13 Two Years Later

13.1 Euromaidan and Aftermath

With the exception of the disaster that took place at Chornobyl in 1986, Ukraine used to be almost invisible to much of the world until angry Ukrainians propelled it recently into the news. In 2004-05, the country got sympathetic media coverage in the West and elsewhere where there is a free press because of the Orange Revolution, a grassroots action that succeeded in preventing Viktor Yanukovych from stealing the presidency through a rigged election; and then there was mostly sympathetic coverage again in the same parts of the world nearly a decade later, in 2013-14, when Euromaidan exploded on then-President Viktor Yanukovych, and then drove him from office. There were many reasons for the people's anger, and many protests against him during his time as president (and even before), but the trigger for Euromaidan and what eventually did him in was that fateful announcement on November 21, 2013 that he had changed his mind about the direction that he would take Ukraine, and that he preferred to follow a path in tandem with Russia and to not seek closer association with Europe and the West as he had once promised. It is almost certainly no coincidence that Yanukovych's change of heart followed a trip to Moscow, where he met with Russia's President Putin, and where he may have been threatened or dressed down, or both.

The protests that followed grew much bigger after November 30, when Ukrainian riot police began beating peaceful protestors and journalists on Maidan, such that eventually there were hundreds of thousands of citizens gathering on the square in central Kyiv, and countless more in other cities across the country. The more repression the government aimed at “Maidan,” the larger and angrier the protests became, and the more the activists on Maidan dug in. They lived in tents on the square and on nearby streets, built barricades using sandbags, paving stones, and “urban materials” such as park benches, signposts, and street-side planters. Also, they set up kitchens, medical clinics, and tent churches for various denominations, as well as distribution systems for food, water, firewood, warm clothing, and blankets. They arranged for Internet service, established rules of conduct for the encampment (including a no alcohol rule), and organized a lending library, Ukrainian-language classes for Russian speakers and Russian-language classes for Ukrainian speakers, and many other activities to make downtime more profitable. A stage on Khreshchatyk at Independence Square was
outfitted with loudspeakers, and a busy program was set up with speeches, music, poetry, and prayer. Ruslana Lyzychko, one of Ukraine’s most popular singing stars, was a frequent master of ceremonies, entertainer, and builder of morale as the days became shorter, darkness longer, and temperatures fell. The crowds on New Year’s Eve were especially large, with perhaps a quarter million or more gathered to be together, support the cause, pray in unison, and enjoy the very best in musical entertainment in Ukraine. I was there with friends and one of my sons, and will remember it always as the best New Year’s gathering of my life, even though my mother passed away in the United States during the celebrations, not quite making it to age 100.

It turned out that New Year’s and the Orthodox Christmas holiday that followed a few days later were the last good days before the storm, as soon there would be many deaths. The first to be killed was a seismologist and mountain climber from L’viv, Yuriy Verbytskyi, on the night of January 21-22. For reasons that are still murky, he was kidnapped from Kyiv’s Oleksandrivsky Hospital along with his friend Ihor Lutsenko, a prominent character in the chapter about the defenders of Kyiv (Chapter 11), and the two were taken to separate areas of a forest outside Kyiv where they were beaten and left for dead. Lutsenko survived, but barely. I have more to say about him later. After Verbytskyi, there were as many as 8 or 9 deaths that resulted from clashes between protesters and Berkut riot police at barricades on Hrushevskoho Street on January 22. Both Serhiy Nigoyan, an ethnic Armenian who settled in Ukraine along with his family as refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh War, and Mikhail Zhyznevskyi, a Belarusian who was living in Ukraine, died that day from gunshot wounds, while Roman Senyk, from L’viv oblast, died three days later in a hospital as a result of multiple wounds caused by a grenade explosion. Then, on January 28, Bohdan Kalyniak, 52, from Kolomiya in western Ukraine, died of pneumonia that was attributed to his being drenched by a water cannon that the police had used in subzero temperatures against protestors, and on February 13, Serhiy Synenko, an activist in AutoMaidan, a branch of the protest movement that traveled in automobile caravans to demonstrate in front of the homes of politicians they opposed, was killed in Zaporizhia in the fiery explosion that resulted when a well-aimed bullet punctured the gas tank of his car.

The first death may actually have been on December 22, 2013. That was when Pavlo Mazurenko, 41, died from complications resulting from a beating that he was given four days earlier in his Borchahivka neighborhood by “three men in black uniforms and batons,” as described by his wife. The reason for the beating and its connection to Euromaidan is not clear.
The climax of the Euromaidan revolution came on February 18-20 when police attempted to storm Maidan. Mountains of tires were set ablaze as a defensive measure, and somehow the Trade Unions Building, the Euromaidan headquarters opposite Independence Square that had been the frequent target of anti-Maidan provocateurs and outright criminals, was burned to destruction, and people inside perished. The center of Kyiv was black with smoke. Some protestors were now visibly armed, and bullets were being fired in both directions, particularly in the vicinity of Instytutska Street beside and uphill from Independence Square. Most of the gunfire came from Berkut, the riot police, and was aimed at unarmed protestors. Berkut sharpshooters were positioned behind trees and on rooftops, and picked off seemingly random individuals one by one with professional marksmanship. More than 100 died: the Nebesna Sotnya, “Heaven’s Hundred.” Among them, Serhiy Bondarev, a software engineer who was originally from Donetsk oblast, was taken down by four gunshot wounds. Valeriy Brezdenyuk, 50, a talented painter from Vinnytska oblast, was killed by a gunshot to the back. Serhiy Didych, 44, died from a grenade explosion. Volodymyr Kulchytskyi, 65, was felled by two bullets. Quite a number of victims took a single shot to the head: Oleksandr Khrapchenko, 26, a theater director from Rivne; Ustym Holodnyuk, age 20 or 21, from Ternopil oblast; Eduard Hrynevych, 28, from Volyn; Yuriy Paraschuk, 47, who had lived most recently in Kharkiv; Roman Huryk, 20, from Ivano-Frankivsk; Roman Tochyn, age 44 or 45, from

Figure 13.1  Honoring the fallen at Maidan Nezalezhnosti after the killings of mid-February, 2014
Khodoriv; and Yosyp Shylinh, age 62, among others. In addition to Nebesna Sotny, the dead also included 13 police officers; their lives count too.

Even before all the smoke had cleared and while the stench from hundreds of tires that had burned at barricades still permeated the air, a common funeral service for the protestors who had perished was held on Maidan on February 21. The blackened hulk of the Trade Unions Building loomed above the scene. The term Nebesna Sotnya was coined from the stage to refer to the dead collectively. Multiple priests and rabbis led the tearful assembly in multiple prayers and hymns, and the very sad folk song *Plyve Kacha*, “the duckling swims,” was played over the loudspeakers as the funeral dirge, and became the anthem for the dead. Its melody and simple lyrics are positively haunting and stay with you long afterward.76 The song is structured as a dialogue between a mother and her son as he sets off for war. One of the verses goes like this:

Dearest mother, what will happen to me if I die in a foreign land?
Well, my dearest son, you will be buried by other people.

February 21, 2014 was a day of shock, disbelief, and incredible sadness in a country that knows the shedding of tears all too well.

I was not there personally but arrived in the second week of March, as soon as my teaching schedule in the United States allowed a few days off. It was Spring Break, but that term sounds so inappropriate in this context. I arrived on Maidan just in time for another funeral service, one for a young man who had died from injuries suffered earlier, and saw the sadness with my own eyes. Priests led the prayers from the stage, and as his casket was carried away by compatriots, his weeping father led the procession immediately behind, holding a photograph of the son he had lost. The recorded sounds of *Plyve Kacha* by the award-winning a cappella group from L'viv Pikkardiyska Tertsiya (“Picardy third,” a harmonic device in classical music) filled the square. There were flowers, candles, and photographs of the dead everywhere across Independence Square and along Instytutska Street from Khreshchatyk to the government district at the top of the hill. Throwing stones had already been collected into high mounds. There were mounds as well of tires, and of the charred wire that had been swept into place from where reinforced tires had burned. The surface of Maidan was charred and broken, and the base of the Independence Monument was black with soot. There were still many tents on Khreshchatyk and on the northern part of

76 www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHFDU5TWl28
the square, and some of the protestors were making repairs and preparing to dig in. There were quite a few visitors as well, including some foreign tourists, as well as news crews. People were placing flowers from bouquets here and there by the single stem, and taking photographs of the scene and of themselves at the scene, as well as photographs of photographs of the dead. The entire area had become a sacred site, and was marked with still more candles, flowers, photographs, religious icons, crosses, rosary beads, and blue-and-yellow ribbons and flags left behind by grieving citizens. A hand-made sign declared that Instytutska Street was now named Street of the Heroes of Nebesna Sotnya.

Even Yanukovych may have been surprised by the violence of those days. He abandoned the presidency on the day of the collective funeral service and on February 22 fled into exile in Russia. Many other top government officials and Party of Regions insiders joined him. Among them is Dmytro Tabachnyk, Ukraine’s hated Minister of Education and Science, who is mentioned several times in this book, starting in Chapter 1 where he gets slapped in the face by flowers. The closing ceremonies of the Sochi winter Olympics took place on February 23, and immediately afterwards, before anyone could figure out how to respond, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin orchestrated the snatching of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine and annexed it to Russia. His Plan A of bringing Ukraine back into the Russian fold had failed when Yanukovych was toppled, so he switched to Plan B. Emboldened, Putin promoted separatism in eastern and southern Ukraine, and argued for the world to hear that Ukraine should be dismantled and its territory assigned to bordering countries. The bear’s share, of course, was to be Russia’s. A war resulted between the two countries, and as I write this in fall 2015, the situation seems to be going nowhere but down. Thousands of soldiers have been killed on both sides. Civilian casualties are high too, and tens of thousands of residents have fled their homes in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and have become refugees across Ukraine, in Russia, and elsewhere. Cities, infrastructure, and economies in eastern Ukraine have been devastated.

On July 17, 2014, separatist supporters of a Russian Ukraine shot down ML17, a civilian Malaysian Airlines passenger jet on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, killing all 298 innocents on board. The dead include 80 children. Aircraft wreckage and body parts were scattered over a wide area amidst farm fields near Hrabove in Donetsk oblast. Propaganda from the “Internet Research Agency” at 55 Savushkina Street in the Olgino district of St. Petersburg, where hundreds of Internet “trolls” work around the clock to rewrite news for the Russian government and influence public opinion
around the globe, tried to pin the blame for the tragedy on Ukraine, but most of the world was wise to them. The same tech-savvy spin doctors have also tried to paint Ukraine’s Euromaidan revolution as a coup by fascists under the influence of the CIA, and have claimed equally preposterously that American troops are fighting in the war in eastern Ukraine and killing civilians. Were it not for the trained vigilance of Mr. Putin, the fabrications from the information factory continue, the fascists in Kyiv and the CIA would together destroy Russia. Those positions, too, have few believers outside those whose main source of information is Russia’s propaganda machine, but the shameless vilification of Ukraine and the West continues on a daily basis with made-up news, doctored photographs, and bogus data. The Internet is a new battleground for war, and both sides have used it for advantage in shameless ways. However, the Putin propaganda machine seems to have no bounds, and spews out far more fabrication than truth.

13.2 The Last Days of Euromaidan

Summaries of Euromaidan and aftermath and commentaries are now available in many books, magazine articles, and films in many languages (e.g., Wilson, 2014; Koshiw, 2015; Koshkina, 2015; Yekelchyk, 2015; and Cybriwsky, 2014), so there is no need for more detail from me here. Let me return now to personal reporting. I spent summer 2014 in Kyiv, again living adjacent to Independence Square. A new government, that of President Petro Poroshenko, had been elected, and there was a war raging in the east, but Ukrainians were also debating what should become of Maidan, the protest. There were die-hard protesters still living in tents, corners of the square reeked from smelly portable toilets, and Khreshchatyk was still closed to traffic. Kyivans felt inconvenienced. Furthermore, the social order that had come from self-government that once distinguished Maidan had dissipated, and now there were drunks, fights, and scary-looking “patriots” with clubs and nasty attitudes. Many citizens wanted the center of Kyiv to be returned to normal. However, others argued that Maidan could not be declared over until the “whole corrupt system” was changed. In their opinion, the people in power after Yanukovych were not different enough to assure that a clean sweep had been made. There were public arguments

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77 These two sections are based on my article in the journal Eurasian Geography and Economics (Cybriwsky, 2014).
about this daily on the square and from the stage. I suppose that this was a sign of democracy restored.

The issue was settled on August 7, 2014, the day that the city government had appointed for the clean-up. I was up early that day and watched as an army of city workers in orange vests, men and women, arrived on Khreshchatyk from all directions to begin taking down the tents and various enclosures and other features of Maidan that still remained. Bulldozers helped with the job. Men picked up the pieces and threw them into big dump trucks that had arrived at precisely the right time, while a brigade of women workers followed to gather smaller items and sweep the square clean. The residents of Maidan screamed and shouted in protest but to no avail, and scrambled to salvage personal belongings before they wound up in the scoops of front-end loaders, but could do nothing to stop the demolition crew because it was protected by a cordon of military men in full battle gear and automatic weapons. The message from high up in government was clear: Maidan has overstayed and today it will be gone.

Then smoke rose up from a fire that had been set on Khreshchatyk about 100 meters from where I was watching the clear-out. Someone had set tires on fire, and then there were more columns of smoke from more piles of tires, and soon the sky overhead was black. There was confusion and panic as people ran forward for a look, while others ran in the opposite direction in fear. Some of them were gasping for clean air. Fighting broke out. Die-hard protestors threw bricks and stones at the police, and the police fought back with clubs and the butts of their rifles. My photographs include a priest in clerical garb and big cross on a chain around his neck throwing a tire in the direction of police and then a palm-sized stone. It was the last “Battle of Maidan.” By the middle of the afternoon, the square was clear, the city workers and all the heavy equipment that supported them were gone, and so was their heavily-armed protection. Even the wiry remains of the tires that had been set ablaze had been swept up. Some of the evicted residents of Maidan hung around, but there was no place for them, and so they began drifting off in different directions. Only the stage remained, but there were no longer any speaker systems, lights, and generators: it was just a silent structure.

One day about a week later as I was walking along tent-free and traffic-free Khreshchatyk, a large column of young men dressed in black appeared suddenly and marched two-by-two into the square. There were perhaps as many as 100 of them. They were carrying tools, and descended on the stage and began to take it apart. The small crowd that was present protested and tried to interfere, but to no avail. The “sportsmen,” as this
type of hired hand was called (See Chapter 4), elbowed people aside and tossed the disassembled stage piece by piece into waiting trucks. A group of four Maidan supporters stood with the piano, a symbol of Ukraine’s resistance, and tried to save it, pleading that it belonged in a museum, but the piano was smashed before our eyes. Someone good made off with the keyboard and some blue and yellow piano wood that was attached, and told me when I asked that it would be safe. Within minutes, the last of the metal scaffolding came crashing down and landed with a thud just inches from my feet. I don’t know why I did not hear the warning equivalent to “tim-ber!” that had caused everyone else to step back. Some people came up to ask why I had just stood there, but I had no answer.

There was a Ukrainian flag that had flown above the stage from a high extension of the tubing. I saw a young high-school-aged girl with it and approached. Her name was Masha and she was from the southern city of Kherson. She just happened to be in Kyiv that day, and when she saw the flag, she asked the sportsman who had picked it up if she could have it. He gave it to her. I asked her if she understood the significance of what she was holding and if she would take care of it, and she responded with a reassuring “yes” to both questions. She posed for a photo with the flag, but a bystander whom I take to be a leftover protestor bombed my shot and stands beside her also holding the flag. Maidan, the specific movement that began on November 21, 2013, had ended. We will see down the road what future it brings for Ukraine.
13.3 Kyiv Updates

This is not a book about Ukraine and its politics, but about Kyiv and its spaces, and about the people of Kyiv after the collapse of socialism. We return to that focus with updates about life in Kyiv after Maidan, about proposals for redeveloping the city’s center, and with news about various individuals and places in Kyiv that were discussed earlier.

Kyiv is the capital city of a country that is at war. Thankfully, the fighting has not reached the city and hopefully never will, and there have been no major acts of terrorism in Kyiv since those days in the dead of winter 2014 when Yanukovych’s Berkut forces opened fire on citizens who had gathered against him on Maidan. The city is on alert, however, as a capital city needs to be during these times, and security has been stepped up in ways that make perfect sense. For example, we see checkpoints on highways outside the city where police make random inspections of trucks and other vehicles to make sure that they are not carrying something that would bring harm, and there seems to be closer inspection of arrivals at the airport and a larger police presence at the central rail station. Otherwise, life has returned to a more-or-less normal rhythm in Kyiv. There is no more Maidan, no stage at Independence Square, and traffic flows of Khreshchatyk as it did before. However, Instytutska Street, now named the Street of the Heroes of Nebesna Sotnya, does not have vehicular traffic and is now a pedestrian space with flowers, candles, photographs of the dead, and other makeshift memorials until such time that an official monument is put up. The broken pavements, stairs, signposts, and other physical features of Maidan have been repaired except for some last projects here and there that are still to be done. The massive Trade Unions Building is still a burned-out hulk, but is no longer visible as building-sized banners that read “Glory to Ukraine” drape its façades.

We see many Ukrainian soldiers and volunteers in military wear in the center of Kyiv. Their numbers include many women. Some of the soldiers are in the city on break from the war zone, oftentimes in transit between their units in the east and visits to their home towns, while others are getting ready to be deployed. Quite a few of those in uniform or camouflage gear are visibly wounded. My friend Sasha was shot near Mariupol, and is lucky to be alive. He hobbles around central Kyiv on crutches between hospital visits and visits to government bureaucracies about his financial needs. There are marketplaces that sell military gear: uniforms, bullet-proof vests, night-goggles, GPS systems, and armaments, among other items. Soldiers and volunteers who can afford the purchases equip themselves with better
needs than the government provides. There are also quite a few volunteers around the city center who collect donations for the war effort and for the medical expenses of the “Sashas” who have been hurt. Many passersby give, sometimes multiple times a day, as the volunteers with collection boxes are numerous and sometimes very persistent as they call out requests such as “for the troops” or “for medications.” Sometimes these volunteers compete for the attentions of visitors to Independence Square or Khreshchatyk with the various people in furry animal and cartoon-character costumes who work for a share of the tips that they get when posing for photographs (See Chapter 8).

We also see more signs of patriotism in Ukraine than ever before. That, too, is to be expected in a country at war. There are Ukrainian flag banners in windows and on balconies all over the city, and many citizens who wear blue-and-yellow buttons and ribbons, or caps and T-shirts with Ukrainian colors or patriotic slogans. Also, more people wear Ukrainian embroidery, not just on holidays but on ordinary days too. Souvenir vendors do a brisk business in selling pro-Ukraine and anti-Putin items. Toilet paper with Putin’s face on each sheet is a popular novelty. Earlier, it was Yanukovych toilet tissue that sold well. Often, passersby greet one another on the street with the exchange: Slava Ukraini (“Glory to Ukraine”) followed by the response Heroyam Slava (“Glory to her heroes”). In stores, there is more product-labelling by country of origin, on shelves right next to information about prices. This is to promote sales of goods made in Ukraine and to help those who want to do so, to boycott products imported from Russia. Some places of business advertise that they no longer carry Russian imports. The Russian language is still heard more frequently in Kyiv than Ukrainian, but I have the feeling that use of Ukrainian is increasing. Ukraine’s tilt to the West can be sensed in many ways, including publication of two “cool” new guidebooks to Kyiv for readers of English (Baldynyuk, ed., 2012; Krawchenko and Kostrykina, 2015).

The Logos Center that Father Nicoli Ilnytskyi founded at the western edge of Kyiv to help the poor (See Chapter 8) now houses more than 170 refugees (“Internally Displaced People”) from eastern Ukraine. The facility is crowded, with people living in bunk-bed arrangements, but the refugees are safe. Their children are in schools and more and more of the adults have found work in and near Kyiv to pay expenses. The residents are raising turkeys, ducks, and chickens on the grounds in order to have food and to raise cash. At the time of this writing, four of the refugee women are pregnant, all with boys. The Logos Center website quotes one of the women as saying that this is a blessing from God, because Ukraine has lost so many
men in the fighting.\textsuperscript{78} When Father Nicoli took me around recently on an update tour, he said that neighbors near the Logos Center are friendly and supportive, except for one young woman who moved in recently to an apartment in a nearby building who seems to spend her time filing false complaints against the organization and generating false news stories. We both agree that this seems to be part of the information war against Ukraine. In addition to the 170 people at Logos, Kyiv houses thousands of other refugees from the east.

Yanukovych’s departure gave the public and the media the chance to see his estate at Mezhyhirya north of Kyiv where he lived (See Chapter 3). Before I had the chance to visit there myself, I was happy and proud to see photographs that some of my former students had posted of themselves on social media posing on the former president’s golf course, with his collection of expensive automobiles, or with animals at his private zoo. The estate proved to be much more luxurious and over-the-top lavish than people had imagined, and soon after it opened to the public the crowds were large and there were traffic jams. Now, more than 18 months later, the numbers of visitors has declined, and there is aggressive advertising on Maidan and at the railway station by tour operators to sell tickets for the excursion. Not only is there outrage about how much the estate must have cost the public, but considerable laughter at its bad taste. A fake pirate ship on an artificial pond is a favorite target. The premises also sport the aforementioned golf course, an equestrian club, yacht club, swimming pool, and tennis courts. The private zoo had previously been a rumor, but it is very definitely there also. In one of the garages is a museum-quality collection of vintage Soviet automobiles. There are also motorbike collections, sports cars, and a museum of motorboats. A pristine 1963 Chevrolet Impala sits beside a pristine Bentley from 1950. In the oversized main house there is luxury everywhere, from crystal chandeliers to toilets where, indeed, the fixtures are of gold. Perhaps most scandalous are the priceless books and documents that were stolen from Ukraine’s history by non-reader Yanukovych, including the original (1654) \textit{Apostolos} by Ivan Fyodorov, the first printed book in Ukrainian.

I saw much of the above on my own tour of Mezhyhirya in spring 2014. On the day that I went, I was pleased to see some very young school groups that had come with their teachers and some parent-escorts, not necessarily for a political lesson or lesson about moral versus immoral behavior, but simply to picnic on the beautiful grounds, play games amidst the trees, and

\textsuperscript{78} www.kiev-logoscenter.org/
see the zoo. Sometime later, I learned that Yanukovych’s wife since 1971, Lyudmyla Oleksandrivna, had come to Mezhyhirya for a personal look. She had never been there, as the president kept her in sumptuous seclusion back home in Donetsk, where he himself rarely went. After his downfall, it was confirmed that he was not living alone in Mezhyhirya, but with a girlfriend from Donetsk and her young daughter. I saw many of the contents of the house in Mezhyhirya when they were on public display as a special exhibit in summer 2014 at the National Museum of Ukrainian Art on Hrushevskoho Street. There was all sorts of bad-taste art, including a number of ridiculous painted portraits of Yanukovych, one of which shows him as a reclining nude, but there were also treasures stolen from Ukrainian museums and libraries such as old religious icons and the Apostolos mentioned above. I felt no desire to laugh at the bad taste; the overwhelming feeling was that the person who wanted to own all of this was not well mentally, and that Ukraine was suffering as a result. Quite a few Kyivans I spoke with said that they were interested in seeing Mezhyhirya but deliberately missed the museum exhibit, because the experience would be painful and sad. A recent book by Serhiy Leshchenko (2014) includes copies of key documents related to the former president and his life in Mezhyhirya.

There is more luxury than was imagined in Koncha Zaspa too (Chapter 7), in the lavish mansions of former government officials who also fled when Yanukovych fell. That of ousted Prosecutor General of Ukraine Viktor Pshonka, an especially close associate of Yanukovych, was shown to be extraordinarily extravagant, perhaps even more so than the main house at Mezhyhirya. It is a world of priceless antiques and art works, including a large collection of spectacular orthodox religious icons of unknown provenance, as well as countless modern luxuries and conveniences. Visitors give considerable attention to the irony of an elegant marble bust of Russia’s Catherine the Great, under whose reign much of Ukrainian territory was annexed into the Russian Empire, and to the various painted portraits of Pshonka himself in various heroic poses, including as Julius Caesar and as Napoleon. My own favorite is the painting in which Viktor Yanukovych is handing Viktor Pshonka a bouquet of red roses. Art is supposed to make one think; this silly-looking painting, which was among those on display in the exhibit referred to above, makes one wonder about the relationship between the two Viktors. Someone had clearly hated it, as Yanukovych’s face had been punched through with what looks to be an angry fist.

Kyiv finally has a mayor. The previous acting mayor (technically Director of City Administration), Oleksandr Popov (Chapters 2 and 3), was suspended from office by Yanukovych on December 14, 2013 and then fired altogether.
on January 25, 2014, as a result of the wholesale beatings of peaceful Maidan demonstrators on November 30, 2013. At the time, the majority of demonstrators were college students. Popov’s dismissal was not because he ordered the beatings of students, which he apparently did not, but because he responded to a reporter’s question about who did by pointing the finger, apparently accurately, at the Viktor with the red roses, Viktor Pshonka. Before Popov, you will recall that the mayor of the city was Leonid Chernovetskiy, “Lonya Kosmos,” the eccentric mayor who went missing (Chapter 3). The new mayor is Vitalyi Klitschko, PhD, the former WBC, WBO, and The Ring magazine heavyweight boxing champion of the world. As a fighter he was known as Dr. Ironfist. He was elected to the post on May 25, 2014, in the same election that chose Petro Poroshenko to be Ukraine’s post-Yanukovych president. Klitschko was a major opposition political leader and head of the UDAR political party, which has since merged with the Petro Poroshenko Bloc. He is very popular in Ukraine as a person and athlete, but is now facing the heightened scrutiny and criticism that comes with political office, and possibly has more opponents than he ever expected. His personal wealth comes not just from success in the ring, but also from real estate investment, and there are critics in Kyiv who fear that Klitschko will not be as tough on developers as they would hope. I was disappointed to hear that the “sportsmen” who dismantled the Maidan stage as people pleaded with them to stop (see above) had been sent by Klitschko.

Ihor Lutsenko, a leading anti-development activist in Kyiv (see Chapter 11) and one of the many Kyivans who was very helpful to me as I worked on this book, escorted his friend Yuriy Verbytsky to a hospital for treatment of injuries that he received from an attack on Maidan by titushky. That was on the night of January 21, 2014. As reported above, both of them were then kidnapped by unknown men dressed in black, and taken to a wooded area outside Kyiv where they were interrogated, beaten, tortured, and left to die. Verbytsky did not survive, but Lutsenko, who did not know that Verbytsky was nearby in the same forest, managed to crawl for help. He survived. He considered a run for the post of mayor, but decided to run instead for a seat in the Verkhovna Rada, the Parliament, or “the Ukrainian Fight Club” (Chapter 3). He won.

A few days before my March 2014 trip to Kyiv, I attended a public lecture given by Myroslava Gongadze, the widow of the murdered Ukrainian journalist Heorhiy Ruslanovych Gongadze (Chapter 4), in a packed hall at the Law School of New York University. I also had the privilege of speaking with her afterward in a room where refreshments were being served. She lives in the United States now, along with her twin daughters, and speaks
English well. Despite the large audience, you could have heard a pin drop as she spoke about her ordeal when her husband went missing, and her ordeal again in seeking justice after his body was found. The Yanukovych government had not yet fallen when she spoke, and her message was not just about the worst period in her life, but also about the rapidly escalating dangers to democracy and press freedoms that Ukrainians were facing. She spoke about Lutsenko and Verbytsky, and about other activists who were being beaten and kidnapped by an army of thugs in the pay of the government. Most especially, she spoke about the recent ordeal of Tetyana Chornovil, a journalist affiliated with Ukrayinska Pravda (Ukrainian Truth), the online newspaper that her husband had founded and paid for with his life.

Tetyana Chornovil (also written as Tetiana Chornovol) was almost another victim. She was the fearless investigative reporter who climbed the fence of Yanukovych’s Mezhyhirya estate to photograph the riches on the other side (Chapter 3). She had also been investigating the construction of a new “Monaco-like" palace for Yanukovych on a promontory above the Black Sea in Crimea (referred to as “Mezhyhirya 2”), and together with Ihor Lutsenko, who is also a journalist by profession, took photographs of the construction from above, below, and the sides. Then, on December 25, 2013, she was run off the road, either near a shopping center close to her home or near Boryspil Airport, depending on the source of information, and was a severely beaten by either a gang of men in black or two men from a Porsche Cayenne, and was left for dead. The beating came just after she had reported in her blog about the opulence of the estate in Koncha Zaspa that belonged to Ukraine’s Minister of Internal Affairs Vitaliy Zakharchenko. It was also known that she had been looking into the estate nearby where Viktor Pshonka lived. She survived the beating and became a cause célèbre on Maidan where photographs of her severely disfigured face after the beatings helped to swell the crowds to new levels. Incredibly, the official investigation into the case offered a conclusion that she was the victim of nothing more than a road rage incident. After Mezhyhirya was vacated by Yanukovych, photos of Tatyana Chornovil were found on the premises, along with a detailed description of her automobile and information about her personal schedule and frequent whereabouts. I saw these with my own eyes. On May 25, 2014, Tetyana Chornovil was also elected to the Verkhovna Rada. The fight against corruption continues to be her main cause. Sadly, on August 10, 2014 her husband Mykola Berezovyi, a member of the Azov Battalion of the Ukrainian forces, was killed in the fighting in eastern Ukraine, leaving her, like Myroslava Gongadze, as a widowed mother of two.
As soon as the dead of Nebesna Sotnya were buried, Kyivans began to talk about putting up a monument in their honor. Some argued for a monument right away, on Independence Square where Maidan protestors were still encamped, or on Instytutska Street where most of victims fell. However, a more cautious approach won the day, as the war commenced in the east and more citizens began to die for Ukraine. The idea of a monument is still very much alive and there are many proposals about what it should look like, exactly what or whom is to be honored, and where it should be, but the war is the nation's priority, and the monument will wait. Wisely, the decision about a monument has been folded into a wider plan for redevelopment in the center of Kyiv. It is agreed that Maidan Nezalezhnosti is a hodge-podge that makes little sense architecturally (see Chapter 6), and that now is the time to think about a redesign. For many, a goal is to make the space more friendly for big gatherings like the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan so that the city always has a place for large-scale grassroots democracy. Recall that one aspect of the square's design, installed during the 1994-2005 presidency of Leonid Kuchma, was to discourage via otherwise unneeded architectural barriers the gathering of too many people because they might be against those in power (Chapter 6). There is also the question about Instytutska Street – Street of the Heroes of Nebesna Sotnya – as a sacred space. That is, because of what transpired there the street should probably not be returned to being part of the city center's vehicular traffic flow network. What to do with the burned-out shell of the Trade Unions Building immediately beside Independence Square is another part of the puzzle, as are questions about how to make Khreshchatyk a more pleasant street, what to do with the poorly used Ukrainian House building on Evropeyska Ploshcha (European Square) that used to be a museum honoring Lenin, and what to do about leftover Soviet monuments such as the People's Friendship Arch nearby that proclaims never-ending mutual love between Ukraine and Russia. In Chapter 3, that “titanium white elephant” was described under the heading “Monumental Woes.” Ukraine's woes with Russia have grown greatly since that writing.

There will certainly be a monument to Nebesna Sotnya in Kyiv in the future, probably as well as monuments to the participants in Euromaidan, the soldiers who died (and who are yet to die) in the war with Russia, and all the soldiers and volunteers who contributed in that war. Exactly what will be built and where will be part of the new plan for central Kyiv that is being discussed, I am happy to say, publically. Whereas planning in the past was typically top-down and secretive, with little chance for citizen input, it seems so far that Kyiv under President Poroshenko and Mayor Klitschko
Kyiv, Ukraine

is following a direction of meaningful citizen participation and open competition for design ideas. The city’s Department of Architecture and City Planning had called for an international competition for designs for central Kyiv and for new monuments, and has shared submissions with the public for comments and opinions. In summer 2015, I was examining exhibits of the most popular ideas when they were on display on Independence Square when Serhiy Tselovalnyk, the chief architect for the city who is mentioned at least two times earlier in this book (Chapters 2 and 3), recognized me and invited me to his office so that I could share my thoughts.79 I did come to his office, where I now feel quite welcome, and told him that since I am not a permanent resident of Kyiv nor a citizen of Ukraine, my main thought is that I would not comment except to say that it was imperative that Kyivans and citizens of Ukraine be heard on the issue. He liked that comment, and then explained to my satisfaction about how he and his boss, Mayor Klitschko, are working to make city government more accessible to city residents. I have also spoken with Tselovalnyk’s top assistant Anna Bondar, and know her to be extraordinarily hard-working, genuine, and sincere, as well as very sharp. There is a long way to go and may hurdles, but I am happy to report that there seems to be progress in how things get done in Kyiv. One measure of that is that construction has stopped on the redevelopment of Hostyny Dvir (Chapter 11) that Kyivans had opposed so vehemently. For the time being at least, the site is silent.

The construction of Diamond Hill (Chapter 7) is completed, but the building is silent too, as there are few residents. It did not get an occupancy permit, because of its dangerous perch atop a bluff of unconsolidated materials. Mr. Tselovalnyk opined that the structure should be taken down. Construction of the “Helipad from Hell” (Chapter 3) is finished too, but there are still no whirlybirds and no known use for the space under the roof. It is a silent site too. Tselovalnyk still does not know what the builder had in mind for the space below when he built it. He reported that it might be necessary to take this structure down too in order to protect the slopes that are endangered by its weighty presence, but weighed in that if the structure were to remain in place, it might be a good conference center near the main government buildings of Ukraine to which dignitaries from abroad can arrive from the city’s airport by helicopter. We also talked about the “Dubious Home” for the museum about Kyiv’s history (Chapter 2), and he liked my thought that maybe the building should be made into a “Museum of Corruption.”

79 Updates about the plans for redevelopment in central Kyiv and proposals for the design of new monuments are presented at the following link: http://terradignitas.kga.gov.ua/novini.
Two Years Later

That was a thought that I had already shared in Chapter 2. It comes from my friend Natalia Moussienko, who was a leader of the protests about the construction of the building where the museum is housed, and a person who is well known to Mr. Tselovalnyk. Some of what was taken from Mezhyhirya after Yanukovych made his hurried escape could be among the exhibits.

Kyiv is still abuilding. Renat Akhmetov’s developers are making progress with reconstruction of the former TsUM department store (Chapter 6), which promises to be quite attractive. However, there is no activity at the site of his planned new building on St. Andrew’s descent (Chapter 6). Akhmetov, of course, was (or is still) very closely tied to former president Yanukovych, and is based in Donetsk, a city that has been greatly ravaged by the war. His attentions are almost certainly on events there. There is construction coming, too, at the site of the historic Desiatynna Church (Chapter 3). As mentioned before, the site is commonly regarded as especially sacred, and as a foundation point for the glories of ancient Rus and Ukrainian and Russian civilizations. The contest between Russian and Ukrainian churches for access to this ground continues unabated. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, continues to hold the spot adjacent where it had built the log cabin-like Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Now, that structure has been substantially enlarged and is of masonry. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate, is constructing its office headquarters across a short stretch of park nearby, much to the consternation of Save Old Kyiv activists and other historic preservationists who lament the loss of older structures that had been ghosts (Chapter 6) on the site. As seen from a nearby billboard, the office complex looks to be well designed in a style that befits the historic ambience of Kyiv (Chapter 11). Both the new office building and the intrusive Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Church are considered to be examples of “Raiding by Religion” in Kyiv. Another update from Desiatynna is that the hallowed ground where ancient church had stood is scheduled to be a museum of that church. It is to be administered by Ukrainian Ministry of Culture. Construction has not started yet, but most of the forbidding green fence that once surrounded the site to keep the competing religious factions away (and to protect archaeological treasures below ground), is now down and there are photos of architectural renderings on display at the site.

Finally, I can report that for now at least, Kyiv is a city without so many Bentleys (Chapter 7), Rolls Royces, Lamborghiniis, Ferraris, and other extra expensive cars. A taxi driver that I use frequently confirmed that traffic now moves more efficiently and politely, and that no one misses the cars of the privileged. He and other Kyivans all say that the rich cars have left
the country, probably to Russia, along with “the crooks who own them.” Likewise, I can say that I detect a decline in sex tourism in Kyiv, this despite the fact that currency exchange rates are now much better for foreigners who are visiting Ukraine, and almost no sex workers trolling Khreshchatyk for clients (Chapter 10). Also, I have noted that at least some of the city’s gaudy striptease clubs have closed. When I mentioned these thoughts in summer 2015 to some Kyivans who know the city well, their first reply was they never thought about such topics, but on reflection they all agreed that I might be right. These are people who know this book, and who think that my “outsider’s perspective” has opened some eyes. Let’s hope that Kyiv will see better and better days. In order to make sure that this will be the case, Oleksandr Glukhov and his wife still live in their apartment on Mala Zhytomyrska Street (Chapter 12), while the developers who wanted to tear down the historic building that they are in seem to have gone silent.