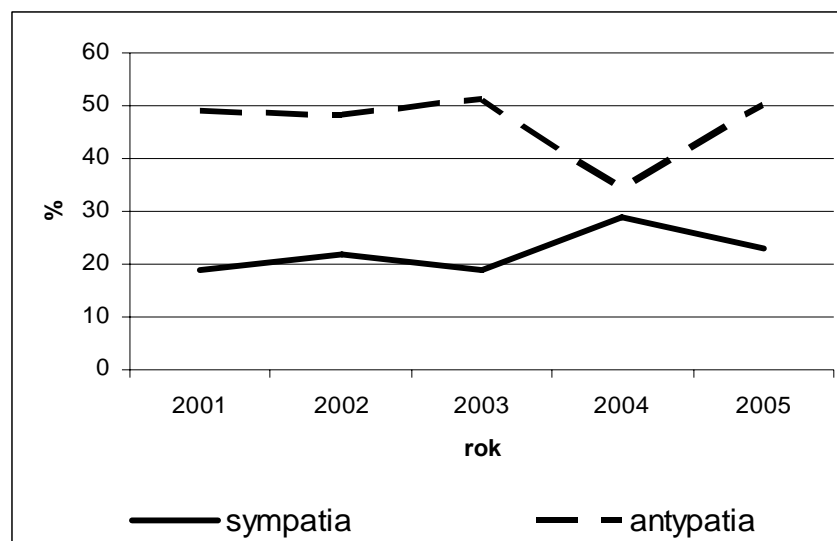
99.8% of district commissions had been announced. The coaches with tired, but happy observers started to return to Poland. The majority of them worked in the hardest southern and eastern parts of Ukraine. The atmosphere of excitement and happiness could be felt. There was also the atmosphere of success of the Ukrainian victory on the one hand, and rubbing Russian's nose in the dirt on the other. As early as before the third round Aleksander Kwasniewski got carried away by the atmosphere. Aleksander Kwasniewski, telling about his mission of a mediator in the interview for a weekly *Polityka* stated: "...for each great power Russia without Ukraine is a better solution than Russia with Ukraine", and further: 'Russia is rebuilding its position in the world, which is all right. But why is it also to gain 50 million Ukrainians?'⁶. Most Poles used to think and still think like this. Nowadays we support the opposition in Belarus likewise. Likewise, we supported Georgia. One could feel great hope and enormous expectations of a rapid change of both Ukrainian foreign policy and internal democratisation. Bitter words of the Russian political scientist Gleb Pawlow saying that Russia will contradict the 'Kwasniewski's doctrine' which is the limitation of the influences of Russia in the world, could be understood only as a confirmation of the success of the doctrine and effectiveness. The doctrine, as should be supposed,

has never in fact consciously existed, was rather the result of happy coincidences and long-lasting efforts of Polish diplomacy to establish friendly relations in the area of post-Soviet countries.

What is more important, however, the success of the Orange Revolution reminded us our great moments and great experiences. It reminded the times when Poland was still on the threshold of changes and great enthusiasm as well as anxiety could be felt. Sporadically, sceptical voices predicting a rapid end of the revolution were drowned out in our ears with the power of words included in the refrain of the informal hymn: "Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty".⁷

Our moods were reflected in a liking or a dislike for the Ukrainians. According to the research carried out by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in December 2004 a great change in our attitudes could be noticed. The number of people declaring liking for the Ukrainians increased from 19% in the late 2003 to 29% in December 2004, and those declaring dislike decreased from 51% to 34%⁸. There was, therefore, a clear improvement in our perception of the Ukrainian nation. Unfortunately, in November 2005 that positive tendency turned out to be only a fleeting phenomenon. The number of people declaring liking dropped over a year to 25% and dislike increased to 50%⁹.

Figure 1. Attitude of the Poles towards the Ukrainians from 2001 to 2005.



Source: 'Stosunek do innych narodów', announcement about CBOS research, no 1 January 2005; 'Sympatia i niechęć do innych narodów', announcement about CBOS research, no 196 December 2005.

What has thus happened that our suddenly awakened liking and hopes faded so quickly? It seems the point is that nothing has really changed, the expected close relations did not really take place. Instead of radical changes we heard again about waiting. Instead of seeing new, powerful and changed Ukraine we saw the same political argu-

ments, factional fights and the slow disintegration of the Orange Revolution. Instead of real actions we could observe the merry-go-round of people and positions, mutual quarrels and selling up the ideas of the revolution. We saw a grey, ordinary life instead of orange future. And more importantly, the Ukrainians also noticed the same. At

least these who we meet every day, who have some connections with Poland, are known here, work or publish here. The disappointment was even bigger because we are also often disappointed with the changes in our country. To answer where this disappointment originated we must focus now on internal political scene of Ukraine and its geopolitical conditions, as well as our Polish disappointments and conflicts.

In April 2003, during the conference in Warsaw, Borys Tarasiuk said: "Thinking of the answer to the question included in the title of our conference 'Where is Ukraine heading for?' or 'Quo vadis Ukraine?', one answer comes to my mind: I do not know!"¹⁰. Despite the events in December 2004 these words unfortunately did not go out of date at all. The representatives of the Ukrainian side who arrived then, declared themselves to be supporters of turning westwards and breaking up with the existing model of a multiplicity of directions in Ukrainian foreign policy, or at least with a different distribution of properties. We saw the same people among the Orange and this implied that declarations would be kept or at least start to be implemented. Also in this way we received the words of Oleksander Zinzchenko saying that Ukrainian foreign policy 'will lose its basic feature, namely its multiplicity of directions and become simply pro-European' and also that "New authorities of Ukraine will change the standards of living in the next three or four years so much that the issue of its membership in the European Union will become natural and obvious to everyone"¹¹. However, the gestures towards the Russian Federation were treated by us rather as judiciousness and calming down the situation. It was not a secret to anyone that Julia Tymoszenko, a very serious candidate for a prime minister then, was the 'target' of Russian public prosecutor's office. It was a very important, symbolic sign of bilateral relations between our two great neighbours. Even the visit of the new president to Moscow on 24 January 2005, a day after the opening speech in parliament, seemed to be rather symbolic, especially in comparison to the announcement that Julia Tymoszenko was designated to take over the position of a prime minister.

However, the series of last year's events brought in further signals which seemed to testify that Polish expectations were unrealistic. The most important and most widely commented event on the domestic policy stage was the recall of Julia Tymoszenko from the position of prime minister, which symbolised the end of the orange coalition then. As W. Fesenko wrote: "After the victory personal arguments and ideological discrepancies among the allies come to the fore: between liberals and supporters of the state interventionism in the field of economy, between enthusiasts and opponents of entering the World Trade Organisation, between the allies and critics of closer relations

with Russia. An internal fight for the division of power and ownership began among the leaders of the Orange Revolution. What remained unknown was the time when the rift would occur"¹². The second crucial disappointment for politicians and Polish public opinion, but in the international arena, was the capitulation of Kiev in the matter of the Russian gas blackmail. It was experienced as a symbolic departure from the firm policy towards Russians, epitomised by Madam Prime Minister through her earlier, already in an era of Leonid Kuczma, attempts to normalise the country and lead it out of the twilight zone of the power sector. The third, but not least important disappointment was and still is our Polish 'accounts' and internal contradictions. There could be found some parallels between the disintegration of the unity of leaders of Majdan, united in a protest against the former president and his team and in the disintegration of just announced but never existing in Poland coalition of Prawo i Sprawiedliwos and Platforma Obywatelska. In both cases we follow the same way, from common roots to conflicts, probably resulting from personal ambitions and arguments of their political leaders. Without a common enemy in the form of a previous ruling group both these allies broke into competing factions. What is interesting, whereas in Poland the conflict increases and seems to be impossible to solve, in Ukraine there appeared a spark of hope in the form of an agreement between Juszczenko's Nasza Ukraina, Julia Tymoszenko's Blok and Oleksander Moroz's socialists, reached again in April this year. Let us however notice that it does not provide for postulated by BjuTy: accounting for privatisation in Kuczma's time and renegotiations of the agreement with Russia signed on January 2006, concerning the gas supply to the Ukraine. It might be a sign of reaching a renewed compromise of the Orange, with an understanding of a hard, geopolitical situation in Ukraine. It might be equally well a signal that personal ambitions and the desire for power, particularly removing Wiktor Janukowycz from power, were allowed to speak. Especially, if we mention the joke supposedly circulating in Kiev about frustrated Janukowycz who says: "What's up? I have even won in the election and they still do not let me rule!"¹³. On the other hand in the Polish and foreign press there was a lot of information predicting a completely different arrangement of future coalition. The most likely option beside a repeated alliance of the Orange seemed to be a coalition of Nasza Ukraina and Partia Regionyw.

There appears at last one more thread. This is the attitude of the organisations Ukraine seems to aspire to. In the comments of Ukrainian political commentators and politicians the thread of disappointment with the lack of clear signals from the European Union and NATO is strongly emphasised. The same tendency can be observed on the other side. At the meetings of European Union one

could hear voices saying that the orange authorities did not carry out announced market, political and social reforms. Working Plan EU-Ukraine, signed on 21 January 2005, cannot be alone treated as a sufficient argument on a way of Ukraine to join in the EU. The Ukrainians themselves pointed out that it was not implemented to a sufficient extent. According to the estimate of Centrum im Razumkova, at the turn of July and in the early August 2005 its implementation "... did not even deserve a strong B mark. During that period the matter of "Political dialogue and reforms" was implemented the best (3.5) and the worst was "Economic and social reforms and development" (2.9), as well as "Trade, market and regulatory reforms" (3.0)"¹⁴. In mutual relations a careful waiting still could be seen. The European Union became embroiled in its internal problems after the latest enlargement and rejection of the constitution and is waiting for clear signals from Ukraine. A superb example here is the statement of Jose Manuel Barroso, the Chairman of the European Commission, during the visit of Jurij Jechanurow to Brussels. He said: "The future of Ukraine is in Europe. The best way to achieve it is not a discussion over its membership in the European Union, but concrete, practical results."¹⁵. This statement illustrates the European Union being very careful about the contacts with Ukraine, even in the case of politicians regarded as its allies, as well as in the reluctance to discuss about the dates. The Ukraine, however, is awaiting a clear invitation, although does not do much itself to receive it. It is hard to accept that the way to implement its obligations is an incoherent economic reform, which used to be rather implementation of social postulates of the Ukrainians gathered on Majdan. The same concerns the changes in administration, which are rather a "great purge" of the remains of

Leonid Kuczma's apparatus, not a calculated personnel policy. A little hope as to the change in this behaviour is found in the statement of Wiktor Juszczenko saying that the appointments of the heads of local administration will depend on the number of votes received during parliamentary elections.¹⁶

Summing up one should emphasise that although the foreign policy of Ukraine has changed, there are however no clear signals if it has been a firm and lasting choice. From Polish perspective there are still many ambiguities in it. At the same time a strong tendency to negate or at least sceptically accept the achievements of Majdan has been evident. It can be seen in the moods of the public, where we again observe a decrease in liking for the Ukrainians, in comments made by best-known polling groups dealing with the issues of the East and in the statements of politicians. It seems that two processes appeared in Poland simultaneously. On one hand it is moving Ukrainian issues to the background, especially in the light of dynamic situation in domestic policy of Poland, on the other feeling tired with Ukraine after the period of great interest at the turn of 2004 and in early 2005. We still support the orange team, but last year's enthusiasm does not exist any more. It might, of course, return at any moment, but on certain conditions. For Polish and European politicians this is undoubtedly a problem of an unambiguous standpoint and real actions of Ukrainian authorities on implementation of economic and social reforms. For an average Pole, however, this is a trivial matter of how the border checkpoints function. These border checkpoints should be rather called 'closure or difficulty' checkpoints instead. These words do not at all mean the necessity of having a visa and the tourist being checked carefully, but a total lack of organisation and unwillingness to co-operate.

¹ Compare: S.P. Huntington, *Zderzenie cywilizacji*. – Warszawa, 2004.

² A. Borkowskyj, *Dalekie ognie Brukseli. Ukraina w poszukiwaniu swiętego Graala*[w:] *Rok po pomaraczowej rewolucji-Ukraina bliżej Europy?*. – Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego. – Warszawa, 2005. – P. 6.

³ Quotation after: W. Stanisławski, *Pomaraczowa kokarda. Kalendarium kryzysu politycznego na Ukrainie, autumn 2004*, *Osrodek Studiów Wschodnich*. – Warszawa, 2005. – P. 13.

⁴ The leading slogan of the concert organised outside the Belweder on 27 November 2004

⁵ From a speech of W. Juszczenko to the demonstrators gathered on Majdan on December 2004, after the decision to rehold the second round of elections was taken by the Ukrainian Supreme Court.

⁶ President Aleksander Kwasniewski tells about mediation in Ukraine. The interviewers were Krzemiecki A. and Ostrowski M. [w:] *Polityka* no 51, on 18 December 2004.

⁷ The refrain of the song by Greenjolly, translated also into Polish and promoted by the media

⁸ 'Stosunek do innych narodów', announcement about CBOS research, no 1 January 2005.

⁹ 'Sympatia i niechęć do innych narodów', announcement about CBOS research, no 196 December 2005.

¹⁰ The speech of B. Tarasiuk [w:] J. Onyszkiewicz (red.), *Dokąd zmierza Ukraina?*, *Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych*, Warszawa 2003, p. 23.

¹¹ Quotation after : W. Stanisławski, *Pomaraczowa kokarda. Kalendarium kryzysu politycznego na Ukrainie, autumn 2004*, *Osrodek Studiów Wschodnich*. – Warszawa, 2005. – P. 117.

¹² W. Fesenko, *Między rewolucją a wyborami: ciemna droga Ukrainy do Europy* [w:] *Rok po pomaraczowej rewolucji – Ukraina bliżej Europy?*, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego. – Warszawa, 2005. – PP. 27-28.

¹³ After: Nocuc M. i Brzeziecki A., "Lekcja Majdanu" [w:] *Tygodnik Powszechny* no 15 on 9 April 2006.

¹⁴ W. Fesenko, *Między rewolucją a wyborami: ciemna droga Ukrainy do Europy...* – op. Cit. – P. 29.

¹⁵ G. Gromadzki, O. Suszko, *Między satysfakcją a rozczarowaniem. Relacje UE-Ukraina rok po pomaraczowej rewolucji*, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego. – Warszawa; Kijów. – December 2005. – P. 3.

¹⁶ The statement of president Wiktor Juszczenko at the press conference on 18 April 2006. After: www.ukraine-poland.com