Against the background of a systematic crisis in society, a question arises about the ability of the Ukrainian elite to generate new ideas, put forward constructive proposals for the authorities and contribute to their implementation. The world knows an effective mechanism for employing intellectual potential in solving issues of national importance. This mechanism is known as the non-governmental analytical centers, also known as a “think tanks”.

The editors of Zerkalo Nedeli invited Anatoly GRYTSENKO, President of the Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies (UCEPS), in accordance with a decision taken by the founders’ meeting, from October 24, 2000 the Centre bears the name of its founder and late head Oleksander Vasyliovych RAZUMKOV. A former Deputy Secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council (NSDC), a great friend and permanent contributor to our newspaper, Mr. Razumkov is commemorated today, on the first anniversary of his death, by his relatives, close friends and colleagues.

In November 1999, Mr. Razumkov’s team had to leave the corridors of power, and this was not for the first time. None of the civil and military servants who convinced in the lobby with dumb telephones held any illusions as to the feasibility of their new aim of creating a powerful centre and continuing the direction of the man they had up until now taciturnly called “Chief”. A man who was USEFUL to his country and FAITHFUL to it, A country whose many citizens, would perhaps realise that it is possible to WORK IN SUCH A MANNER as part of official Ukraine, only after watching the airing on Sunday (11 pm) on “1+1” TV of Olya Herasymyuk’s film. And to wage SUCH a life.

Anatoly GRYTSENKO, born in 1957; ethnic Ukrainian; education - Kyiv Suworov Military High School (1974), Kyiv Higher Military Aviation Engineering School (1979), Defence Language Institute, U.S. Department of Defence (1993), the US Air War College (1994), Academy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (1997). Cand. of Technical Sciences, senior research fellow, author of more than 130 scholarly works, some of them issued in Belgium, the Netherlands, the USA, Germany and Switzerland. Since 1997 - a permanent contributor to Zerkalo Nedeli. Colonel (Retired) with a 25-year active service. Served in a combat unit, worked as an instructor at a higher military school, as a staff officer at the Defence Ministry, headed the Military Security and Defence Services Division at the General Staff Research Centre. His most recent position in state bodies - Head of the Analytical Service of Ukraine’s NSDC Staff. Since December, 1999 - UCEPS President.

- Yes, they do. These problems are as topical as before. What do you think hinders Ukraine’s overcoming the crisis, why have we been “extinguishing the fire” for so long and have not been able to find the right way?
- Your question contains the answer: exactly we are “fire-fighting” and are not looking at least half a step ahead. One of the reasons lies in the absence of an integral system of informing the government, strategic analysis and forecasting in the country. This is manifested in the low effectiveness of the executive branch; unreadiness of Parliament to put forward serious initiatives; and a lack of well-founded, revolutionary proposals or simply fresh ideas in the programmes of parliamentary and presidential candidates. Even the headquarters of political parties lavishly funded by their founders have failed to propose feasible programmes in the main spheres of governance. The crisis bears not a local but a systematic character. We cannot go on this way: the state leadership is short of breath without fresh air, and the entire country can suffocate.

The shortage of systemic analysts is especially felt in state structures. There are few of them in central staff, and the situation at departmental research institutions is not much better. The humiliatingly low remuneration of a qualified expert is not the only problem. Unfortunately, there are very few specialists in the country (in some branches - literally a handful), who are ready for responsible work, even if it is decently remunerated. Thousands of doctors and candidates of sciences are of little help here, since most of them are either unable or unwilling to adopt up-to-date methods of analysis, unprepared to resolve applied problems and produce analytical products on short deadlines. Such people should be deliberately trained, and available “brain potential” requires care.

- Is the situation really so bad?

- Yes. We have positive experience that confirms the authorities’ readiness to co-operate with NGOs, and this gives reason for optimism. Let me cite some examples.

Last April, UCEPS prepared the analytical report “Reform of the Insurance System in Ukraine: Conceptual Background”. Prime-Minister Victor Yushchenko found the time to acquaint himself with it. According to his decision, a working group was formed that involved representatives of the Ministry of Finance, other ministries and agencies and, finally, experts from the academic institutions of Ukraine. Several months of joint efforts resulted in the drafting of the State Programme for Ukraine’s Insurance Market Development through 2005. The draft has been agreed with all ministries and is waiting for a political decision - approval by the Cabinet of Ministers - to be taken.

A month ago, UCEPS presented the analytical report "The Church and Society in Ukraine: Problems of Relationship". Our experts prepared it in close co-operation with the State Committee of Ukraine for Religious Affairs. Our analysis was highly praised by the leaders of religious confessions and the Head of the Presidential Administration, Volodymyr Lytvyn.

In March the report "International Image of Ukraine: Myths and Realities" we proposed expanding the DINAU news agency network beyond the country's borders - this September, the Government adopted a relevant resolution.

In February the report "Military Reform in Ukraine: the Start or Another False Start?", UCEPS substantiated incorporation of the Chief of the General Staff into the NSDC - in July, the President signed the relevant decree, and General Shchitkhenko is now working in the Council. This means that the authorities take public opinion into account.

- And what about the authorities?

- We have positive experience that confirms the authorities’ readiness to co-operate with NGOs, and this gives reason for optimism. Let me cite some examples.

http://www.uceps.org/eng/print.php?lng=ENG&&news_id=99&&address=article
Of course, problems exist. For instance, we have failed to establish effective co-operation with Yevhen Marchuk so far, and not through our own fault. Before leaving the NSDC, I considered it my duty to tell the newly-appointed Secretary about possible ways of raising the effectiveness of the NSDC Staff, first of all - of its information and analysis components. I was less than perfectly successful, and I was later informed that our meeting had been a success. First, instead of the planned twenty minutes, the meeting lasted an hour and twenty minutes. Second, at meeting's end, Mr. Marchuk said that my assessments coincided 100 percent with his views, including with respect to possible appointments.

Finally, we agreed to maintain working contacts between experts of the NSDC Staff and UCEPS, since it is simpler to solve issues important for the country through joint efforts (of government structures and practical structures) than to be back to square one. We hardly guess on whom and what to bet. I believe this to be bad for our common cause. That's why we are open as before for a dialogue leading to constructive co-operation.

- Why are reasonable ideas accepted rather rarely?

- A new good idea travels a difficult path: flat rejection - understanding - acceptance - implementation. In many cases, this path is blocked at the early stages. Everything depends on the power structures' ability to take responsible decisions and demonstrate political will in the course of their implementation. If the urgency of a problem is realised too late, momentum is lost, than we have to "extinguish the fire". Sometimes, there is enough political will only for decision-making. Meanwhile, executive structures not always carry out the will of the superior, since they operate according to Parkinson's laws. Let me cite some examples personally known to me.

The NSDC Staff has long come out with proposals on many issues that are of concern to the state leadership. As far as I know, in the near future, an NSDC meeting will be held devoted to Ukraine's energy policy at the intersection of Russian and West European interests. But Alexander Razumkov proposed an NSDC meeting with such an agenda as early as mid-1998. But it did not happen. But, with strategy discussion, it is not on the agenda to be back to square one. Several practical solutions for these issues were offered to the President as far back as 1998-1999. It is worth noting that relevant decisions were adopted: the documents bear the resolution "Agree. For implementation", and were addressed to specific ministers. Had the Government carried out the instructions of the head of state, many problems would have been resolved in a timely fashion.

By the way, half a year prior to the economic crisis that occurred in September 1998, Alexander Razumkov warned of the risk of external threats and the internal preconditions for the collapse of the economic system, and outlined the possible scenarios of crisis development proceeding from an analysis of the Indonesian situation. These forecasts were not properly considered by the Government either. As a result, in September, 1998, we had to hastily work out a list of anti-crisis measures and again "extinguish the fire".

The ultimate conclusion is evident: executive structures should work for the future, the policy of "extinguishing the fire" leads to a deadlock fraught with grave miscalculations and loss of time. It is clear that every unit of state power with a staff of 100 should employ 3-7 analysts, to forecast the situation two to three months in advance. Today, the political structures (the Government and the NSDC Staff) that should work together are engaged in "political cannibalism".

In principle, I cannot rule out that any of UCEPS employees will be offered an executive position in the state structures. Under certain circumstances such an offer may be accepted. We are interested in the effectiveness of work, and this requires accumulating a critical mass of genuine professionals, who are devoted to the country and whom its future can be entrusted, on all levels of the executive pyramid.

- Do independent experts always have the chance to present their thoughts to decision-makers?

- It is difficult for me to speak on behalf of other NGOs. As a rule, we do not experience problems with this, although you are right - not all doors open at the first stroke. There are officials who consider it humiliating to consult experts from non-governmental analytical centres. Their assistants plainly say that, say, Ivan Ivanovych is occupying doing more important business and cannot waste his time meeting some experts, you should understand - he heads a ministerial section (department)! What can we say about this?

First of all, some of the UCEPS employees up until recently have worked in executive structures. Such people as Valeriy Chaly, Volodymyr Saprykin, Mykola Sungurovskyi and Ìgor Zhdanov occupied no less or maybe even more important posts than those "Ivan Ivanovychs". Their assessments and proposals were presented to state leaders, and important decisions were taken on their basis. Second, we are not budget-financed and are not chumming anyone. We offer the authorities our analysis of the situation, a forecast of its development and possible solutions. The Razumkov Centre has always supported constructive initiatives of the authorities and simultaneously criticised weak or erroneous solutions. Ukraine's leaders understand that the Razumkov Centre is present, and that they should take into account the analyses and recommendations.

Where we criticize the state leaders for certain actions (or inaction), we always propose a solution and are ready to contribute to its practical implementation. We believe this to be a responsible civic position of people not indifferent to developments in this country.

Indeed, many employees are maximalists. We want the situation in the country to change for the better while we are alive, not in 100-150 years. That's why we are using all channels of influence accessible to NGOs.

- What are the financial arrangements of analytical centres? In other words, who calls the tune?

- There are forms of mutually beneficial co-operation, too. For instance, in recent months, meetings involving leaders of non-governmental centres have been held at the initiative of Mr. Lytvyn. The presidential team expressed a readiness to consider independent assessments of the situation, even to take into account the ideas and proposals. It's an extremely important message for us, and we prepare for such meetings very seriously, being aware of our responsibility.

In February the report "Military Reform in Ukraine: the Start or Another False Start?", UCEPS substantiated incorporation of the Chief of the General Staff into the NSDC - the relevant decree, and General Shkidchenko is now working in the Council. This means that the authorities take public opinion into account.

- And what is the essence of UCEPS strategy?

- Alexander Razumkov set very high requirements for the analytical product offered by the Centre, and we have no moral right to lower these requirements. This imposes some limitations on our relations with partners and sponsors: UCEPS takes on only those projects, which we can do better than others, and draw concrete proposals and recommendations from our survey. We have studied the practice of non-governmental centres in dozens of countries, defined our strategy and adhere to it.
To work, while there is enough health and power...

- To work, while there is enough health and power... channel limited resources to fight corruption that has paralysed the entire country, and to monitor dubious foreign trade transactions where the country loses billions. This will be centres present an important element of civil society, they should not be viewed as an opposition that dreams of “attacking” the Government or selling state secrets. It’s better to there is enough open information to make grounded assessments and forecasts. We know not only our duties but also our rights and how to secure them. Non-governmental We know who may stand behind this. Someone is probably unaware that a professional analyst does not need to read secret or top secret documents, or break into locked rooms: by special services and “technical novelties”. We are able to reveal shadowing or bugging, mail cover or breaking into our computers. “Competent bodies” sometimes work so

- To work, while there is enough health and power...

- You ask point-blank, but I will give you a direct answer. Our personnel have sufficient experience of working in this country and abroad, and are familiar with the methods used supervisors or special services?

- Sometimes UCEPS experts boldly speak in public, producing assessments that are not to everybody’s liking. Do you feel any “special attention” to the Centre on the part of

- The UCEPS magazine publishes materials by experts representing, so to speak, polar political forces that often strongly criticise the present authorities. Is this done intentionally or through negligence?

- Indeed, we allow the pages of the National Security & Defence for the thoughts and assessments of different people. Those included Yury Yekhanurov, Viktor Medvedchuk, Heorhiy Kruchkov, Natalia Vitrenko, Boys Kozhyb, Roman Zvarych, Inna Bohoslovskaya, Valeriy Shmarov, Anatoly Lopata, 1 Van Bilas, 2 gor Istash, 3 hollushko, Volodymr Horbulin, Boys Tarasyuk, and Anatoly Énakh. we can also mention the names of well-known Western experts - Zbigiew Brzezinski, Jeffrey Sachs, Sherman Garnett, James Sherr, Jeffrey Simon, - with whose estimates not everyone in Ukraine agrees.

For us, the main criterion is the quality of material and the depth of argumentation. The UCEPS magazine won’t publish unfounded accusations and humiliating attacks. We reject publications that term the present authorities as “an anti-popular gangster regime”, without putting forward any constructive proposals. At the same time, we do not evade sharp discussion and are not afraid to compare thoughts, ideas and propositions - such was the firm position of Alexander Razumkov, and we adhere to it. It’s no secret that few mass media in the country can present the situation as it is in reality. When working in the NSDC Staff, we monitored 80-90 newspapers and magazines, and continue to do this now, but few of them deserve attention. Television reports increasingly resemble the times of stagnation, although there are more than a hundred political parties in the country instead of

On the eve of the 1998 parliamentary elections, UCEPS held a round-table to discuss economic programmes of political parties battling for parliamentary seats. Let me remind you that Aleksandr Razumkov at that time was not only the leader of the Centre but also occupied an executive position in the NSDC. His colleagues in the presidential team, to put it mildly, did not recommend him to give a rostrum to the Left, which criticised the authorities. It does credit to Aleksandr Razumkov that he assumed all the responsibility for the possible consequences, but did not betray the principles to which his Centre adhered and continues to adhere. As a result, the round-table involved not only the parties associated with pro-presidential forces, but also the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU), Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU), and the Peasant Party of Ukraine. And nothing terrible happened, quite the contrary. People saw the readiness of the authorities to carry on an open dialogue, mass media obtained the chance to discuss the parties known to the voters, and experts - to assess the substantiation of proposals and the depth of populism of those who criticise but are unable to propose anything.

We are firmly convinced that Ukraine’s domestic policy and relations with other countries should be built on a solid foundation, take account of realistic capabilities and limitations, including the spirit of broad masses of the population. And since the CPU, SPU and PSPU enjoy the support of millions of voters, the policy of the country’s leadership, as well as the policies of other countries toward Ukraine, should take this factor into account. Otherwise we will find ourselves in a world of illusions, incorrect assessments and forecasts, overstated expectations and unjustified hopes, which neither we, nor our partners need.

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