

THE PERCEPTION OF IRONY IN NEWSPAPER ARTICLES IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN



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“Trusting no man as his friend, he could not recognize his enemy when the latter actually appeared.”

The Scarlett Letter –

Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Abstract

This paper sets forth a contrastive analysis of irony in 60 newspaper articles extracted from two journals written in English, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, and the Ukrainian newspaper *Ykraincka Prabda*, all published in March 2011. The point of departure will be a prototype approach to irony, according to which it has a high degree of overlap with neighbouring categories such as metaphor, sarcasm or humour. Irony will not be considered to involve violation of Gricean maxims, but flouting instead, since its use is due to the writer's intention to communicate additional meanings rather than to provoke communication problems. The paper will offer a classification of different linguistic devices that express irony (Barbe, 1995, Beals 1995, Booth 1975, Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989 and Stanel 2006), which may be basically divided between: a) clausal devices, such as reversed polarity (i.e. negation instead of affirmation or vice versa), metaphors, rhetorical questions, exaggerations and unexpected speech acts, and b) lexical devices such as reinforcing expressions (*sure(ly)*, *it is clear / natural...*), antonyms or homonyms as well as oxymorons and polysemy. The articles, whose topics are politics, economy and society (life and style, sports, entertainment and culture), were analyzed in terms of irony and then distributed among 60 informants, aged 18-55 of different nationalities and with education at university level. The informants, after reading the articles, filled in a questionnaire with tasks about rating the degree of irony of the articles as a whole, detecting concrete expressions of irony and explaining them by means of non-ironical paraphrases. The responses to the questionnaires were inserted in a database for quantitative analysis, whose results are discussed: among other issues, the articles in *Ykraincka Prabda* display a remarkably higher degree of irony than those of the other two newspapers, and age plays a crucial role in understanding irony. The article also aims to shed light into the degree of correspondence between different theoretical studies (Barbe 1995; Muecke 1970, 1980; Stanel 2006) and the layperson's idea of irony, in order to redefine the concept and scope of irony for application to further studies.

Keywords: irony, newspaper articles, English-Ukrainian contrastive analysis, questionnaire, informants.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. 1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESIS

In the last decades, the study of irony has played an important role in linguistics, and especially in pragmatics, with a focus on the analysis of the purposes and intentions of irony use in both written and oral texts, as well as its identification by the addressees (Muecke, 1980; Barbe, 1995; Stanel, 2006). On the one hand, Muecke's (1980: 64- 92) study on irony is the first of these and his classification of irony into *verbal*, *dramatic* and *situational* marked a starting point for other contemporary linguists, such as Littman and Mey (1991: 131- 151) or Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989: 374- 386), who provide a more detailed taxonomy of irony usage. On the other hand, Barbe (1995: 18- 24) highlights the importance of more pragmatic issues of irony such as the meaning, speaker purpose and addressees, whom she denominates *victims*¹. Other pragmatic approaches on irony have been done by Grice (1975: 9-113) and Lapp (1992) in Stanel (2006: 33- 34)², where irony is perceived as a substitute of conversational implicature and as a simulation of insincerity, respectively. Similarly, Clyne (1974) and Löffler (1975) in Stanel (2006: 40- 44) explain several semantic signals of irony, such as the usage of rhetorical questions and polysemy, which might help in the process of irony identification in both written and oral contexts. A more general overview of the irony markers is presented by Hutcheon (1995: 156), who argues that irony markers do not signal irony by themselves, but their function in context suggests that words/sentences might be ironic. Therefore, the five categories of signals that

¹ This concept is also used in a similar way by Muecke (1980:30)

² Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975), Berg (1976) and Lapp (1992) are the four German linguists mentioned in this paper, whose researches are not available in English; therefore, Stanel's (2006) comments on their theories are taken into account.

Stanel (2006) also comments on other references on metaphor by German linguists, such as Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975) and Berg (1976).

function structurally are: various changes of register, exaggeration, contradiction, simplification and repetition.

Nevertheless, although considerable research has been devoted to irony in written texts, less attention has been paid to irony in newspapers. Thus, the reason for studying irony in newspapers is in order to find the answers to the following questions: How do people perceive irony in newspapers in their daily life? Are people actually aware of the fact that certain irony markers exist and thus help them to identify irony? If so, to what extent do these “irony alarms” serve as an aid when trying to comprehend irony? Is it possible to classify irony into ironic statements and ironic situations in the newspapers? In what newspapers (i.e. Ukrainian, British or American) does irony predominate? Finally, what are the “markers” of irony that predominate in the three newspapers?

Therefore, this paper aims, first of all, to analyze irony in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers, particularly its perception by the readers and, secondly, to compare the results achieved using a quantitative analysis. In addition, the identification of irony signals presented by Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975), Barbe (1995), Beals (1995) and Willer and Groeben (1980) will be analyzed in detail in order to observe their efficiency in written texts. Besides, some plausible results on irony predominance in American, British or Ukrainian newspaper articles will be presented.

The remainder of this paper will be divided into four sections: methodology, theoretical background section, results and discussion and conclusion. In the methodology section the information concerning the necessary data and the process of the investigation of irony perception will be provided. In the theoretical background section a broad scope of the linguistic study of irony from the last four decades till the present time will be offered and the approach adopted here will be specified. Subsequently, in the results and discussion

section, the analysis of irony in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers will be supplied, focusing on the identification of irony by the participants of the study. Besides, this section also offers a discussion of possible differences between irony predominance in the American, British or Ukrainian newspaper articles. Finally, the conclusion section contains the summary of the main points and the results achieved from the study.

1. 2 INTRODUCTION TO IRONY

Irony has gained an important role in all branches of linguistics in the last decades, though its roots can be traced back to Aristotelian times, when it had a quite negative meaning (Gibbs and Izett, 1994, Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 240). As irony meaning evolved throughout an extended period of time, it has gained different meanings which lead to a certain controversy regarding the actual idea of what irony is. Thus, on the one hand, its meaning has lost the negative effect of the classical philosophers on people and achieved another - “saying contrary of what one means” (Muecke, 1980 in Pishbin, 2010:3), indicating that the utterance, if taken literally, is inappropriate to the situation and, therefore, the recipient is compelled to reinterpret it in such a way as to render it appropriate; therefore, the most appropriate way “to interpret it is meaning the opposite of its literal form” (Searle, 1979: 113 in Hutcheon, 1995: 62). Thus, speech act theorists such as Searle (1979) considered that what people called “ironic” was somehow related to the logical contradiction to what was said or to the literal meaning (Hutcheon, 1995: 62). On the other hand, there are theorists such as Hutcheon (1995) and Levinson (1983), who claim that irony is something more than a mere relationship between the said and the unsaid; irony conveys an attitude or a feeling from both the interpreter and the ironist (Hutcheon, 1995: 37- 39) and it may be perceived as a *perlocutionary act* (in Hutcheon, 1995: 39), introduced by Austin (1975. 101). This means that the ironic utterance “brings about certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience,

or of the speaker, or of other persons” (Levinson, 1983: 236). Thus, irony can be viewed as the expressive tool that the ironist uses in certain situations, which might be perceived either negatively or positively by the interpreter.

Therefore, irony is not easily definable and its features and classification vary from one author to another. For instance, while some linguists (Muecke, 1980; Booth, 1975) consider that irony is not equally understood by all people, who have a choice to accept it or not, or there might be also dangers in earnestness, “in not having a sense of irony” (Muecke, 1969: 245 in Hutcheon, 1995: 44), others, such as Gibbs (1991: 523- 530) and Stanel (2006), assure that nearly everybody is capable of irony understanding, even though sometimes this understanding is unconscious or it completely rests in the interpreter (Hutcheon, 1995: 45). Overall, there are many situations in which irony is not easily perceived, due to the context (Smith, 1989: 73) in Hutcheon (1995: 143), and/or the intentions of the ironist (Grice, 1975; Austin 1975, Searle, 1983) and this may cause problems of misunderstanding between participants in both spoken and written registers.

1. 3 NEWSPAPER LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE

Newspaper language belongs to the written text and, therefore, works on a visual or graphological level, whereas oral text consists on aural or phonological level. However, both texts have lexical and grammatical or syntactic levels (Reah, 1998: 55 in Stanel, 2006: 52). Moreover, Crystal and Davy (1969) in Stanel (2006: 52) claim that there is a difference between the *journalese* and *normal* English. Thus, the two theorists found out that verbs of speaking often appear before the subject in the statement- type sentences as in “said Dr. Mason” instead of “Dr. Mason said” in the *journalese* English. Furthermore, they also emphasize the frequent presence of adverbials in empathetic clause initial position instead of post-verbal positions and a great number of complex post- and premodifications

and much fewer commas in the newspaper's language style than in *normal* English as in the following example: "Lansley's reforms to the NHS – handing over a majority of the healthcare budget to GPs for commissioning, and scrapping primary care trusts- have been opposed by some Conservative MPs and the British Medical Association, and 10 days ago Lib Dems voted at their spring party conference to ensure modifications were made to the bill." (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

Furthermore, Carter (1988) in Stanel (2006: 53) concludes that British newspapers are supposed use more so called *core* or highly frequent vocabulary for a better understanding of the content and fewer linguistic devices and rhetorical figures such as metaphors and irony, which contrast with the expectations of a plain style.

Although the term 'newspaper' suggests that its content should be dealing mainly with news, decorated with some opinions or comments, it also contains another type of informational items such as advertising, entertainment, TV listing and celebrity stories, among others (Stanel, 2006). Therefore, the newspapers' main components are the heading, the lead and the news reports.

Regarding headings, Stanel (2006: 54) considers that they are eye-catching and controversial, usually condensing information because of their brevity and their main function, which consists in catching the attention of the reader. Thus, the writers of the newspapers have to bear in mind the highly informative character of headings in order to select the vocabulary, the style of language and the size of the headings. Reah (1998: 18) highlights some of the most common language tools used in headings: metaphors (e.g. "More Water Money *goes down the Drain*" → that is wasting money), homophones (e.g. "Dr. Spuhler will maintain *Swiss role*" → *Swiss roll*), homonyms (e.g. "Women who smoke have *lighter* children" → as noun it refers to the device lighting a cigarette),

polysemies (e.g. “Butter battle *spreads*” → butters can be spread, battles can widen), intertextuality (e.g. “*Babe in Wood* found safe” → reference to the folk-tale *The Babes in the Wood*), etc.

After the heading usually goes the *lead*, which corresponds to the short, relatively stand-alone introductory part and whose function is to complement the headline, to summarize the following text, to present main ideas and to give the readers the reasons to go on reading (Stanel, 2006: 55).

According to Prestin (2000: 165- 168) in Stanel (2006: 57- 59) a distinction should be made between the *hard* and the *soft* news. Thus, the hard news are characterized by a neutral style of writing, providing information about the issue’s of *what*, *who*, *when* and *where*, that is that the hard news should avoid subjective evaluations and ambiguity. Likewise the *hard* news, the *soft* news are informative, but they are aimed to entertain the reader; therefore, the linguistic devices and rhetorical figures are used to create a jocular and informal mode of communication.

The news reports are the “nucleus” of information, which is presented in extended or relatively short paragraphs. Its function is to develop the main ideas presented in the heading and the lead in a more descriptive way so that the audience could get a detailed general overview of the news presented.

Stanel (2006: 60) concludes that irony presence is usually much more evident in the editorials than in the news reports; however, this does not mean that there are no ironic instances in the latter.

2. THE METHOD

In order to analyze the perception of irony in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers among native and bilingual (i.e. proficient users of English as a Foreign Language) bilingual English speakers and Ukrainians, a small survey was conducted on the basis of questionnaires and, a quantitative study was carried out, focusing on the results obtained from the quantitative investigation.

2.1 NEWSPAPER ARTICLES³

The data consisted of 60 newspaper articles and editorials from three newspapers of prestige from the United States, United Kingdom and Ukraine, respectively; the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Ykraincka Pravda*. The articles selected at random in order to broaden the scope of the study, selecting specific topics in order to observe the presence of irony signals (i.e. metaphors, rhetorical questions, reinforcing expressions, exaggerations...) as well as their variation in use. Moreover, it should be stated that each of the newspapers of each language contains 5 editorials in order to provide a broader view of how irony functions in newspaper language, both subjective and objective. The articles contain topics belonging to politics, economy, technology and society. The political topics chosen belong to the issues of the Libyan war, the military, and some government, election and presidential matters. The topics related to the economy include the nuclear crisis in Japan and issues related to it, the financial situation of some countries and retirement matters. The technological topics contain mobile phone technological innovations, internet and digital developments, electricity and energy issues. Finally, the society issues include

³ The newspaper articles of this study are specified in the Appendix A, B and C for, respectively, the *Ykraincka Pravda*, the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, where all irony instances found are underlined.

sport matters such as football, basketball or car racing, cultural topics such as literature, cinema and theatre and everyday issues such as drugs, reality shows or family issues.

The aforementioned articles were selected from both English and Ukrainian newspapers published during the 20th and the 23rd of March, 2011. From the *New York Times*, the articles were 7 socio-cultural, 6 political and 7 economic; from the *Guardian* 7 socio-cultural, 6 political and 7 economic; from the *Ykrainska Pravda*, 7 socio-cultural, 7 political and 6 economic - corpus for each language consisted on approximately 16.500 – 17.300 words. Moreover, these texts were chosen from the same dates in order to observe the quantity of ironic features (i.e. ironic words/sentences) and the relative predominance of ironic features of certain types over others for a further reliable quantitative comparison. In addition, the articles contain images as a visual support with potential for a better irony perception, but in this research attention was paid only to the written language.

2.2 PARTICIPANTS

As Stanel (2006: 70) claims, the ability to interpret irony, reading between the lines and an appropriate interpretation of humor, requires a very high level of the process of language learning. For such reason, participants of different ages (18-50) and of both genders were carefully chosen with the objective to get a wider view of irony awareness. Thus, sixty participants were selected, taking into consideration the necessity of the contribution of English-Ukrainian bilingual respondents. Moreover, the respondents chosen belong to different cultural environments (i.e. not all English participants are natives, but belong to different countries, such as Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Japan, Russia, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Iran, Argentina, China, U.S.A., Finland, Sweden) with similar educational level (i.e. all of them have academic experience at a university level). As it may be perceived in Table 1, the total of nationalities involved are 16, what means that the participants are

bilingual (i.e. proficient users of English as a Foreign Language), but not necessarily native speakers of English. However, in the case of Ukrainian respondents all of the twenty respondents involved are native speakers.

Country	Algeria	Argentina	Australia	China	Costa Rica	Finland	Holland	Iran
Number	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Country	Italy	Japan	Russia	Spain	Turkey	Ukraine	USA	Venezuela
Number	1	1	1	16	1	20	8	2

Table 1. The nationalities and the quantity of the participants involved

2.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE⁴

The questionnaire was chosen as an adequate via to conduct this research on irony, due to the fact that irony may be analyzed in several different ways and that it is sometimes difficult to indicate that something is ironic, despite following certain criteria. We must remember that from the classical period till nowadays theorists diverge among themselves with regard to the definitions, classifications and functions of irony, as will be perceived in section 3. Therefore, the questionnaire will shed light into the adequacy of the various theoretical studies to the layperson's idea of irony. Moreover, since the study aims at the perception of irony, and its perception differs from one person to another, a questionnaire might be a useful tool to achieve a variety of subjective irony recognitions. Thus, the questionnaire was administered to 60 participants, who had to carry out several tasks. The first one was simply to recognize irony in a particular newspaper article. The second one consisted on rating (from 1 to 4) the difficulty of irony perception. The third task consisted on providing an explanation of that ironic phrase/word with the aim to observe whether all

⁴ The questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

of the participants had the proper awareness of its usage. Finally, the fourth task consisted on giving information about the possible usage of some extra “aid” such as dictionaries or Internet in order to carry out the aforementioned tasks and for a better understanding of irony in certain articles. Moreover, some personal information of the respondents was asked: age, nationality, educational background and gender.

2.4 METHODOLOGY

After having collected the data, the questionnaires were supplied to the respondents for a period of one week. Each participant received one article either from American, British or Ukrainian newspaper and had to carry out the tasks indicated in the questionnaire. Then, the results were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, concentrating, first of all, on the classification of irony and, secondly, on the predominance of certain irony signals above others and the difficulties in interpreting ironic items (i.e. words/phrases). Some plausible reasons for such difficulties were also provided. Moreover, the Ukrainian texts and examples to be analyzed were translated into English after having collected the results for a better and clearer perception of irony and its understanding and are provided in section 5. Finally, the results were tabulated and classified in terms of the predominance of irony markers in the newspapers.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 WHAT IS IRONY?

3.1.1 IRONY DEFINITION

The concept of irony dates back to Aristotelian times, in which it referred to abusive pretense and *contrarium* meaning of the utterances, also often understood as a falsehood or another form of lying frequently used to deceive. (Stanel, 2006: 14; Knox, 1989: 51). For instance, Aristotle himself differentiated among four opposites of irony: contraries (i.e. good and bad, tall and short) contradictories (i.e. “He is good”, “He is not good”), relatives (i.e. double and half, son and father) and privation/ possession (sight and blindness) (Knox, 1989: 19). However, Knox (1989: 20) claims that the fact that irony might depend on the four Aristotelian opposites “was mentioned wherever figurative language was analyzed logically, notably in medieval commentaries on Latin grammars and in Renaissance rhetorical emphasizing the kinship of rhetorical and logic”. Such interpretation and understanding of irony survived until the sixteenth century when authors such as Pierre de la Ramée or Petrus Ramus (1515?-1572) changed slightly the application of the four Aristotelian opposites. Thus, “good” and “bad” or “rich” and “poor” were contraries, what meant that when the evil was called good or poor rich, the irony depended on contraries. Whereas “double” and “half” or “son” and “father” were considered to be opposite relatives, therefore, when the father exclaimed that his disobedient son was the father and that he, the father was the son in indignation, the irony depended on the opposition of relatives, according to Knox (1989: 20- 21).

However, this notion evolved throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period when many authors and philosophers such as Bede, Donatus (4th c. A. D.), Traversagni

(1425- 1503) and grammars such as Alexander de Villa Dei (1170- 1250) defined it as “a trope expressing what it intends through its opposite”. This way, a weak person might be called “Samson”, an idiot “Aristotle” and a pauper “Croesus or Midas” (Knox, 1989: 14).

However, nowadays, irony’s meaning is still a problematic one, since there is a great dichotomy among authors regarding whether it has left behind such a negative meaning or not. First, there are theorists such as Knox (1989: 8- 10) and Gagnier (1988: 135) who suggest that irony is no longer perceived with strong negative connotations, but rather as a humoristic tool which creates incongruity or release in addressees. Second, Swearingen (1991: 5) claims that irony must be viewed as an intellectual mode, associated to the superiority and upper classes, what might also indicate the notion of control from the side of the ironist when uttering certain ironic messages. However, Belsey (1980: 72) in Hutcheon (1995: 29) assures that irony is no longer authoritative, due to its implicit meaning. Some authors (Booth, 1974: 43; Winner: 1988: 156) give quite positive connotations to irony, indicating that rather than being an insult or an attack, irony is a defense or a less malicious or less direct insult towards the interlocutor. Finally, Hutcheon (1995: 26) suggests that irony has a *double edge*, which means that “anger and hostility mark one negativized extreme of the affective range” of irony and “relatively unemotional detachment” constitutes the other. Thus, one cannot state with certainty that irony has either a negative or a positive meaning and effect on the interpreter, because “It seems that no matter what role is granted to irony, by either ironists or interpreters, there will always exist both a negative and a positive perspective on it.” (Hutcheon, 1995: 29)

Therefore, since the meaning of irony has changed significantly throughout centuries and its perception and recognition may differ from one person to another as Muecke (1970: 7) claims there is neither a unique nor a concrete definition of a given concept. Precisely, for such reason, Barbe (1995: 9) avoids providing a definition of the aforementioned

notion, preferring, thus, the usage of the notions, such as *characterization* or *description* of irony, because of the inevitable change of language, which, in turn, alters the comprehension of certain linguistic utterances (in Stanel, 2006). Despite such evidence, some linguists (Muecke, 1980 and Canestrari, 2010) made an effort to define irony, focusing particularly on some general features, which can be summarized in one of Muecke's (1980) (in Pishbin, 2010:3) and Hutcheon's (1995: 42- 43) explanations of irony as "saying contrary of what one means" taking into consideration the emotional and evaluative character it may have on the ironist and the interpreter.

Even though, there is a big dichotomy among classical and present day authors regarding irony definition and comprehension, the fact that irony may appear in any type of sentence (i.e. interrogative, imperative and declarative) is shared by writers and philosophers throughout human's history (Knox, 1989: 38).

3. 1. 2 IRONY CHARACTERISTICS

Booth (1976: 10) and Berg (1975: 11) in Stanel (2006:18- 19) assure that irony, as well as other tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, litotes and rhetorical questions require certain cognitive processes for the correct interpretation and perception of them. Therefore, Booth (1976) claims that this perception process is a gradual one during which the interpreter goes through the understanding of the literal meaning of the utterance or text and chooses whether to accept the literal meaning or look for the alternative interpretation. However, Gibbs (1991) made a psychological study on irony understanding and concluded that people usually understand the ironic meaning of irony, even though they are not always aware of irony presence (in Stanel, 2006: 19). Besides, Stanel (2006: 17) claims that people "do not use irony unconsciously - not in speech acts and less in written texts forms". In line with the statements that irony may or may not be perceived equally by all

people, Constantinescu (2007) claims that irony, as well as parody or satire, is neither easily recognizable nor equally understood by everybody, for the reason that there is no existent rule which could indicate how to recognize these linguistic devices. Therefore, it is the reader himself who must “*catch the tone*” or “*feel the pulse*” of ironic expressions, where the intended meaning does not match the literal one.

Thus, even though people might or might not be aware of irony presence, they still have to undergo certain cognitive process in order to accept or not the literal meaning of the proposition. Moreover, it usually takes time to place oneself in a context or situation of the content of the utterance in order to catch the correct meaning of it.

Moreover, even though Booth (1976) claims that people usually choose whether to accept ironic meaning or not, one might state that people usually understand ironic meaning, or simply perceive its presence, sometimes not fully comprehending it as Gibbs (1991) and Constantinescu (2007) claim.

Then, do we use irony with certain intentions or unintentionally and how does the interpreter understand whether something is ironic or not? Several theories such as those of Grice (1980), Sperber and Wilson (1981) and Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) could give an answer for these questions.

On the one hand, Grice (1980) in Stanel (2006: 22, 23) and in Sperber and Wilson (1995: 28) made an effort in defining the meaning in terms of the intention of the communicator. Besides, Grice (1980) elaborated a so called *co-operative principle*, which consists on making “your contribution appropriate to stage, purpose and direction of conversation” (Lapp, 1992: 64 in Stanel, 2006: 23). Therefore, this principle of successful communication is divided into nine maxims classified into four well defined categories: *maxim of quantity* (make your contribution as informative as is required; do not make your

contribution more informative than is required), *maxim of quality* (do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence), *maxim of relation* (be relevant) and *maxim of manner* (avoid obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief; be orderly) in Sperber and Wilson (1995: 34). Besides, Grice (1980) was aware that human communication is so complex that there exist many situations in which speaker's meaning differs from the sentence meaning that is why he took into consideration the existence of circumstances when one of the aforementioned maxims could be flouted, naming it *conversational implicature*. "This occurs when what a cooperative speaker says so obviously fails to obey that maxims that the hearer must assume the speaker means something different" (Wayne, 1998: 12). Moreover, Grice (1980) himself categorizes irony, metaphor, metonymy and litotes into the flouting of the maxims of quality, however, Stanel (2006: 24) assures that ironic instances could be provided by the violation of all of the maxims presented by Grice (1980). Thus, Willer and Groeben (1980) in Stanel (2006: 40- 41) provide an explanation of conscious violation of conversational *maxims of modality* (the term that they use for the Gricean *maxims of manner* and of *quality*), *relevance* and *quantity*. Therefore, violation of the maxim of modality involves the repeated paraphrasing of the same content (e.g. person 1 embraces person 2 and says: "You know how much disgusting, insufferable and unbearable you are!"), or when certain emphasis is put on some idea with the help of particles such as *really*, *truly* or *indeed*. The violation of the maxim of relevance happens when people name irrelevant details as in the following example: "Sorry, could you tell me how to go to the street Francisco 45?" - "Yes, of course, you know where they are building the new road with the cement brought from Italy; it's the most popular one and it is becoming to be used in the whole Europe? So, when you reach that road near McDonald, you turn left and you will see the red building in front of you. That is the Francisco Street". Finally, the violation

of maxims of quantity, which was stated to be as one of the irony cases, refers to utterances where there is too much or too little information. This may be illustrated by the following instance: a civil servant asks the citizen in the registration office who wants to have passport issued: “Born?” answer: “Yes.” In this example, it is clearly perceived that there is a misunderstanding between the two interlocutors and that the civil servant has omitted the whole sentence and therefore, received an absurd answer.

The first one who shows a strong disapproval with Grice is Searle (1969: 46- 48) in Sperber and Wilson (1995: 28), who claims that the speaker may successfully communicate the same without the fulfillment of the Gricean intentions. Another linguist to criticize Grice (1980) was Barbe (1995: 39), who disagrees with the fact that irony must be understood as the flouting of only one of the maxims, thus it cannot serve for the cases when the sentence and the speaker’s meaning conflate (in Stanel, 2006: 24). Besides Levinson (1983: 122) states that many attacks have been made on the universal character of Grice’s implicature and on the broadness of his maxims (Kroch, 1972; Kiefer, 1979; Gazdar, 1979), concluding that his theory is vacuous, however Levinson (1983) also claims that such criticism could have force only if it were impossible to predict implicatures “on a rigorous basis”. Hutcheon (1995: 116- 118) suggests that the “intentionalist” theories of Grice (1980) and Searle (1969), among others have never really disappeared despite the criticisms received and that none of the positions against intentionalists necessarily deny that intention exists, because everybody has intended to be ironic some time: “to call something ironic is to frame or contextualize it in such a way that, in fact, an intentionalist statement has already been made - either by the ironist *or* by the interpreter (or by both)” (Hutcheon, 1995: 117- 118).

Thus, it may be stated that indeed, irony may be the tool which people usually use with particular purposes, violating all of Gricean maxims, as Willer and Groeben (1980) and

Barbe (1995) suggested. However, Gricean theory of the importance of intention when violating certain conversational maxims seems to be verifying due to the fact that all of us have used irony intentionally likewise Hutcheon (1995) claims.

On the other hand, Sperber and Wilson's (1981) criticism of Grice's explanation of irony as a conversational implicature lead to the development of another irony interpretation. Therefore, in the examples: "What lovely weather!" (during a downpour) and "What awful weather!", the two theorists ask themselves why do we sometimes choose to utter the former utterance and not the latter one (Stanel, 2006: 24- 25). The difference between both lays in the attitude in that in the former one the speaker expresses the attitude towards the content of the proposition, while in the latter one he/ she expresses the attitude to the weather. Thus, this distinction between the two utterances was missed by Grice (1980). Instead, Sperber and Wilson (1981) claim that ironic utterances do not use the literal meaning but just mention it; therefore, irony is an *echoic mention* of an utterance created to evoke speaker's attitude to the proposition (Van der Auwera and Rombouts, 1982: 17 in Stanel, 2006: 25).

However, Sperber and Wilson's (1981) theory of echoic mention was also criticized by many theorists such as Lapp (1992), Van der Auwera and Rombouts (1982) and Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) among others. For instance, for Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) as well as for Sperber and Wilson (1981) the important part of ironic statements is the *echoic mention* or *reminding*. However the difference consists in that for Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) the ironic statement can be used and not mentioned as in the example chosen by the two theorists where a mother says to her daughter: "Would you very much mind if I asked you, please, to perhaps consider cleaning up your room sometime this month?", where the mother makes a clear request by asking a question with ironic politeness. Thus, Kreuz and Glucksberg (1969: 383) claim that here the reminding theory makes effect because "the

question reminds of the speaker's stance towards the listener's behavior" and does not mention it, moreover Stanel (2006: 28) suggests that this theory might be applied to the statements "whose literal meaning is the intended meaning".

Therefore, even though there are dichotomies with regard to the *echoic mention* theory, one may state that irony may work in two ways: mentioning the literal meaning as Sperber and Wilson (1981) claim and use that literal form, as Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) suggested.

Hutcheon (1995: 57- 66) suggests three generalized semantic characteristics of irony; perceiving it as *relational*, *inclusive* and *differential*. Thus, the first one has to do with the fact that irony does not only operate between meanings (said and unsaid) but also between people (ironists and interpreters). The second irony characteristic is the inclusive feature which makes possible the rethinking of the "standard semantic notion of irony as a simple antiphrasis which can be understood by a straightforward meaning substitution" (Hutcheon, 1995: 58). Finally, the last semantic feature of irony is that which provides the explanation of the fuzzy relationship between irony and other tropes such as metaphor and allegory. Thus, Hutcheon (1995) offers to go further and to perceive irony not just as the relationship between the said and the unsaid but also to perceive it as a semantic notion which joins together people through its peculiar and easily confusing features. However, Attardo (2000: 5) claims that ironic semantic and pragmatic features go hand in hand and therefore, cannot be distinguished when used, because the semantic meaning of the ironic utterance always depends on the pragmatic interpretation of the addressee (Hutcheon, 1995) as illustrated in the following example:

"My Perestroika" is intended to be a window onto public opinion, though in truth, its subjects are not altogether average Russians. Muscovites, like the New Yorkers, are considered a breed apart by their compatriots. While the Meyersons are history teachers, they work at School No. 57 in Moscow, one of the country's elite public schools. Mr.

Meyerson has a beard and ponytail, not to mention some Jewish roots (The *New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

The participant commented that she has found the last sentence as ironic claiming that

“this phrase is very interesting and highly ironic because of the expression “Jewish roots”. This man is described like somebody untypical. Here we go back to the history and to the Lenin’s and Stalin’s epoch when Jewish people were unwelcome, but now they are an important pillar of the “intelligentsia”.

Thus, from the respondent’s answer and comment one may perceive that, first; she is very familiar with this topic, because, in fact, the girl is from Ukraine, where similar situation was lived and, second, the respondent perceives the sentence as ironic because of her general cultural knowledge. However, it is probable that not everybody would perceive it as an ironic utterance due to the different culture in general or, more particularly, cultural background.

Overall, one may say that irony is a not equally perceived and understood notion and, therefore, may be constructed in several ways, both mentioning and using literal meaning so that the interpreter may have more facilities when understanding it. However, it should be stated that unlike Hutcheon (1995) claims, irony indeed may overlap with other tropes such as metaphors, as it will be illustrated in subsection 3.1.3. Moreover, the fact that irony consists of semantic ingredients, whose interpretation normally depends on the recipient as stated in Attardo’s (2000) claim that irony is a purely pragmatic phenomenon, associated with certain semantic features, seem to be the most appropriate for the study.

3.1. 3 IRONY FUNCTIONS

With regard to the purpose of irony usage, a great amount of scholars such as Littman and Mey (1991), Barbe (1995) and Hutcheon (1995) among others concluded that irony is always used with certain goals. Thus, Littman and Mey (1991) distinguish among *humor*, *social hedging* and *instructional* goals. The first one does not always succeed, since irony

usage may have two edges, the tragic one and the humorous one; however, Littman and Mey (1991) assure that after some time has passed, people usually remember irony with humor. Besides, Hutcheon (1995: 26) claims that irony is not always humoristic, but that sometimes people perceive it as such because of misinterpretation of its serious content. Stanel (2006: 18) suggests that “while an ironic statement can be perceived as a joke for a friend, it may have an insulting effect for a stranger”. For instance, the two dialogues may illustrate this dichotomy with regard to the humoristic and tragic edges of irony: “Is she still mad at me?” – “Do birds fly?” and “I have a national reputation”- “And I am the Queen of England”. Therefore, one might say that in the first case, the interlocutor tries to avoid the direct answer using ironic sentence, which implies the negative answer to the question, and, therefore, is somehow humoristic. However, in the second case the receiver of the message is somehow downgrading the “importance” or the “reputation” of his/her interlocutor, which might have certain “tragic” or “negative” consequences, depending on the relation between both. With respect to the second goal, Littman and Mey (1991) as well as Attardo (2001) coincide in the fact that irony is usually aimed at getting to know the addressee better and his/ her values, as well as establishing a better and closer social contact with that person. For instance, if somebody asks an unknown person on the street: “Excuse me, do you know what time it is?” – “Yes, I know” depending on the reaction of the first person to such answer, both partners may establish either a “concurrence or discrepancy of values” (Littman and Mey, 1991: 149 in Stanel 2006: 17). Finally, the third one has to do with the “softening” of the ironic utterances which could be perceived as criticizing, insulting or disapproving. For example, if a mother says to her child: “My dear, could you please stop playing the Play station during five hours per day, because if you won’t reduce the playing time, you won’t be able to see your friends during the whole week”, where the mother is clearly instructing or informing her child about the possible

negative consequences if he/she won't do what the mother says. Therefore, the ironic way consists on saying it in a polite, softened way so that the child could perceive the actual ironic intention of his/her mother and that she is not joking at all.

Moreover, Littman and Mey's (1991) irony goals overlap with some of Barbe's (1995) irony aims. Thus, she mentions the polite criticism of irony which is related to the aforementioned instructional irony aim, the power or control aim, which could also be related to the social hedging goal of irony. Overall, it may be perceived that irony is indeed used with certain individual purpose, either to create a more relaxing and, therefore, humoristic or even less disapproving environment or simply to establish a social contact with somebody.

Hutcheon (1995: 44-56) presents a rather personal characterization of irony functions, which goes from the maximal affective charge it may have on the interpreter to the minimal. Therefore, the nine functions of irony are: *aggregative*, *assailing*, *oppositional*, *provisional*, *self-protective*, *distancing*, *ludic*, *complicating* and *reinforcing*. The first function is related to what Barbe (1995) and Littmand and Mey (1991) called the social goal which serves to create communities and to "play to in-groups that can be elitist and exclusionary" (Hutcheon, 1995: 54). The *assailing* function is taken from the Latin word *assilire*, which means to leap upon, which the author explains as a destructive and strongly attacking intention of the ironist. The oppositional function might be explained quoting Wright's (1978: 524) words, who said that "both conformers and rebels use irony at each other, and both suffer from it" (in Hutcheon, 1995: 52). The *provisional* function of irony means that there is always a proviso offered for the interpreter, with some requirement that challenges any firm stand. The *ludic* function has to do with understanding irony as a defensive technique people use to protect their face. The *distancing* function of irony may involve aspects such as non-committal and indifference,

which distances the ironist from the recipient. In the seventh place Hutcheon (1995: 49) places the *ludic* function of irony, claiming that this function may include humor, teasing and playfulness aspects of a communication. The *complicating* irony function is the one, which, according to the author, is related to the “complexity or richness of all art” (Hutcheon, 1995: 48). Finally, the last irony function is the *reinforcing* role it has, to underline some points in a conversation. Therefore, the author concludes that:

Irony’s edge, then, would seem to ingratiate and to intimidate, to underline and to undermine; it brings people together and drives them apart. Yet, however plural these functions, we still seem to want to call the thing itself by a single name: irony (Hutcheon, 1995: 56).

3. 1. 4. IS IRONY THE SAME AS METAPHOR, LIE, SARCASM OR HUMOR?

Language is enriched with different types of linguistic devices such as sarcasm, humor, metaphor, lie and irony among others, which provide people with the possibility to “play” with words as producing an utterance either in a spoken or in a written registers. Such a semantic-pragmatic strategy used daily may offer the speaker to manipulate meanings in various ways, depending on the context. Moreover, the role of the interpreter is crucial (Hutcheon, 1995: 45), because the presence of these linguistic phenomena rests in the interpreter. In other words, the intention of the speaker (i.e. ironist, humorist, sarcastic person) might or might not be perceived by the interpreter and depending on the mis/understanding, the aforementioned linguistic devices exist or not, according to Hutcheon (1995). The question that arises is whether these phenomena are distinguishable from each other in an everyday life and if so, how should people differentiate irony from humor, sarcasm or from metaphor?

Irony is being perceived as an evaluative trope which “invites inference of meaning and attitude” (Hutcheon, 1995: 39). And, according to Hutcheon (1995: 64) the meaning of irony has a differential aspect in the sense that irony calls for the semantic difference between the literal and the intended meaning of the ironic utterance. However, metaphor is a semantic deviation which is rooted in the similarity between the two meanings involved. For instance, taking the following example one may perceive the clear ironic intend of the author to downgrade top models with “the difficult” work they do:

Make no mistake: America’s Next To Model is as tough reality as TV gets. First there’s the physical strain the gaggle of aspiring models are put through: posing in bikinis in ice cold swimming pools; kneeling for hours on burning hot sands; negotiating a high speed travelator catwalk in high heels: the potential for injury and indignity is intense and relentless (The *New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

Therefore, as it may be perceived, the extract is highly ironic, where one ironic utterance is above the other and is aimed to criticize in a sarcastic way the fact that top models are “TV stars” because of the “dignified” work they do. Whereas, in an utterance “The streets of London were covered with a white coat of snow” the semantic deviation lays in the expression of a “white coat of snow” which refers to the great amount of snow covering the streets. Thus, such utterance is metaphoric in the sense that the big amount of snow is compared to the white coat of snow, showing the similarity between the two concepts; moreover, the intention of the speaker is not taken into account in such metaphorical expressions. Moreover, since metaphor consists on the movement from the abstract to the concrete meaning, as in the case of the “coat of snow”, there is certain easiness in the interpretation from the side of the addressee or reader, whereas ironic utterances require certain mental effort in order to interpret and understand the expression correctly. Moreover, irony is based on the communicative process which relates together not only meanings but also people, evaluating, criticizing or expressing certain attitude towards the situation (Hutcheon, 1995: 58, 40), while metaphor is functionally descriptive

(Scholes, 1982: 76 in Hutcheon, 1995: 64; Barbe 1995: 85 in Stanel, 2006: 49). Taking into consideration the “classical” praising when saying: “Your teeth are pearls” or “Your lips are red roses” there is a clear descriptive function of the metaphorical utterance, without any criticizing attitude from the side of the speaker. However, when a boy says to his partner: “You are a real friend!” when that partner disappointed him in something, such expression contains certain evaluative behavior of the speaker, who expresses his feelings of disapproval and criticism towards that partner.

Some theorists such as Thirwall (1833: 483) in Hutcheon (1995:40) perceive irony as a tool used to create disagreement, concluding that irony is always polemical in the sense that it does not fit to any peaceful occasion, because it belongs to the armoury of controversy. Despite such differences, Sperber and Wilson (1995: 243) maintain a “neutral” position, arguing that the two linguistic devices are similar and different at the same time. On the one hand, they differ from each other in the sense that metaphor “plays on the relationship between the propositional form of an utterance and the speaker’s thought”, while irony involves speaker’s thought and the interpreter’s. For instance, if a husband says to his wife, who has put on a very nice dress for a romantic supper with him: “Today you are my princess!”; this utterance establishes a clear parallelism between the propositional form of the sentence and the speaker’s thought. Thus, one might say that the husband seems to be frank when praising his wife and comparing her to a princess. In this example, it may be perceived that a metaphor lays in the three-dimensional similarity between the speaker’s thought, the physical appearance of the wife and the words uttered. But, if a wife is not feeling very well, and, therefore, this is reflected on her physical appearance and hears her husband saying: “Today you are my princess!”, the reaction of a wife would not be the same as in the first case, because the husband is being ironic in comparing her with a princess. Therefore, the immediate reaction of a wife might be

bursting into laugh or becoming angry with him, due to the humoristic or insulting intention of the speaker.

Thus, as it may be perceived, ironic utterance is usually more “risky” than metaphorical utterances and, thus, depends on the addressee’s interpretation, which might or might not coincide with the speaker’s intention. On the other hand, both irony and metaphor can be grouped under the notion of a trope, which makes them different from other ‘non-figurative’ utterances and that both tropes “involve no departure from a norm, no transgression of a rule, convention or maxim” (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 242). Therefore, even though many theorists (Knox, 1989; Thirwall, 1983) suggest that irony marks the path towards hostility and anger, unlike metaphors, Barbe (1995: 86) claims that, though irony and metaphor present important differences, they also may overlap or complement each other. For instance, in the example: “It is easy to love Ukraine with your heart, but not with your pocket”, the ironic intention lies in the fact that Ukrainian economic system is very “bad”, what means that it, like a country, does not “take care” of its citizens. But, the ironic effect is made with the help of metaphor, which consists on the similarity between the pocket and the heart as containers for, respectively, money and love. Therefore, in this case, metaphor and irony complement each other and, thus, overlap. Moreover, it is important to highlight that in metaphor the meaning transfer is often from the abstract to the concrete, as in the example above, where it goes from the abstract notion- the love of Ukraine, to the concrete one- to the pocket of a citizen, thus, facilitating the interpretation. However, this does not happen with irony, what somehow, makes it difficult to perceive it and not to confuse it with other linguistic phenomena such as metaphors. What more, it seems that there is a hierarchical relationship between irony and metaphor, because metaphor seems to be under the scope of irony. This means that irony is a powerful and

potential language trope which is not equally perceived by everybody and, therefore, is a “tricky” one due to certain difficulties in its perception and comprehension.

The two language devices do not only have in common the fact that both require reading in between lines, but also that both use words or phrases in an imaginative way to refer to something or to somebody with the aim to confirm that the two things have something in common. This may be shown through the example she chooses to explain the ironic instances which make use of metaphors in different ways, for example, when metaphors are incongruent, overused or do not fit into the context. For instance, a male student addresses a female one: “I once had a girlfriend who had a child. I tell you she was a real beast. She was an Aquarius just like you.” Therefore, as it may be perceived, the metaphorical usage of *beast* creates a parallelism with the perception of the female character as such, but in an indirect way. Thus, the student prefers to use irony through a quite incongruent metaphorical expression in order to criticize his colleague.

Sperber and Wilson’s (1995: 242) explanation of the metaphor and irony continuum, where there is no clear “dividing line between the metaphorical and literal utterances” fits well into Barbe’s (1995) theory on a coherent and “friendly” relationship between so similar and simultaneously so different linguistic devices like metaphor and irony:

If our account is correct, there are two conclusions to be drawn: first, metaphor and irony are not essentially different from other types of ‘non-figurative’ utterances; and second, they are not essentially similar to one another (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 243)

So far, it has been explained that irony and metaphor are not exactly the same; however, they may overlap and complement each other relatively frequently, but what about the relationship between irony and humor? Thus, Attardo (2001: 2) perceives irony, humor, ridiculous and sarcasm as folk-concepts with fuzzy boundaries, claiming that, particularly irony and humor rely on the indeterminacy of implicature and indirect speech. Many

theorists such as Giora (1999: 256- 257), Colston (2000) and Dews (1995: 348) in Attardo (2001: 8) suggest that irony characteristics such as incongruence and the element of surprise between the said and the unsaid, among others, are also shared by humor in certain sense, converting them into similar mechanisms of language. However, there is a pragmatic distinction between the two notions and it is the fact that humor “is seen as a violation of Grice’s Cooperative Principle” (i.e. a violation that is redeemed by concealed upholding) (Attardo, 2001: 4-5). Therefore, humor is a real violation, since the Cooperative Principle is violated without the intention to let the hearer reach the implicature of the utterance. Besides, it may be stated that in fact, irony may display a humoristic function in certain contexts, as Littman and Mey (1991) claim, however, it may be said that the humoristic effect is usually temporal, what means that the fun takes place when the speaker/writer violates the maxim and the interlocutor/reader perceives it. While, irony is said to be the flouting of the Grice’s maxims of quantity of information required in order to understand the utterance correctly. Moreover, Attardo (2001: 5) suggests that even though humor is a non-cooperative mode of communication, because the speaker *must* violate the Cooperative Principle, its purpose is still largely approved of socially and great amount of humoristic utterances and expressions take part of everyday conversations.

By contrast to irony, humor involves two opposed senses which are both usually present in the joke or humoristic expression. Moreover, “it is typically operationalized by the intensity and duration of the “mirth response”, including smiling and laughing or by subjective funniness ratings provided in response to humorous stimuli” (Kozbelt and Nishioka, 2010: 376). While ironic utterances are not always followed by smiling or laughing, but by annoyance, offence or even anger. Schopenhauer in Dadlez (2011: 10), following Kant’s ideas on humor, considered that humor depends on the clash between our concepts and our interpretation. He also contrasts humor with irony, claiming that irony

presents humoristic ideas straight and in a serious manner, while humor “harbors serious intent behind a joking manner” (Dadlez, 2011: 10- 11). This idea may be illustrated with the Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, where Hamlet replies Polonius:

Polonius: My honorable Lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

Hamlet: You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I would more willingly part withal. Except my life, except my life, except my life.

As it may be perceived, Hamlet’s response is uttered in a humorous way or manner, however, the content of his words is very serious, because he is talking about the possibility that Polonius can take away his life.

Despite different theories and ideas regarding the relationship there might be between irony and humor, one might say that there are certain cases and situations in which irony is humoristic, and humor may even have moral overtones. Taking the cover picturing presented in the *New Yorker*, July 21, 2008, where “Barack Obama in the Oval office wearing a turban, bumping fists with his wife, Michelle, who wears an Afro and fatigues, and has an assault rifle slung over her shoulder. Osama bin Laden watches from a portrait on the wall. American flag burns in a fireplace.” (in Dadlez, 2011: 7). The author claims that the reactions were immediate, confusing and different. Thus, it is clear that with such image the purpose was to “satirize the kind of fear-mongering prevalent in the 2008 election year” and to present just the opposite of the intended, that is to “excoriate the tactics of both the media and the far right by exaggerating just the kinds of ridiculous rumors that were making the rounds” (Dadlez, 2011: 7). However, McCain’s and Obama’s campaigns perceived the cartoon as offensive. Therefore, as it may be perceived, the covering picture of the *New Yorker* combines both the comic or humoristic connotations though exaggeration and an ironic message with certain sarcasm due to the fact that it intends to say just the contrary of what was presented in the image. Thus, once more it may

be proved that irony and humor may go hand in hand, but this depends on the interpretation of the addressee, who might perceive the message either as funny or as strongly offensive.

According to Attardo (2001: 8-10), the reasons of the uses of irony and humor overlap, for instance, both might be used for *social management* (i.e. social control, establishing solidarity, play, etc), *retractability* (i.e. the possibility to state something and the opposite at the same time) and *politeness*. However, many controversies may be found regarding the fact that irony and humor share politeness as one of the main characteristics, due to the fact that not all theorists coincide in this point. But many (Colston 2000; Attardo 2001; Giora, 2000) claim that irony could be perceived as a less aggressive or less direct way of attacking/insulting somebody.

Hutcheon (1995: 26- 28) suggests that irony is not always humoristic and that there are certain *serious ironies*. To exemplify this, she chooses the Lucien Pintilie's production of the opera *Carmen*, which "dealt ironically with the cliché that Bizet's music has become today". Thus, Carmen started her "Habanera" and then she suddenly she began to sing "Toreador Song", switching from French into English. And the author states that the reaction of the audience was bursting into applause, cheers and strong laughter; however, none of the audience appeared to understand the real words of the song about love.

Thus, as it may be perceived, as with all linguistic devices, there is no agreement among authors with regard to the idea that humor and irony are different, similar or even complementary. Nevertheless, one might suggest that, on the one hand, irony does seem to have some humoristic part, which can be accepted or not as such by the interpreter, always depending on the context, culture and personality of the recipient. But, on the other hand, one might say that there are ironic situations as the example of the *beast* comparison with

the female student, presented by Barbe (1995) in this section, which are strongly insulting and impolite, which might not be perceived with humor by the recipient of the message. Moreover, as Acconci⁵ (2003) explains, irony does seem to have a double edge by involving both certain criticism and humor:

"Irony is know-it-all; I prefer slapstick. Irony is laughing at something; or someone, from above; I want laughs from within - laughing at oneself, and laughing with someone. My models are Buster Keaton, the Marx Brothers. Let's say there are two views of life, the tragic and the comic. In the tragic view, the protagonist travels along a pathway, a channel, towards a goal; call that goal transcendence, or God. Nothing gets in the way of that trajectory; the viewer's attention is singleminded, the viewer is numbed by the relentlessness of that trajectory. In the comic view, there's the same protagonist, the same pathway, the same goal. Now, halfway along the pathway, the protagonist slips on a banana peel; suddenly that goal doesn't seem so important anymore - the protagonist's mind is on the other things, and so is the viewer's. What humour does is allow a second thought, a reconsideration. Humour questions judgement - it riddles holes into the idea of a Last Judgement - while Irony judges. Humour leaves a mess - who cleans up afterward? who cares? - while irony is pointed and clean. Humour is carnival - it's enjoyment from making a fool out of oneself; irony is enjoyment from making a fool out of others."

Likewise with humor and metaphor, the relationship that might be between sarcasm and irony does not have a clear response from the side of the theorists. Thus, Littman and Mey (1991) and Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) coincide in the idea that sarcasm frequently contains irony, but that it is usually more face-threatening than irony, with the intention to hurt the interlocutor and to show disapproval. Nevertheless, Muecke (1980: 54) in Stanel (2006: 27) does not differentiate irony from sarcasm, but describes it as "the crudest form of irony". Moreover, even if taking into account the historical point of view, Greek words *sarazein* and *eiroeia* shared similar characteristics, particularly that of negativity and certain insult. However, with the passage of time, irony has gained a more "positive" connotation (i.e. that of the indirect way of speaking with the intention to avoid a more "direct" way of hurting somebody), while sarcasm maintained the association of the

⁵http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:MCLufC2BMy8J:wayneshonors.blogspot.com/2003_04_01_archive.html+%22difference+between+humour+and+irony%22&cd=14&hl=es&ct=clnk&gl=es&source=www.google.es

negative intention (Stanel, 2006: 27- 28). Moreover, Littman and Mey (1991) in Stanel (2006: 27) claim that there are no sarcastic situations, but sarcastic statements, while with irony does not happen the same. Haiman (1998: 20) in Stanel (2006: 28) concludes that the most important difference between both notions is the intention of the speaker, in the sense that, according to him, irony is not always premeditated, while sarcasm is frequently intentional. Another linguist such as Barbe (1995) suggests that sarcasm is another way of reinforcing ironic interpretation with its face-threatening criticism. Knox (1989) claims that sarcasm might be considered as type of irony in its most aggressive form if it is understood as Plutarch defined it as occurring “when someone, with a feigned smile, reviles another by saying the contrary” (in Knox, 1989: 177). However, if sarcasm is defined more broadly, that is as a hostile, bitter and derision, it would not be considered as a type of irony, according to Knox (1989: 177).

Overall, even though each theorist presents its own criteria in order to differentiate irony from sarcasm and not all of them agree that the two notions are different, one might say that sarcasm is a type of irony that usually requires disapproval from the side of the speaker, which sometimes might be accompanied by bad intentions; irony also includes other cases that, depending on the context and culture, do not always require a high-level negativity.

Another important argument should be stated regarding the possible confusion between irony and lie. This way, theorists such as Knox (1989: 42) and Hutcheon (1995: 118) state that irony and lie should be distinguished by the intention of the speaker. This way, irony, since medieval and renaissance periods was related to *dissimulatio*, however, lying was perceived as the intention to deceive (Hutcheon, 1995: 118). Nevertheless, from the semantic point of view, Kerbrat- Orecchioni (1980: 114) in Hutcheon (1995: 118) suggests that it is impossible to distinguish irony from lie in the sense that the interpreter has to

formulate the hypothesis that his/her interlocutor either intends to be ironic or to lie. However, Hutcheon (1995: 118-119) claims that “this formulation of the issue does not do away with intention”, due to the fact that the inference is itself an intentional act, build upon the immediate context and textual markers. Lapp (1992: 142) in Stanel (2006: 29) claims that on the surface there is no clear distinction between irony and lie, however, he also claims that there are indeed concrete conceptual differences between the two notions. Thus, Lapp (1992: 142) states that even though, both irony and lie are *simulations of insincerity*, irony is an “open simulation of insincerity on the level of language acts”, while lie is “a disguised simulation of insincerity on the level of propositional intent”. Moreover, according to the author, the ironist simulates a language act, pretending to believe something, whereas a liar simulates the propositional intent, pretending to claim something. Despite such statements, Stanel (2006: 30) claims that Lapp’s (1992) theory is a purely theoretical one, without no empirical proves, which, therefore, is not completely reliable. Thus, once more it is difficult to state that there is a clear cut between irony and lying taking into account the diversity of opinions with this regard, but one might say that irony is a flouting of Gricean maxims, whereas lie is a violation of a maxim of Quality, which consists on being careful with saying something that a person believes to be false (see section 3. 1. 2).

Overall, as it might be perceived, the fuzzy boundaries among different linguistic devices such as irony, humor, metaphor, lie and sarcasm cannot assure the interpreter that what he/she is listening to is indirect, humoristic or metaphoric, is a lie or is offensive. Therefore, the hearer should bear in mind the immediate context of the situation and use the inferential strategy or even textual markers in order to determine which the nucleus of the message is.

3. 2 IRONY CLASSIFICATION

A great amount of scholars provide reliable classifications of irony in both literary and linguistic fields (Littman and Mey, 1991; Muecke, 1970; 1980; Barbe, 1995; Beals, 1995; Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989, Hutcheon, 1995).

Littman and Mey (1991) in Stanel (2006: 16-17) present a quite general irony classification, which consisted in creating a computational model for distinguishing ironic from non-ironic instances. Even though this classification focuses mainly on the verbal communication, Stanel (2006: 16) claims that it is perfectly applicable to the written texts. Thus, Littman and Mey (1991) present three instances, such as *intentional goal/ plan irony*, *serendipitous goal /plan irony* and *competence irony*, which are the common instances of the ironic situations. The first case is related to the situation when the ironist prepares a reasonable plan to achieve certain goal, but suffers when that plan has no success (Littman and Mey, 1991: 137). In other words, the plan of the actor fails and “the negative consequences are worse than the consequences that would have been suffered had another plan been fulfilled” (Stanel, 2006: 17). The second situation is characterized by the fact that the actor gives up the aim to defeat his problem, that is, that his/ her act is accidental, leading, thus, to the change of situation. And, even though, “the future looks bright again”, the new situation brings negative consequences, which end up in a disaster (Stanel, 2006: 17). According to the authors, the third ironic situation appears when one of the actors shows the culturally valued competence which, simultaneously, is the focus of the situation. What happens next, as in the two previous instances, is that the actor fails to accomplish that competence, suffering negative consequences. The level of irony depends on the intensity of the failure or loss (Stanel, 2006: 17). Therefore, as it may be perceived, the three types of ironic situations presented by Littman and Mey (1991: 137) share some common characteristics: the elaboration of a plan which is expected to be successful and

the frustration because of its failure, followed by certain negative consequences. Thus, one might say that the authors perceived irony as something strongly negative for one of the participants, unlike Hutcheon (1995), Booth (1974) or Winner (1988), who do not deny the negative connotations of irony, but they also present some positive ones, claiming that irony is less insulting or direct than the straight attack.

Muecke (1970, 1973 and 1980) is another linguist who made an effort in classifying irony in different ways in the three of his books. At first, Muecke (1970) presented three main categories: *verbal*, *situational* and *dramatic irony*. The first one refers to the situation when the speaker's utterances do not correspond with the intentional meaning. The second type of irony is listener/receiver oriented and has to do with the way in which an ironic situation is perceived by him/her. Finally, the latter category of irony corresponds to a theatrical irony, where an actor/ speaker assumes that an addressee/ audience will perceive what is presented as truthful (in Pishbin, 2010: 3-4).

Later, Muecke (1973) reformulated his classification, differentiating between ironic situations and statements with regard to the intention. Therefore, according to him, the ironic statement is intentionally ironic, while, the situation is unintentional and depends on the development of the events in that particular situation (in Stanel, 2006: 18).

However, in Muecke's (1980) latter book, he expands the classification of ironic situations into five well differentiated instances. The first one is the *irony of simple incongruity*, because, according to him, all ironic situations are incongruent or contrasting. The second one is the *irony of events*, which is characterized by the contrast between what is expected and the event. The third instance is the *dramatic irony*, which is immediately ironic and no further interpretation from the side of the participant is required. The fourth type of ironic situation is called the *irony of self-betrayal*; it happens when one of the

interlocutors “betrays” him/ herself, exposing his/ her weakness or ignorance accidentally by what he/ she says, not by what happens to him/her. Finally, the fifth ironic instance is *the irony of dilemma*, where the participant is the *victim* of a dilemma or some other impossible situation (in Stanel, 2006: 18).

So far, the *ironic situations* have been explained, then which are the *ironic statements* and in what aspects they might be differentiated from the ironic situations? To start with, Barbe (1995) suggests three possibilities of ironic statements: (i) the surface meaning differs from the underlying meaning-difference; (ii) the surface meaning and the underlying meaning appear to be the same; (iii) sarcasm, but it also may be realized by the meanings (i) and (ii) (in Stanel, 2006: 19). Moreover, Barbe (1995: 18) makes a further distinction with regard to *nonce* and *common* irony, where the former one is the one “exemplified by those instances of irony that have not habitually been used for ironic purposes and subsequently lost their original status” and the latter one refers to expressions such as “Go on, you must be kidding!”, which always seem to have an ironic interpretation even if taken out of specific context (in Stanel, 2006: 19). Thus, a good example of the *nonce* irony would be the situation when the utterance is used to tease or to show superiority: as when Harold tells Bill: “Go on Bill, you are nearly there!” even though he knows that Bill will not make it (Stanel, 2006: 13). The *common* irony case would be in the case when the addressee cannot do anything right and the speaker tells him/her: “You are a winner!” or if Joe and Jim are a good friends until Joe betrayed Jim, however, Jim says: “Joe is a *fine* friend!” Barbe (1995: 22) claims that such expressions always seem to trigger an ironic interpretation, either because of the situation when the speaker utters the contrary of what he/ she thinks or the words themselves such as *real* work as intensifiers or ironic instances. Stanel (2006: 14) presents the cases of the literalness, taking into consideration Barbe’s (1995) examples of ironic situations which go beyond the mere fact that irony is

just saying the contrary of what is intended. For instance, when Joan is driving and when trying to turn left, she does not signal and she gets in a dangerous situation. Sally on the passenger's seat comments: "I love people who signal!". The explanation given is that Sally uses a hyperbole when saying that she *loves* people who signal, therefore, she uses this phrase to criticize Joan because she did not signal. Another example presented by Barbe (1995) is the following one: Ruth: "How was your blind date?", Sandra: "He had nice shoes". Thus, the irony lays in the omission of the answer by Sally, who prefers to reply with one of the details of the date, indicating that she did not have a very good time.

Therefore, in both examples the "device rather than a clear opposition is used to express an ironic intent" (Stanel, 2006: 14). Finally, Barbe (1995) suggests that sarcasm is another way of reinforcing ironic interpretation with its face-threatening criticism.

Besides, Barbe (1995: 30) distinguishes between meaning, speaker purpose and *victim* as the three most important aspects of irony (in Stanel, 2006: 15). Thus, Barbe (1995) distinguishes between the literal and the different meaning from the literal one, usually characterized by the opposition, negation or contradiction. In terms of the speaker's purpose, she mentions the primary and the secondary purposes, where the former one implies certain intended criticism and the latter one has to do with power, complaint, belittle and fake praise, among others. The *victims*, according to Barbe (1995), could be the addressees, ignorant persons; persons who did not say something, the person talked about, and even the speaker himself. Unlike Barbe (1995), Hutcheon (1995: 42) prefers not to use such concepts in order to define the interpreter who is the receiver of the ironic utterance:

In a no doubt vain attempt to let certain strong words in English retain their power, I would rather not refer, as so many do, to what are called irony's "victims" (McKee 1974; Almansí 1984; Schoentjes 1993: 135). Like "rape" and "fascist", "victim" seems to me best reserved for other, less metaphoric contexts. I would not even want to argue that all receivers or interpreters of irony are necessarily, if not its "victims", then its targets, though some clearly are (cf. Tittler 1984: 23- 4; Winner 1988: 28), often the ironized target is someone or something quite different.

Moreover, Stanel (2006: 16-17) describes Muecke's (1980: 64-92) classification of irony into four different modes as an alternative taxonomy to recognize irony in a written text, which would, thus, correspond to the written ironic statements. Therefore, the four modes are the following ones: *impersonal irony*, *self-disparaging irony*, *ingenú* and *dramatic ironies*. The distinguishing feature of *impersonal irony* is the fact that the speaker who pronounces it is absent and only his words exist and the speaker speaks dispassionately, showing himself disinterested and objective as if it was not of his/ her interest. This means that what is said, refers to someone or something different as Muecke (1980: 70) in Stanel (2006: 16) states: "Russian satirists are unable to attack abuses in their country directly, thus they situate these abuses in America or Albania". Therefore, this type of irony is presented from an objective point of view in an unemotional way, which is precisely the intention of the speaker. This irony mode consists on using different strategies, such as praising in order to blame, blaming in order to praise, pretended agreement, advice or encouraging with the victim, rhetorical questions, intentional doubt, among others. For instance, a son has broken the jar with flowers and the mother says: "Very well done, my boy, very well done!", thus in this instance the mother utters the words of praise, but in reality she is blaming her son for having broken the jar with flowers. An example of pretending a doubt might be the situation in which Joe and Mike agreed on meeting at 12 am and Joe is half an hour late and Mike calls Joe: "Joe, Do you remember when we were meeting today? I think, but I am not sure, maybe it was at 12 am, could you remind me that, please?", where Mike is clearly being ironic and annoyed with Joe pretending to have forgotten or to doubt about what time they were going to meet. Another good example of pretending to doubt would be when a father is playing with his son in hide-and-seek and he perfectly sees his son, but he pretends on purpose that he doesn't by saying: "I wonder where Clark is, I really can't find him, he indeed has found a

very good place to hide!” Thus, such techniques are usually used by the speaker, who wants to be ironic. The *self-disparaging irony* is characterized by the importance of the attitude, personality and character of the ironist, who guides the interpreter to his/her real, literal opinion. By contrast to the aforementioned irony modes, the *ingenú irony* deals with the real innocence and ignorance and not with the pretended one. According to Muecke (1980: 91), such irony mode is sufficient to “discover” and to go through the “woven complexity of hypocrisy and rationalization or pierce the protective issues of convention”. Finally, the *dramatic irony* is somehow impersonal in the sense that the speaker himself does not appear. Overall, it may be perceived that Muecke (1980) takes into consideration the pragmatic and the semantic features of verbal irony, where the speaker may or may not have the intention to provide the interpreter with the literal or direct meaning of the utterance. Moreover, one might say that, even though Muecke (1980) focuses on the literary texts as one form of written language, such taxonomy might be perfectly applicable to the “specific” language of newspaper articles.

The classification provided by Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) in Pishbin (2010: 4) echoes Muecke’s (1980: 64- 92) taxonomy with respect to *dramatic*, *verbal* and *situational irony* (which is called as *irony of fate* in Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989). Nevertheless, they also present the fourth type of irony, *Socratic irony*, which is characterized by the situation when someone acts as if ignoring irony for certain pedagogical purposes. Moreover, with regard to the ironic statements, which are referred to as simply verbal irony, Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989: 374) in Stanel (2006: 11- 12) claim that verbal irony does not need to refer to certain ironic event, but that it simply shows the attitude of the speaker towards the object, event or person by using utterances which are not literally true.

Human communication, both verbal and non verbal, is a complex one, however, many linguists and psychologists, such as Searle (1969), Grice (1957), Strawson (1964/1971),

Schiffer (1972) and others made an effort in analyzing it, providing reliable justifications about their theoretical assumptions (in Sperber and Wilson, 1995). The aforementioned theorists present different points of view regarding the communication models, which organize and explain humans' interaction. On the one hand, for instance, Grice (1957), in his effort to define the "meaning" or "communication" claims the existence of an inferential model; according to him, it consists on making the speaker infer the indirectly uttered information from the message received. On the other hand, more recently Searle (1969) criticized Grice's theory on inference, claiming the fact that humans communicate through a combination of a linguistic and a speaker's meaning, therefore, introducing a second model, a code model (in Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 25). Moreover, Sperber and Wilson (1995: 27-28) suggest that the communication is based on at least two models: the literal meaning of individual words and their combinations and the intention of the speaker/ writer. These components of human interaction are different; however, this does not mean that they cannot combine during an interaction.

Overall, it may be perceived that there is a dichotomy regarding the explanation of how humans communicate; however, the intention of a speaker's/writer's message is an important notion which should be taken into account. Moreover, irony is one of the linguistic devices, which requires certain inferential techniques from the part of the recipient of the message in order to perceive it as literal or not. For instance, taking one of the examples provided by Sperber and Wilson (1995: 25, 26) where Peter asks Mary "How are you feeling today?" and she takes a bottle of aspirin out of her bag. In this case, Mary is not sending any linguistic message to Peter; however, he does understand her intention to inform him is that she is not feeling very well. Therefore, she succeeds in communicating Peter the meaning with a paralinguistic message.

3.3 RECOGNITION OF IRONY

According to Stanel (2006: 25, 26), people usually use irony consciously; however, there is certain controversy regarding the awareness of irony perception by the receivers. On the one hand, while linguists, such as Booth (1975) and Berg (1976) in Stanel (2006: 26-27) assure that the correct interpretation of irony depends on certain gradual cognitive processes in which a receiver of the message has a choice to decide whether to accept the literal meaning of the utterance or to look for other interpretation, Gibbs (1991: 526) maintains that people usually understand the metaphorical sense of an expression, even though they are not always aware of irony usage (in Stanel, 2006: 25-26). Besides, Hutcheon (1995: 60) indicates that people usually can and “do oscillate very rapidly between the said and the unsaid” and, therefore, generally perceive irony as such. Moreover, Sperber and Wilson (1995: 238) claim that irony understanding is a second-degree interpretation, because it is an appreciation of someone else’s thought or idea, which might indicate that the content of the ironic message might or might not be interpreted by everybody as it is intended to be.

Furthermore, linguists such as Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975), Barbe (1995) Beals (1995) and Hutcheon (1995) among others suggest that there are certain “signals” in each irony occurrence, which help to identify irony in both written and spoken texts. These might include signals from the phonological level (i.e. intonation, rhythm) to the pragmatic stage (i.e. extra-linguistic cues such as gestures and movements).

To start with, Clyne (1974: 343-351) in Stanel (2006: 34- 35) claims that irony cannot always be interpreted correctly without certain knowledge of the context of the situation. Moreover, the author states that there exist certain linguistic means which serve as an aid or indicators for irony. Thus, irony signals can depict incoherence (e.g. exaggeration) or

opposition in a linguistic activity; however, this might depend on the combination of irony signals and the given context. Hence, according to this author, every language aspect could become an irony signal in a certain context; he selects four sociolinguistic variables “which determine lexical, syntactical and phonetic selection partially”: subject area, the partner of conversation, role relation and type of interaction (in Syanel, 2006: 35). So, any type of incongruity between any of these variables may create a potential effect for irony presence. Thus, Clyne (1974) presents four main lexical irony markers: a reversal of subject and accusative object (e.g. “A nice match it was”), the use of polysemy, the use of particular syntactic constructions (e.g. “A good boy you are!”) which lead to incongruity and exaggeration and, finally, the use of rhetorical questions, whose context usually implies the anticipation of semantic interpretation as in the example: “I see you here for the tenth time. Do you come here often?”. In this example “the construction implies the question and the context a predicative semantic interpretation”, thus, such question is perceived as ironic because the answer is already implied in the question and, therefore, is unnecessary (Clyne, 1974: 351 in Stanel, 2006: 36). “The advice that hints at the ironic intent can be situated at every place of the statement”, therefore, Clyne (1974) illustrates this with the following nursery rhyme (Stanel, 2006: 36):

“Little birdie, flying high
Dropped a message from the sky,
As I wiped it from my eye,
I thanked the Lord that cows don’t fly.”

Apart from being extremely funny, the rhyme has an ironic message, which becomes clear in the second line through the association of *dropping* with *dung*.

Clyne (1974: 350) illustrates the example of a polysemy irony marker in the following nursery rhyme:

Mary had a little lamb,
She also had a bear,
I've often seen her little lamb
But I never saw her bear.

Thus, according to the author, the polysemy is to be found in the ambiguity of the pronoun *her* and the noun *bear* and it also mocks the Victorian moral taboos. Stanel (2006: 36) assures that these irony markers are easily found in oral speech; however, one might say that a written text might also be rich with such linguistic signals of irony.

Likewise Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975: 125) suggested that an ironic statement consists of two parts: the ironic utterance and a linguistic or non- linguistic sign “which reverses the informational status of the assertion” (in Stanel (2006: 33- 34). Moreover, for Löffler (1975: 124) irony may appear in a single word (e.g. friend, mate, sweetheart), a phrase (e.g. “Nice shoes!”), a clause (“Just go on like this!”) and even several clauses or the whole text. Thus, Löffler (1975) presents certain grammatical categories which seem to be ideal for ironic instances because they may be easily transformed into their contrary, such as homonyms, equivocal names and idioms. Particularly the author distinguishes among four main ways of reversing the statement into the opposite one: the negation of a sentence as in “Go on like this!” for “Don’t go on like this!”, the negation of a word such as: “I really do care!” for “I don’t care!”, the use of the “contrary opposite”⁶: *high* instead of *low*, *warm* instead of *cold*, finally the usage of the contrary opposite in terms of speech acts: a command instead of prohibition, an assertion instead of question, among others, as in the

⁶ The “contrary opposite” is explained as “a gradual displacement of single semantic features” by Loeffler (1975: 125) in Stanel (2006: 34).

example when a son has eaten pieces of fruit without cleaning them and he has a stomachache, thus the mother says: “Yes, indeed you must eat more fruits without washing them!”. In this example it may be perceived that the mother is being ironic in saying that her son should eat unwashed fruits more frequently, because this command is in reality an ironic prohibition.

Thus, taking into consideration Clyne’s (1974) and Löffler’s (1975) classification of irony signals, one might say that they represent very simple and verifying possibilities for irony recognition both in written and oral discourses.

Moreover, Beals (1995: 166- 289) hints at reinforcing expressions, such as *it is perfectly natural* or *it is clear* and similar to them, as a reliable strategy which serves to identify irony in both spoken and written discourse. For instance, in a context of a march by middle class suburban kids one of them says: “It is perfectly natural that we should have a protest march when marchers have no complaints” (Beals, 1995. 290, in Stanel, 2006: 41). The ironic notion lies in having taken for granted to perform a senseless act.

Apart from these reinforcing expressions, Beals (1995: 288) mentions the usage of certain verbal expressions and tag questions which are used with the aim to only pretend that something is true, in order to highlight it as ludicrously false: “The women’s catalogues are the best. I love how natural- looking the models are. Just plain folk, aren’t they? They could be the girl next door, right?”.

Another broad classification of irony signals was presented by Willer and Groeben (1980) in Stanel (2006: 38), who go beyond the aforementioned taxonomy, including the phonologic-graphemic approach, morphologic-syntactical approach, the intentional approach, the speech act approach, the approach with reference to social field and situational conventions and the approach of the conversational maxims of Grice. Thus, the

phonologic-graphemic approach consists on the deviation from language standards, including the violation or even invention of new rules. The authors highlight two types of deviations: the rule-breaking and rule-intensifying. The former one consists on omission, relocation or replacing and adding of phonemes and with neologisms (e.g. “The fall in largesse comes from an ignorance of etiquette by the dinner, **technophobia** and a British awkwardness by the hovering, tongue- tied stuff”⁷), while the latter one is characterized by word plays with the usage of equal sound structures, such as homophones (e.g. *bank* either for financial institution or for the river edge) or alliterations as in the example: “Silence, silence, silence, please all at once!” when many people are speaking at the same time in a meeting. The morphologic-syntactic approach deals with syntactic expressions where there is certain omission, replacement or adding of words. Thus, likewise Cyne (1974) and Löffler (1975), Willer and Groeben (1980) consider the relocation of certain sentence parts as a possible signal of irony presence as in the example “A fine friend you are!” in contrast to “You are a fine friend!”. The replacement of sentence parts as in “Mr. Important”, where an adjective is used as a noun, is another way of signaling irony. Another possibility to mark an ironic idea may be done through the omission of words as in “My dear students! No more words!”, where the verb is totally omitted in the second utterance. Finally, according to Willer and Groeben (1980) the addition of certain sentence parts or its unnecessary repetition might be another example of irony presence: “To quote from one book is plagiarism, to quote from two books is science!”, where it may be perceived that the repetition of two similar syntactic structures as well as words lead to a too obvious statement, which may be described as ironic.

The intentional approach of Willer and Groeben (1980: 299) in Stanel (2006: 39) has to do with the “incompatibility of intentional determining parts of semantic structures of

⁷ Taken from Stanel (2006: 79)

complex units, or a violation of conditions for conjunctions and relations of compatibility of semantic units”, what creates certain deviation. Thus, there are three kinds of semantic relations: the symbol-functional, the symptom-functional and the signal-functional relations. The latter one consists on the relation between the sign and the object that is that such semantic relations may appear in oxymoron or semantic zeugma. An oxymoron is a rhetorical figure which combines incongruent or contradictory terms as in the following examples: “Alone in a crowd” or “Always remember you’re unique ...just like everyone else”⁸. A zeugma is another rhetorical figure which governs two or more words; although its use may be grammatically or logically correct with only one as in the examples “You held your breath and the door for me”. In this example the syntactic structure is correct but not the logical interpretation. The symptom- functional semantic relation is given when there is a change in a style, which is when the member of lower class uses a very formal communicative style as in Stanel’s (2006: 80) example: “He might murmur something about “servis non compris” even if you though it meant you haven’t understood the service”. Finally, the third semantic relationship consists in the change in style as in the following instance: “Make your minds up, **chums**- do you want to be just like one of us, **mucking in** with your *Sandhurst* minions and *swearing with* the best of them, or do you want to be a **breed apart**?”⁹, where the colloquial words and expressions such as *mucking in* and *swearing with* are contrasted with *Sandhurst minions* and *chums* refers to pals or mates.

The speech act approach has to do with the situation in which the addressee doubts whether to take the utterance of the speaker as literal or not because of his/her general knowledge. This approach is characterized by the fact that the context makes the ironic

⁸ Taken from: http://www.guy-sports.com/months/jokes_oxymoron.htm#Examples_of_Oxymoron_Phrases

⁹ Taken from Stanel (2006: 75)

intention clear and therefore, it does not require any irony signals. Willer and Groeben (1980) distinguish between deviations as a consequence of general knowledge and contradictions as a consequence of general values and norms. The former refers to the contradictions or exaggerations based on general knowledge such as in the following instance: “Can you type that in also, and hit the right triangle or should that be a square? Will the machine empty your account? Can you write that on the paper spewing from the innards?”¹⁰. The latter one is based on the values, norms and aims which contradict the literal meaning of the proposition as in Stanel’s (2006: 76) example from the *Guardian*: “Everyone from Zara Philips through Princess Beatrice to Prince William has been credited with some physical loveliness, **on the basis that beauty is a perfectly comprehensible modern thing to be celebrated for**”.

The approach with reference to social field and situational conventions of Willer and Groeben (1980) does not have to do with linguistic irony signals and therefore, it will be mentioned briefly. Thus, the conventions of this approach are based on the relation between the speech acts and the situation. The authors highlight the importance of the time of speaking, speaker alternation and the appropriateness of certain speech acts in different social fields. This may be illustrated with the following example: a group of students are trying to agree about the time of celebrating Easter for breakfast and one of them suggests meeting at 8:30 am, while the other person replies: “Great idea, why not at 8 am, for Easter is the celebration of resurrection.”¹¹

However, despite the evidence offered by the aforementioned linguists in terms of the importance of irony signals, certain controversy exists with regard to the necessity of those

¹⁰ Taken from Stanel (2006: 80)

¹¹ Example taken from Stanel (2006: 40)

in every linguistic occasion. For instance, Muecke (1970) suggests that some ironic propositions do not require irony signals, because in those cases the incongruity between text and situation is so obvious that it already provides a sufficient “alarm signal”. Hutcheon (1995: 152- 154) claims that the important thing is the function of those irony markers not the mere presence of them, because if irony markers indicate irony, then why are some ironic words still missed? Hutcheon (1995) also claims that irony signals are not “so” helpful, because they do not indicate themselves that the statement or the situation is ironic, but that it completely depends on the interpretation of the recipient, because “irony is not irony until it is felt” (Muecke, 1969: 53 in Hutcheon, 1995: 151).

3.4 THE APPROACH TO IRONY IN THIS STUDY

Given the broad scope of the theoretical background presented in section 3, it is important to indicate the approach which has been chosen for this study. Thus, it should be stated that the idea that irony is viewed as a pragmatic phenomenon, containing certain semantic ingredients, as Attardo (2000) stated, will be taken into account. Therefore, this leads to the idea that this linguistic phenomenon overlaps with others, such as metaphor, and humor, and that it encompasses sarcasm. All these phenomena might be used as linguistic tools to provide critical and negative evaluations with certain humoristic and descriptive portions. Moreover, it should be reminded that humor and metaphor do not always contain those pragmatic ingredients, so that there is not a hierarchical relationship between. This means that irony is a notion difficult to define and to determine in real situations, where the intention of the speaker/writer, the cultural and situational contexts should be taken into account.

Furthermore, on the one hand, it is important to emphasize the crucial role of the recipient of the ironic message, who seems to be the one who actually identifies irony, and,

therefore, determines its presence and effectiveness. However, on the other hand, one cannot deny that speaker's function is an important one, since it is he/she who actually initiates and "switches on" irony's effect on the addressee, who may or may not perceive it.

Moreover, dealing with newspapers, it is important to have in mind the fact that irony used by the authors of the articles will probably be intentional, that is, with certain critical or humoristic purposes. However, it is probable that not all participants of the study will perceive irony equally, because as Constantinescu (2007) and Gibbs (1991) claimed, irony is not equally perceived and understood by everybody.

Thus, irony, being a complex linguistic phenomenon with fuzzy boundaries, represents a real dichotomy and a *double edge*, as Hutcheon (1995) stated, with strong evaluative character. In other words, this trope may be viewed both as a negative or less insulting and downgrading evaluation of something or somebody, always depending not only on the context, which is crucial, but also on the individual's cultural and educational backgrounds.

Therefore, this study intends to take into account all of the "problematic" features of irony in order to perceive whether people indeed view irony as a clearly identified phenomenon and whether everybody coincides in the "double edged" features of this notion.

With regard to the recognition of irony, this paper will mainly focus on the theories presented in section 3.3, where linguists such as Willer and Groeben (1980), Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975), Beals (1995) and Barbe (1995) provide a verifying classification of possible "irony markers" which may serve as an "alarm" for irony presence. Thus, the effectiveness of rhetorical questions, reversal of statement, reversal of sentence parts,

oxymorons and contradictions, omissions, polysemy, alliterations, colloquialisms and reinforcing expressions will be taken into account when analyzing the results. Moreover, it should be stated that due to the requirement of a broad lexical knowledge in order to determine polysemy and oxymorons, one might state that those irony alarms might not be easily found by the participants.

Therefore, one might claim that the irony presence might be difficult to identify, especially with newspaper articles which are not editorials: in editorials the clear intention of the writer may be perceived from the beginning. Moreover, both negative and less insulting or humoristic irony instances are expected to be found due to the fuzzy boundaries of this linguistic phenomenon, which may also frequently overlap with others and, therefore, be confusing for the respondents. Finally, it should be stated that the role of the participants is crucial indeed, due to the fact that irony is primarily a pragmatic phenomenon which contains certain semantic components, which may or may not be identified by the informants and function as possible irony “markers”.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4. 1 IRONY PERCEPTION IN AMERICAN, BRITISH AND UKRAINIAN NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Frequencies of irony words/sentences in different, both American, British and Ukrainian newspaper articles, are discussed in Table1, where those instances found by the analyst are compared to those found by the different types of informants:

Quantity of irony instances	The <i>New York Times</i>		The <i>Guardian</i>		The <i>Ykraincka Pravda</i>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Found by analyst	114	100%	130	100%	279	100%
Found by natives	37	32%	38	29%	125	45%
Found by non-natives	32	28%	31	27%	-	

Not found by the participants	45	40%	61	44%	154	55%
Other phenomena confused with irony	18		35		20	

Table 1: The frequency of irony appearance in the newspaper articles

Therefore, Table 1 summarizes the most relevant results in terms of the quantitative analysis of the newspapers in American and British English and in Ukrainian. Thus, on the one hand, there are the results of, first, the instances of irony found by the analyst and by the native and non-native participants and, second, irony instances which were not found.

Moreover, the quantitative analysis of the “errors” done by the participants while deciding whether certain linguistic phenomenon is irony or not, is given. Furthermore, the total number of irony found refers to the irony instances found by the analyst.

Thus, analyzing the results in detail, the number of irony found in the *New York Times* is the lowest one, as compared to the *Guardian* and the *Ykrainska Prabda*. However, it is also important to claim that, according to the results stated in Table 1, the frequency of ironic instances does not vary to a great extent between the American and the British newspapers, while there is indeed a big quantitative difference between the articles of the *Ykraincka Prabda* and those of the other two newspapers.

Subsequently, the ironic words/sentences which were not found by the participants are of great interest. Such analysis consisted on irony identification following strictly the theories of irony recognition presented in the sections 3.3 and 3.4. Thus, first of all, the analysis suggests that in the *Guardian* and the *Ykraincka Prabda* the number of the irony instances which was not found is slightly larger than the number of the discovered instances. This is important, because the theories about how people perceive irony and what linguistic or semantic features serve to identify it better may not completely

correspond to reality. Second, the examples of irony which were not perceived by the respondents in the *New York Times* show that it seems to be easier for the participants to identify ironic words or sentences, due to the fact that the number of irony instances that they found is larger than the number of the non discovered instances.

Next, the errors, found in the previously analyzed articles by the participants, refer to the confusion of irony with other linguistic or semantic phenomenon such as metaphor or utterances which simply require some inferencing (i.e implicatures in Gricean terms). Therefore, the quantitative analysis suggests that the *Guardian* seems to be the newspaper where more errors were done, while the *American* and the *Ukrainian* newspapers appear to be more understandable in terms of ironic utterances. This might be interpreted as that in written British English irony is not so easily perceived and that is why the respondents confused irony with other linguistic occurrences (i.e mainly metaphors and implicatures) during their search of irony. Thus, the following are some examples of such confusion in each of the newspapers:

- Confusing irony with metaphors:

- (1) The towering achievement of French cinema in the silent era was undoubtedly Abel Gance's six-hour topic of Napoleon (1927), which like many large scale productions of the time, has had a choppy subsequent history (the *Guardian*, 22/ 03/ 11).
- (2) Their ambivalence about their country's standing, nearly two decades after Communism's fall, is at the heart of "My Perestroika", a new documentary that burrows into the lives of five Muscovites who came in the twilight of the Soviet Union (the *New York Times*, 22/03/11).
- (3) As for the Communist political team and the team "Freedom", they like it or not, their producers consider them ideological political forces and precisely for that they vote (Ykrainska Prabda, 22/03/11).

Thus, as it may be perceived, none of the three examples of the metaphors may be considered ironic. Then, in the three cases neither the *towering achievement* or *my perestroika* nor the *ideological political forces* contain irony, what indicates that the

metaphors *towering*, *perestroika* and *forces* are clearly confused with irony. This might be due to certain implicative process which both irony and metaphor share, in the sense that the three cases require some deduction because of the non-literal vocabulary used. Moreover, according to (Hutcheon, 1995: 58, 40) irony is evaluative, while metaphor is descriptive; it may also be evaluative, but the evaluation can be positive as well as negative, as Scholes (1982: 76) in Hutcheon (1995: 64) or Barbe (1995: 85) in Stanel (2006: 49) state. Therefore, in none of the three examples the linguistic utterances are criticizing or downgrading something or someone.

- Confusing irony with negative connotations or negation:

- (4) Tragically, it was his last film, as he succumbed to tuberculosis the same year, aged just 29 (the Guardian, 22/03/11).
- (5) During the last year that client was surrounded only by bad situations: he was not able to maintain the inflation, as well as prices; he was also forced to think about the increase of retirement age, in one word, he considerably worsened the situation in the country (Ykrainska Prabda, 22/03/11).
- (6) He, however, has predicted the opposite: that the revolt is a tribal war of eastern Lybia against the west that ends in either his triumph or prolonged period of chaos (the *New York Times*, 22/03/11).

Likewise in the confusion with metaphors, this misunderstanding of irony might be due to the fact that, since irony is usually related to either humor or criticism, the negation and negative connotations of the cases (4), (5) and (6) were interpreted as ironic because of the presence of certain negative evaluation from the side of the author as in (5) or as a negative situation in general as in (4) and (6).

Finally, the total number of irony in Ukrainian newspapers resulted to be even more than the double of the irony found in the American and British newspaper articles put together. Such finding suggests that Ukrainian authors seem to use ironic utterances very frequently with the aim to either criticize or laugh at certain economic, political or socio-cultural issues. Such a big quantitative difference might be due to the critical view

Ukrainians have of the political and economic systems of their country and also to the possible lack of freedom of expression as IFEX (La Oficina de la Red del Intercambio Internacional por la Libertad de Expresión) states¹².

Moreover, no significant quantitative differences are found between the American and the British newspapers; nevertheless, the *Guardian* resulted to be slightly richer in irony than the *New York Times*.

Moreover, it has to be stated that no important differences were perceived between natives and non-natives of English, which may indicate that the matter of irony identification does not completely rely on perfect language comprehension, but rather on the individual cultural knowledge and education, independently of the country one comes from. Moreover, one of the possible reasons for which no significant differences were found between the results of the natives and non-natives is the fact that the non-native speakers of English were nearly bilingual and, if they had some problems with certain word or phrase comprehension, they used dictionaries (80% of non-native speakers of English used on-line dictionaries). Besides, it should be stated that the Ukrainian respondents were all natives and the fact that they appeared to have less difficulties in irony comprehension may be related to the fact that Ukrainian articles resulted to be much richer in irony than the English ones.

Overall, it may be viewed that first of all, people seem to have some difficulties with irony identification, if we take into consideration the linguistic theories of Willer and Groeben (1980), Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975), Beals (1995) and others (see section 3); and, second, that from a quantitative analysis, the Ukrainian newspapers resulted to be much richer in irony instances than the American and British newspaper articles.

¹² <http://www.ifex.org/ukraine/articles/es/>

Furthermore, the study suggests that the participants seem to sometimes confuse irony with other linguistic phenomena such as metaphors and mere negations or situations with negative connotations.

Other interesting results were achieved in terms of the frequency of irony in different types of newspaper articles (i.e. political, economic and socio-cultural), as well as the level of difficulty when searching irony, as illustrated in table 2:

Type of articles		The <i>New York Times</i>		The <i>Guardian</i>		The <i>Ykraincka Prabda</i>	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Political articles	Found by analyst	32	100%	30	100%	118	100%
	Found by natives	9	28%	11	37%	50	42%
	Found by non-natives	9	28%	5	17%	-	-
	Not found by informants	14	44%	14	46%	68	58%
	Level of difficulty	4.5		5		3	
Economical articles	Found by analyst	24	100%	32	100%	82	100%
	Found by natives	7	30%	4	13%	35	43%
	Found by non-natives	3	12%	7	22%	-	-
	Not found by informants	14	58%	21	65%	47	57%
	Level of difficulty	4.5		4.5		2	
	Found by analyst	58	100%	68	100%	79	100%

Political articles	Found by natives	21	36%	23	34%	40	51%
	Found by non-natives	20	35%	19	28%	-	-
	Not found by informants	17	29%	26	38%	39	49%
	Level of difficulty	3		3		1	

Table 2: Recurrence of irony in political, economic and socio-cultural articles and the levels of difficulty of irony identification

As illustrated in the table above, irony frequency in each of the types of newspaper articles, such as political, economic and socio-cultural, is given along with the classification into the number of irony found by the different types of the participants. Moreover, the difficulty or the easiness of irony identification is illustrated. This outcome was obtained by adding all of the results in terms of the level of difficulty indicated by the participants and dividing the result by the total number of the questionnaires (i.e. twenty for each of the three languages). In addition, it is important to indicate that, as stated in section 2, the level of difficulty had to be ranked from 1 to 5, where the former one specifies that irony is very easy to find and the latter one indicates that the participant has difficulty in identifying irony and may confuse it with other linguistic phenomena. Moreover, the results of irony frequency were achieved by adding the number of instances of irony found by the respondents and the number of irony which was not perceived and, then, subtracting the “errors” found from the results obtained. However, the outcome of the level of difficulty focuses on barely the participants’ point of view, without any latter modifications.

Therefore, on the one hand, such quantitative analysis interestingly shows that irony is easier to recognize in socio-cultural articles in the three languages rather than in political or

economic ones, since the outcome indicates that the level of difficulty ranks in between 1 and 3. Moreover, even though the results in Ukrainian political and economic articles (where the results rank between 2 and 3) differ from the outcome in American and British ones (in between 4 and 5), it is important to note that compared to the socio-cultural articles, the Ukrainian political and economic ones also show certain difficulty in irony recognition.

Thus, the results suggest that in politico-economic articles, the irony used is a complex one and requires certain previous political or economic cultural knowledge in order to identify ironic features (i.e. words/sentences) without difficulties. Moreover, in some cases, the texts had to be reread for a better interpretation of the ironic idea.

Apart from irony misunderstanding after its recognition, the unconsciousness of irony presence during the first reading appears to be one of the major difficulties. Due to such reason, the second and even the third reading were required during which more attention had to be paid on irony identification rather than on the mere understanding of the article.

On the other hand, the study exemplifies that the chosen Ukrainian newspaper articles turned out to be richer in irony than the American and British ones in both politico-economic and socio-cultural articles. In addition, the results illustrate that the difference of irony distribution in the three newspapers is rather high, indicating that there is almost the double of irony used in Ukrainian articles than in the American and British. Moreover, even though the quantitative results of political and economic articles in the *Guardian* and in the *New York Times* do not show much consistency¹³, one may state that this does not

¹³ It seems to be difficult to state any general results in terms of irony frequency and predominance in any of the political or economic articles of American or British English, since, on the one hand, the political articles of the *New York Times* have slightly more irony than the *Guardian*, while, on the other hand, the *Guardian* economic articles have more irony than American ones.

occur with the socio-cultural ones, since the cases of irony outnumber those found in political and economic articles in both American and British English.

Moreover, the quantitative study between native and non-native informants does not present any significant differences in the outcome, due to the variation of the predominance of native participants over non-native in the political articles in the *Guardian*, for instance, while in the economic articles of the same newspaper the bilingual respondents showed better results than the native informants.

Thus, to sum up, one may perceive that, first of all, the Ukrainian newspaper articles (i.e. the three types) resulted to be much richer with irony than the two English newspapers, showing that there is more the double of irony instances in each of them; and, second, that socio-cultural articles appear to have irony which is somehow easier to recognize than in the politico-economic ones. Furthermore, one might conclude that the participants seemed to have fewer difficulties in irony recognition in the Ukrainian newspaper articles (i.e. political, economic and socio-cultural).

4.2 IRONY CLASSIFICATION

The qualitative results for the newspaper articles suggest that both the irony of situational and of statements may be found in the three languages. However, even though irony statements seem to be easier to recognize because they do not require complex cognitive processes, the majority of the ironic instances would be classified under the scope of the situational irony. This is because, as Muecke (1980) claims, this type of irony is listener-oriented, this means that it is the listener who decides whether the utterance is literal or not, as in this example:

- (7) Somebody says ironically that the maximized closeness of the moon to the Earth has influences negatively on the football players during the day of the championship (*Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

- (8) On the Ronald Reagan, emissions from the crippled plant have been an acute concern for the Americans; The Navy fliers said they were trying to stay at least 50 miles away. When helicopters returned from relief, they and their crew were carefully scanned with Geiger counters. The carrier itself has also pulled back to at least 100 miles away from the reactors (*The New York Times*, 22/03/2011).
- (9) Then it was suggested that even though the Lib Dems had registered their discontent, there was little their leader would be able to do within government (*The Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

These three instances were analyzed as ironic by some of the participants, but, obviously, this does not mean that everybody would consider them ironic. And this is precisely the main characteristic of the situational irony, which primarily depends on the reader of listener, that is on the recipient of the message, and on the characteristics of that situation which might indicate the addressee whether something is ironic or not. Thus, first, in (7) the participant claims that this sentence is ironic because superstition comes to the fore. Second, in (8) the respondent makes his idea clear by saying that:

given the epic tone of the description of the American performance, this sounds a bit ironic. It is said that the Americans had an acute concern for the crippled plant, but then it is also said that they stayed 50-100 miles away from it, so in my opinion, this security-distance is not a fair response to an “acute” concern by Americans” (participant of the *New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

Finally, in the last example taken from the *Guardian*, one participant claims that he/she perceives the sentence as ironic because it “highlights the ironic remark of a leader who cannot do much in government”. Thus, as it may be perceived, the situational irony leaves certain freedom in irony interpretation and detection in the sense that not everybody could agree with what the aforementioned participants have claimed, or even one might agree but stating different reasons for which one may consider these sentences ironic.

In contrast to situational irony, the ironic statement is not listener oriented, but it rather depends on the producer of the message. This ironic utterance does not correspond to the speaker’s intention and it is similar to the *verbal irony* suggested by Muecke in the 1970s.

This means that the context has no important role in this ironic type, but that it is rather the words uttered and the intention of the speaker which are the crucial issues to identify irony:

- (10) D'Antoni said: "I'm getting to a point where we got to figure something out, because it's not real good right now, obviously. And there's no reason why we can't figure it out. We got to scorers on the floor like Amar'e and Carmelo, then we got to do a little bit better job." (*The New York Times*, 22/03/2011).
- (11) Sanchez also thanked all those who had texted her. "I can't keep tweeting all the texts of support," she wrote. "There are too many of them and I have only 10 fingers!" (*The Guardian*, 22/03/2011).
- (12) Is the government doing everything possible to reach Cairo's situation? Destroying the previous, weak political opposition by the police methodology, isn't it that the government is trying to create a new potent and radical power, which is able to go till the end without fear and doubts? (*Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

First, in (10) the author of the words, D'Antoni, seems to intend to say that the situation of their team is really bad by saying that it is "not real good right now". This means that the trainer is softening the "crude" and difficult reality by using a kind of euphemism, which instead of softening and taking importance to the situation, is maximizing the scope of the difficulty in which his team appears to be. Likewise, he uses the diminutive "a little better job", which gives the impression of the contrary- that the team has to work very hard in order to achieve their goal.

Second, in (11) it is clear that the exaggeration used in "I have only 10 fingers" indicates that Sanchez is not able to reply to all of her admirers because they are so many that it would require having more than 10 fingers. Moreover, the respondent stated an interesting explanation saying: "This is that she is not able to answer to everyone because she is like another person in the world although she wants it but what I have understood of the text is that she is not free wherever because of the Cuban's Regime". Thus, if the participant is right, then the phrase is even more ironic, because the fact of saying that she has only 10 fingers is highly sarcastic indicating that she has no freedom to use the web because of being under vigilance of the Cuban's government.

Finally, in a similar way (11), in (12) the rhetorical question sounds highly sarcastic because the author of the article is indicating that the government, instead of saving the country and the regime, is doing the contrary- it is leading it to the similar situation of the revolutions that are carried out in Arab countries such as that of Cairo. Moreover, by saying that the political system of Ukraine is creating a “new, potent and radical opposition” should not be interpreted as a positive statement, though it seems to be so. Thus, the statement may be considered as ironic and even sarcastic because the literal meaning of the sentence does not correspond to the intention of the producer of the message, who indeed is criticizing the Ukrainian government.

Therefore, as it may be perceived, ironic statements do not depend on the reader’s understanding and that is why there may be some misleading in irony interpretation, because what one considers ironic, another person would classify as literal. That is why this type of irony is rather difficult to determine because it completely depends on the carrier of the message.

Moreover, Barbe (1995) makes further classification of irony statements into nonce and common irony, where the former one corresponds to the utterances which are not usually used in an ironic way, but that in certain cases they may be highly ironic, whereas the latter one has to do with the linguistic instances which are immediately ironic, even if taken out of their contextual situation.

Therefore, on the one hand, the examples of the nonce irony illustrate the usage of certain expressions which usually are not used with ironic intention as in the following instances:

- (13) Natural gas may be having its day, as its rival energy sources come under a cloud
(*The New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

(14) The number of “year in, year out” workers are growing he says, as companies resist giving full benefits to new employees (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

(15) The third task, which can be pursued by “upstairs” consists on showing to all Ukrainian oligarchs, who is the owner of the house, and that no one of their relatives is saved from problems caused by the bad behavior before the elections (*Ykraincka Pravda*, 22/03/2011).

Then, the three cases taken from the three newspaper articles illustrate the nonce irony, that is, this is the type of irony, which, according to Barbe (1995) is not so easily detectable or identifiable because of the lack of habitual use of certain expressions in an ironic way. In this way, (13) is perceived as ironic because the metaphor “to have one’s day” here refers to the fact that the natural gas might be the solution to the pollution caused by other energies used up to now. This is a nonce irony because usually this expression is not used with non-living objects such as natural gas, but rather with persons. Moreover, the metaphor used in (14) illustrates even better the nonce irony, because here the expression “year in, year out” adds humoristic tone to a very serious situation of work which concerns the workers. Thus, such an utterance seems to be used metaphorically on this specific occasion and, therefore, usually not applicable to other ironic situations. Like in (13) and (14), in (15) the nonce irony is exemplified by the metaphor “to be the owner of the house”, which in fact is not usually used as ironic in Ukraine, but in this case it does. Then, the author has accurately selected an everyday expression in order to illustrate better to the audience the critical view of the political system of country.

Therefore, as it may be perceived, the nonce irony seems to be tightly related to the metaphoric expressions, which are usually used as simple descriptive comparisons between the source and the target domains of certain things, and, therefore, may not be easily recognizable when used with an ironic intent.

On the other hand, the following expressions illustrate some of the possible usages of the common irony utterances:

- (16) All mothers are shown the edited programme before it goes out. “There was nothing I could fault”, says Julia. Was there anything she asked not to be filmed? She laughs and says “Anything from the waist down” (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).
- (17) “It was a bloodbath, but it was beautiful”, Celtics Coach Doc Rivers said (The *New York Times*, 21/03/2011).
- (18) To the answer of “the owners of the government: I forgive those whom I owe” and “Yanukobich wants to privatize GTS, the objects of energy and to eliminate the help of the millions of Ukrainians. With one law!” (*Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

By contrast to the nonce irony, the common one, as its proper name indicates, is a rather “common” one, in the sense that it is usually quicker identified and understood primarily because of its explicit ironic ingredients as in (16), (17) and (18). Then, first, in (16) the expression used by one of the pregnant women interviewed seems to be funny even if taken out of its context. Moreover, it is contradictory due to the fact that if the woman agrees to be filmed during the birth of a child, then it is obvious that the most focused pattern will be the “from the waist down”. Second, in (17), there is also semantic incongruence with regard to the utterances “bloodbath” and “beautiful”. In other words, one might say that the bloodbath would be never beautiful, that is why the usage of such an expression outside its sport context would still be ironic because of the lexical contradiction with which the listener/reader faces. Similarly, the common irony can be described in (18), where the author is once more criticizing the politics by using the incongruent and even sarcastic expression “I forgive those whom I owe”. This expression is highly ironic because, normally if you owe something someone, it is you who should be forgiven by that someone and not the other way round.

Therefore, to sum up, common irony may be characterized, first, by fixed expressions used constantly in an everyday life in a humoristic or sarcastic way so that the interlocutors may apply them to different contextual situations as in (17) and (18) or, second, by even not so fixed utterances as in (16) but which could be also easily understood as ironic in several different situations.

Overall, it might be said that the main differences between an irony situation and an irony statement is that the former completely depends on the listener/reader due to the free interpretation of the contextual situation of the utterance, while the latter depends on the speaker and his decision to say the contrary of his intentions, thus, provoking a sarcastic tone which may be clear or not for the addressee.

Furthermore, taking into consideration Muecke's classification of irony situations into irony of simple incongruity, irony of events, dramatic irony, irony of self-betrayal and irony of dilemma, the following are some of the possible examples found in the three newspaper articles:

- (19) One of those baggages was caught by the deputies and inspectors of police in Lviv. The driver escaped immediately, leaving the car. [...] The deputies were saving the baggage all the time by themselves. When, next day, the car was inspected, the contraband baggage consisted in more than a million of dollars. But, in the police only 236 thousand of "griben"¹⁴ were declared (*Ykraikcka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).
- (20) Kemp said the operation was "vastly expensive" but added that people needed to ask the question "what price do you put on saving human lives?" (*The Guardian*, 22/03/2011).
- (21) The archetypes were the same in this season as any other: the young mum ("I am doing this for my daughter, Cassidy, so I can give her life she deserves") the really weird looking girl who always gets through to at least semi-finals (" I wanna show them back home that I'm not a freak",) the Ivy Leaguer who gave up her place at college to follow her dreams ("Tyra says my intelligence is a flaw as it makes me over-think my poses"), the snobby fashionista ("Patrick De Merichier is a household name to me") and the sassy homegirl ("Who drank my margarita mix! How you gonna disrespect me like that, bitch?") (*The New York Times*, 22/03/2011).
- (22) "In the worst I believe immediately, without any argumentations" (*Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

On the one hand, it is important to state that Muecke's (1980) classification of irony may be easily found in all of the newspaper articles, where at least one type of irony may be identified. However, on the other hand, it should be indicated that no examples of irony of dilemma were found. This might be so, because of the absence of subjective reflections in

¹⁴ Ukrainian money: 1 euro is equivalent to 10 gribnjias.

these types of newspaper articles, so that it is difficult to know whether the person is a victim of the situation.

Therefore, in (19) one may identify the presence of irony of simple incongruity, in the sense that, as Muecke (1980) states, there seems to be certain incongruity or contradiction in the situation, where more than a million of dollars were found, and only several thousands of “gribnajs” were declared in the police station. Such statement indicates that the political deputies appear as highly corrupt people, who left the major part of money for themselves, even though that money is not legal. Then, as it may be perceived, this sentence also contains certain sarcasm from the side of the author, who does not criticize openly the political system but does it in an implicit way so that the reader identifies that incongruity and sarcastic irony easily.

The self-betrayal irony is characterized by the unawareness of a speaker of the ironic meaning of his/her own words, as in (20). In this example the lieutenant Kemp states that the operation in Libya was “vastly expensive”, and by saying that the humans’ lives do not have price, indicates that they knew that it would be too expensive and, even though, they decided to carry out that operation. Thus, the author of the words “betrayed” himself with the rhetorical question about the morality of a man.

Muecke’s (1980) irony of events seems to overlap with the irony of dilemma in the instance presented in (21), where one may perceive that it is the author of the article who downgrades the commercial show of top models as well as the models themselves. That is that the mentioned girls, such as the young mum, the “weird girl” and Ivy Leaguer, for instance, are described in a ridiculous way by thinking that being the top model is like a gift from God. Thus, when the author of the article claims that Ivy left her college to “follow her dreams”, he/she wants to say just the contrary: that she made a big mistake

when leaving her studies to become a “snobby fashionista” and show her intelligence by over-thinking her poses. Something similar happens with the “really weird” girl who says that by posing on the stage she can demonstrate back home that she is not a freak (when the proper author still calls her “really weird”). Therefore, this paragraph shows both the irony of events, in the sense that the intelligent college girl has left the studies to become a model, and irony of dilemma in the case of the “young mum” who, because of her complete innocence, appears to be a *victim* of the ironic situation by thinking that only by being a model she can help her daughter in the future and “as if this show is the only option woman has to provide for her daughter when there are many other ways where she would not make a fool of herself” (participant of the *New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

The dramatic irony turned out to be the easiest one to find because it does not require any further cognitive thinking about whether something is ironic. This is due to the fact that, as Muecke (1980) states, this irony is the immediate one and no interpretation is required from the reader or listener. Thus, in (22) the exaggerated and contradictory as well as humoristic statement about that one immediately believes in the worst, the instant irony is perceived without doing any effort in understanding and perceiving ironic meaning and intention. Moreover, it could be added that in this case, even though the sentence is short, one perfectly perceives irony without the necessity of further context by contrast to (19), where the whole paragraph is required in order to be able to identify irony correctly. Moreover, if compared to Barbe’s (1995) distinction between the nonce and the common irony, the dramatic irony of Muecke (1980) would correspond to the common irony instances, which are also characterized by the immediate perception of irony, even if taken out of their immediate context.

Thus, taking into consideration Muecke’s (1980) and Barbe’s (1995) irony classifications, one may perceive that there is an important distinction to be done between

ironic situations and statements, where the former ones are listener-oriented and refer to the contextual situations, while the latter ones are the linguistic expressions whose ironic interpretation depends on the intention of the language producer. Moreover, it has to be stated that the three newspaper articles turned out to contain all of the instances of ironic situations and statements as well as their further classification into the nonce and common irony and into the irony of events, of self-betrayal, of dilemma and, finally, into the irony of simple incongruity. Besides, it has to be stated that Ukrainian articles turned out to be highly sarcastic, due to the fact that there were found more explicit criticisms towards different issues of the country (politics and economy particularly).

4.3 HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE IRONY?

The study on irony in Ukrainian, British and American newspapers suggests that irony identification is strongly dependent on a variety of a so called irony markers, which are exemplified in table 3:

Irony markers	Newspaper articles		
	<i>The New York Times</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Ykraincka Prabda</i>
1. Metaphors	26	31	69
2. Situational sarcastic irony	20	23	50
3. rhetorical questions	17	22	35
4. rhetorical statements	1	1	19
5. polysemy	2	2	1
6. omission/invented words	1	8	13
7. oxymoron/contradictions	29	26	10
8. reversal of statement	4	5	14
9. euphemisms	2	1	3

10. cut sentences	-	-	6
11. reinforcing expressions	3	2	14
12. alliteration/unnecessary repetitions	6	4	1
13. replacement of sentence parts/unmarked word order	3	5	10
14. colloquial words	-	-	28

Table 3: The distribution and recurrence of irony markers

Thus, table 3 illustrates the distribution of different irony markers throughout the different types of the three newspapers. Moreover, it should be stated that the classification above was done after the collection of the questionnaires; therefore, it was not done by the participants, whose task was primarily to identify and to explain ironic instances. Furthermore, the classification of irony utterances into so called irony markers follows the description done by the linguists such as Clyne (1974), Löffler (1975), Beals (1995), Barbe (1995) and Willer and Groeben (1980), provided in section 3. In addition, some of the above mentioned “markers” of irony do not appear in anyone of the aforementioned irony classification by the linguists, and were determined after the analysis of the newspaper articles. Thus, the invented words, cut sentences, euphemisms and exclamatives might be possible irony signals along with the ones presented and explained by other linguists, such as Barbe (1995), Beals (1995) and others.

Besides, it can be perceived that the aforementioned markers of irony are not equally distributed throughout the newspapers, a fact, which indicates that some of them are more predominant than others. For instance, metaphors, situational sarcastic irony, rhetorical questions and contradictions are the most common irony signals in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers. By contrast, the usage of polysemy, alliteration and replacement of sentence parts are the less common pointers of irony occurrence in both languages.

However, it is important to state that there is a significant difference between the Ukrainian newspaper articles and the English ones, in the sense that the recurrence of irony markers in the two English newspapers are distributed in a similar way, while there are important differences between them and the Ukrainian newspaper. Thus, the usage of colloquialisms, replacement of sentence parts and reinforcing expressions as well as rhetorical statements are very frequent in Ukrainian newspaper articles in contrast to the English ones.

Besides, it is important to state that not all of the irony markers were perceived by the participants. Thus, interestingly, rhetorical questions were not perceived as ironic by almost any of the respondents, what might indicate that maybe people do not perceive them as such, though after a thorough study, rhetorical questions indeed seem to have certain portions of irony as it will be illustrated.

❖ **Metaphors as irony signals:**

The usage of metaphorical expressions is illustrated in the examples (23), (24) and (25), taken from each of the three languages and, thus, correspond to Barbe's (1995: 84- 86) assumption that metaphors are one of the major and most clearly perceived irony signals:

- (23) Sometimes, in the evening I read the myths of the Ancient Greece, which are a wonderful sleeping pill (*The Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).
- (24) This unprecedented, three-pronged command is reflected in the different names for operation: The French are calling it Harmattan (the name of a hot wind that blows over the Sahara); in Britain, it is Operation Ellamy; and in the US, it is Odyssey Dawn. *Le Nouvel Obsertarteur* magazine described it as "a boat without a captain" (*The Guardian*, 22/03/2011).
- (25) "Are they up to the task?" said Kenneth, J. Menkhaus, an African specialist at Davidson College in North Carolina. "So far, I'd say yes. Down the road, though, if it gets messier, it'll test the capacity of Africom. This is certainly a baptism by fire." (*The New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

Metaphors, as claimed in section 3, may and do usually overlap with ironic instances, as illustrated in the examples above. For instance, in example (23) the Ancient Greek mythological stories are described as “wonderful sleeping pills”, creating, this way, a metaphoric irony, where certain humoristic criticism may be perceived. In other words, the author decides to present both issues as similar, however, no similarity may be found between mythological stories, which are full of fantastic creatures and interesting adventures of heroes and a sleeping pill, indicating, therefore, that such comparison is ironic and is used with a downgrading purpose. Then, according to Barbe’s (1995) explanation, metaphor can be used as an irony tool when one uses it in an incongruent and exaggerated way, so that it appears as humorous or critic.

Similarly, in (24), apart from the obvious contradiction between the metaphoric ways in which each country denominates the military operation and the one the *Le Nouvel Observateur* uses, there is certain humoristic portion, created by the usage of the metaphoric irony “a boat without a captain”. This expression is metaphoric by itself and could perfectly fit into Barbe’s (1995) common irony and Muecke’s (1980) dramatic irony, presenting certain easiness in its identification. However, in this case, this metaphor is used in order to downgrade or to criticize the military organization of the operation, so that there is some ironic intention from the side of the author who decided to put the two sentences, which are clearly contradictory, and, therefore, with a clear ironic metaphor.

Likewise in the two previous examples, in (25) the metaphor “baptism by fire” is ironic in the sense that its usage creates certain incongruence and exaggeration because baptisms are usually characterized by a peaceful situation full of happiness, however, in this case the usage of the word “fire” breaks down with that peacefulness and tranquility of the baptism process, creating contradiction. Therefore, as it may be perceived from table 4, Barbe’s (1995) assumption about that metaphors are the most usual irony markers or

signals seems to be correct. However, this does not mean that all metaphoric ironies used outside their context will still be ironic, because sometimes certain situation is required so that a metaphor could be interpreted as ironic.

Overall, metaphors may overlap with irony in a very interesting way so that metaphors are not perceived as such anymore, but it is rather irony which is put in the first level, indicating, thus, that metaphors are usually under the scope of irony. This also suggests the powerful capacity of irony to be placed one step further than metaphors which seem to be intrinsic within ironies.

❖ **Situational sarcastic irony as irony marker**

Barbe (1995) and Knox (1989) among others claim that sarcasm is another most frequent irony type or the most aggressive side of irony. The results achieved, suggest that indeed sarcasm is a clearly perceived type of irony by the participants and that it is the second one in terms of the frequency of recurrence in the three both American, British and Ukrainian newspaper articles:

- (26) Indeed, emergency authorities have only in recent years begun to realize that evacuations are often regional and even multistate events (*The New York Times*, 20/03/2011).
- (27) Lansley insisted that the bill was compatible with EU law that he was supported by legal advice. But when pressed five times by Labour MP Valerie Vaz to publish the exact legal advice, he appeared to refuse (*The Guardian*, 22/03/2011).
- (28) A well played performance started with the president's speech about the damages of the humanitarian politics during the 20 year of independence. While the "head"¹⁵ of the country was attentively reading the written text, Hanna German was looking proudly into the faces of the present. She was proud of her written for the president text, of herself and of that she is sitting near him (*The Ykraincka Prabda*, 20/03/2011).

¹⁵ Here the author uses a Russian word with ironic intention, because it strikes a lot to find it among Ukrainian language.

Thus, in (26), (27) and (28) there is no linguistic signal to indicate that the utterances are ironic, but there is some pragmatic pattern which indicates that the three of them are ironic. And this is sarcasm. Then, in (26) the disapproval from the side of the utterer of the message is clearly perceived with regard to the bad organization of the evacuation. This means that the author of the article is using sarcastic irony, which is reinforced by the expression indeed, and, therefore, indicating that the emergency authorities have been doing evacuations in a bad way and that they have only realized that recently.

Subsequently, in (27) the author suggests that Lansley has done illegal political deeds which, supposedly, do not correspond to the EU law. This sarcastic irony could also fit with the previously explained Muecke's (1980) irony of self-betrayal, where the deputy "betrays" himself and his words because of the disagreement to make public the legal advice, indicating that, since he has something to fear, there is something not as legal as he states.

Finally, in (28) the example chosen is highly sarcastic and ironic because of certain contradictory situations and exaggerations in the description of Hanna German. Thus, here once more the sarcasm is perceived through the disapproving tone of the writer, who ridicules the writer of president's speeches in a humoristic way, describing her feelings as if he knew what she was thinking at that moment. Moreover with the ironic metaphor "well played performance" the sarcasm is even more evident from the beginning, due to the fact that the writer presents the political meeting as a kind of before prepared "performance", where "the actors" play very well for the audience. This also indicates that what the president is reading is not completely true, but prepared in a very accurate way so that people would believe him and sympathize with him.

Overall, then it may be suggested that sarcastic irony exists and that it is common to the American, British and Ukrainian newspaper articles, where certain disapproval of the situation, events, actions, objects or persons from the side of the writer/speaker may be perceived.

❖ **Rhetorical questions:**

Clyne (1974) talks about rhetorical questions as possible irony markers in the sense that their context usually implies the anticipation of semantic interpretation, where the answer is already intrinsic in the question itself:

(29) “What if you had a tsunami warning in the Atlantic Ocean and had to evacuate the Eastern Seaboard? You’re talking about tens of millions of people. Where are you going to put those people? How are you going to get them there? Good luck with that”, Dr. Wolshon said (*The New York Times*, 21/03/2011).

(30) Maybe it will happen this way. Because who are those mysterious politics, who advise him not to sign that insignificant instruction for the operation? And, will they focus only on those advises? (*The Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

Thus, it may be perceived that these rhetorical questions both in (29) and in (30) are implicative, due to the fact that they already entail certain critical answers. This way, in (29), the three questions Dr. Wolshon makes are rhetorical because he is already involving in them the fact that it seems to be impossible to solve the problem of evacuation because of the lack of the place and the impossibility in the way of doing it. Moreover, when he says “Good luck with that”, he emphasizes even more on the idea that such process is almost impossible to do, entailing, therefore, that the questions he did, are rhetorical and imply both the question and the answer. Similarly happens in (30), the author is criticizing those “mysterious” politics that, according to the writer’s ideas, advise the president in an incorrect way and may also go further. Therefore, these rhetorical questions are ironic because the fact of asking a question with an already implied answer indicates that this is done in order to criticize something or someone.

❖ Rhetorical statements:

This type of the possible ironic markers was not presented by any of the linguists discussed in section 3; however, after the analysis of the primarily Ukrainian questionnaires, the rhetorical statements appeared to be one of the possible signs of irony presence for the participants:

- (31) You won't believe- there was the opportunity to find a text of the last publication about the concepts of the language education in Ukraine! Don't ask how, but I will answer with a joke about an announced possibility of journalists in case there is the necessity to escape through some "holes" (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 21/03/2011).

Here, the evident fact is that the author is trying to communicate with the reader as if it was an oral interaction by using expressions such as "you won't believe" or "don't ask". It is obvious, that, as in the case of the rhetorical questions, where there is no answer, in these expressions, there is no direct interlocutor who might ask or wonder about something. Thus, this kind of "rhetoric" statements might be another irony signal, because of a clearly perceived ironic tone the author uses when linking sentences with such "colloquial" links which increase the interest of the reader and also break the distance between the reader and the writer.

❖ Polysemy:

Polysemy has been also introduced by Clyne (1974) and it refers to the words which are pronounced in the same way, but which have different meanings semantically speaking. Moreover, as it may be perceived from table 4, it is the irony marker which is not frequent at all in the three newspaper articles; however, it is not so difficult to recognize:

- (32) Make no mistake: America's Next Top Model is as tough as reality TV gets (The *New York Times*, 20/03/2011).

- (33) It is important to indicate that in contrast to the friendly atmosphere in the tribune, a tough play by the football players was increasing (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 21/03/2011).

Thus, surprisingly, the only polysemous words in both languages seem to be the same- the word “tough”. Then, this lexical unit does not refer to the strength or the difficulty of this show, but rather to the silly or dumb intention and process of this show. Therefore, polysemy results to be another important ironic signal, however, not a frequent one in the three newspapers.

❖ **Omission/invented words:**

Omission was explained by Willer and Groeben (1980) referring to the omission, relocation or replacing and adding of phonemes to words or to neologisms, however, in this study certain word invention was found, which maybe not clearly refers to the idea of omission explained by the aforementioned linguists, but it has certain link towards it:

(34) Depending on when and how such investments are carried out, some “disbenefits” may emerge along the way, however (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

(35) Looking at the second part- the first one seems less trustworthy and there are more reasons to claim that there is nothing to do in this country. We are just “*nationalizing*¹⁶” like this, say those who always lament and do nothing (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

Then, as it may be perceived, in both cases there are invented words, that is words done by adding prefixes as in (34) or suffixes, as in (35), thus, creating humoristic meaning of the context with certain critical aims. The two words are not clearly neologisms and that is why they do not perfectly fit into the theory of Willer and Groeben (1980), however, they indeed are created by adding certain lexical parts to the already existing nouns, creating, this way, new words with the aim to indicate an ironic meaning of the respective sentences.

¹⁶ This word is totally correct in English, however, in Ukrainian there is no verb for the action to nationalize and the word is therefore invented.

❖ Oxymoron/contradictions:

This type of irony marker was introduced by Willer and Groeben (1980), referring to the rhetorical figure which combines incongruent or contradictory terms, as in the following examples:

(36) The danger is compounded by Libya's tribalism. Behind the thin façade of a modern state lies a long, seething history of rivalries among the 140 tribes and clans, about whom we know little. Colonel Qaddafi has kept them in check with a combination of brutal repression and generous payoffs (The *New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

(37) Will it not feel unsettling to share such an intense and private experience with millions? "Yes and no. Because we had tried for a long time to get pregnant, I think it was important to show people that through all the heartache good things can happen," says Caroline (The *Guardian*, 21/03/2011).

One may perceive that the two examples are somehow different, because in (36) there is no clear oxymoron, but there is a clear semantic and pragmatic contradiction with regard to the proper situation, while in (37) there is an easily identifiable oxymoron in the answer of the woman. Thus, first, it is important to state that both oxymoron and pragmatic and semantic contradiction are cases of semantic incongruence and that is why both are placed under the same scope of contradictory utterances which reinforce ironic meaning of the sentence. Second, obviously they are not exactly equal, but rather similar; however, both could be grouped under Muecke's (1980) irony of simple incongruity, where certain absurdness or exaggerations are frequent.

Thus, in (36) there is a contradictory situation in which Libyans are generously paid and at the same time brutally treated. In (37) one may easily detect an oxymoron between the words "yes" and "no", which, even united by the same omitted sentence, are still contradictory.

❖ Reversal of statement:

Löffler (1975) considered the linguistic item “which reverses the informational status of the assertion” (in Stanel (2006: 33- 34) as a possible irony marker. However, it should be stated that this signal is not an easy one to find and it was not clearly perceived by the participants. Thus, the reversal of statement has to do primarily with the pragmatic capacity of a person to first, understand the utterance, and, second, to detect what is being said in the reverse way:

(38) From the article of M. Dubinyanskoho it was known that in Ukraine “live poor wild people”. I liked it. I always like something special (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

(39) According to British Gas, the discount is “based on average annual consumption of 16, 500kWh for gas and 3, 300kWh for single rate electricity as at 28th February 2011, is rounded and includes VAT at 5%. Discount received according to seasonal consumption.” Simple then (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

The two examples above are highly humoristic ones, due to the clearly perceived reversal of statement of both authors. This way, in (38), the Ukrainian author’s expression “I liked it” ironically indicates just the contrary, likewise in (39), where the author’s phrase “simple then” emphasizes that the explanation given to him is completely incomprehensible, moreover if one is not a specialist in mathematical measure of gas. Thus, this usage of the contrary of what one wants to say is highly ironic, as illustrated in the aforementioned examples.

❖ Euphemisms:

This linguistic item is not usually considered as ironic or as a carrier of irony; however, in this study some participants explained that certain euphemisms used in some articles in specific context did have some ironic intent, as illustrated in the following instances:

(40) Sue Macdonald, education manager of the Royal College of Midwives, says she has noticed more enquiries from people wanting to rain in midwifery. “You get a picture

of what births are like,” she says. “There have been some nice experiences and others where there has been more intervention.” (The *Guardian*, 20/03/2011).

- (41) The less intelligent part at best fights against the monuments of the dictators who died long time ago, but at worst, it finds “enemies” behind the color of the skin or the sexual orientation (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

As viewed from the examples above, the claim of Littman and Mey (1991) in section 3, where the two linguists state that one of the primary functions of irony is to “soften” the utterance. This means that, in (40) and in (41) the expressions “more intervention” and “less intelligent” are somehow reducing the negative impact of ironic statements. Thus, in (40) the lexical item “nice” seems to appear in the same semantic level with the softened expression “there has been more intervention” in order to not to create a big semantic distance between the two types of experiences: the good one and the bad one. Maybe the usage of this kind of “euphemistic” expression is better perceived in (41), where the content of the sentence indicates the critic view of the author who tries to disguise his criticism by moderating ironic intention with the usage of “less intelligent”. Thus, even though such softening expressions are not very frequent in the articles, it is important to state that they were helpful for the respondents when identifying ironic instances.

❖ **Cut sentences:**

This linguistic, particularly syntactic, phenomenon seems to be one of irony evidenced only in the Ukrainian newspaper articles and it seems to function as an ironic markers, as described in the example above:

- (42) At the same time, the retirement reform was made with new myths and “scary-movies”. As if the people will not have time to save enough money until the retirement. If they will have time, this money will be stolen. If they won’t be stolen, then that money won’t be given. If given, then not all (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

Thus, in (42) the syntax is completely broken, the sentences are cut and are syntactically incorrect. This is done in order to emphasize on the ironic idea: that in Ukraine the

retirement reform does not function and that the government does not pay all money to the retired. Then, one may perfectly identify this ironic intention through the visual perception which serves as an aid to comprehend the semantic meaning of the utterance. Thus, as with euphemisms, cut sentences are not very frequent and only appear in Ukrainian articles, they indeed help to identify and to recognize irony not only from the semantic meaning of the utterance, but also from the visual perception.

❖ **Reinforcing expressions:**

Reinforcing expressions such as *it is clear*, *that is*, *for sure*, *it is natural* and many others are powerful irony signals presented by Beals (1995: 288) and have the function to indicate the false evidence about something:

(43) Well, in three weeks time the documents disappeared, the baggage was hidden. And they are waiting with impatience the sleeping police, who, it is clear, may find nothing (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

(44) But the phrase of the *free option of the language of education* as an important characteristic of the democratic society is still in the same place. Though, about what *free option* they are talking is perfectly clear (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

These examples suggest that, even though the evidential expressions such as *it is clear* or *it is perfectly clear* are used, these statements do not pretend to be truthful at all. Therefore, in (43) the usage of the reinforcing expression creates an ironic intention with regard to the fact that it is in the interest of the government to maintain those documents in secret and not to find them. Thus, even though *it is clear* is used, the utterance is highly ironic. Similarly, in (44), the usage of *it is perfectly clear*, indicates the ironic intention of the writer of the article when talking about the free choice in using either Russian or Ukrainian languages for educational purposes.

❖ Alliteration/unnecessary repetition:

Alliteration of phonemes or words was explained by Willer and Groeben (1980) as possible irony markers which, if used in an incongruent way, may cause ironic effect:

(45) Samson was right two years ago and he still is right now, in suggesting that it is a burning desire to give a play new theatrical life that makes it worth doing (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

(46) But there is a school of philosophers- in fact, perhaps the majority school- who consider free will compatible with their definition of determinism. These compatibilists believe that we do make choices, even though these choices are determined by previous events and influences. In the words of Arthur Schopenhauer, “Man can do what he wills, but he cannot will what he wills.” (The *New York Times*, 22/03/2011).

The two examples illustrate the usage of both phoneme and lexical alliterations, which somehow suggest the unnecessary repetition, what, in turn, creates certain incongruence, leading to the ironic meaning of sentences. First, in (45) the unnecessary repetition of the item “right”, which could be perfectly omitted in the second part of the sentence, leads to the ironic statement regarding the idea that nowadays the theatrical plays are somehow not worth performing. Second, in (46) the proverb presents an overuse of the word “will”, indicating that the utterance is somehow incongruent, confusing and ironic.

❖ Replacement of sentence parts:

This type of irony signals was proposed by various linguists such as Clyne (1974), Löffler, (1975) and Willer and Groeben (1980) and all of them claim similar ideas with regard to the effectiveness of the syntactic constructions as irony “alarms”:

(47) This is a book that, imperfect though it is, some of us have waited a long time for (The *New York Times*, 21/03/2011).

(48) If great artists work well beyond the retirement age, it is surely because, especially for a painter, writer or similarly skilled worker, it can take a lifetime to learn all the skills. Only then can you work with total freedom hence the striking phenomenon of “late” styles (The *Guardian*, 22/03/2011).

Even though, this type of irony signals did not turn out to be very frequent in the three newspaper articles, they are indeed useful tools when identifying irony. This way, in (47) the reversal of the adjective and the subject- verb clause indicates that the author wants to emphasize to that part of sentence because of its importance for the comprehension of the intended meaning of the sentence. As in (47), in (48), the writer tries to call the reader's attention to the fact that, as according to the author, the "real" artist reaches his/her artistic "top" when he/she is retired.

Therefore, as it may be perceived, the syntactic replacement of sentence parts plays an important role when identifying irony or ironic intention in newspaper articles.

❖ Colloquial words:

This type of ironic signal was described by Willer and Groeben (1980) in section 3 and consists in certain style change with the usage of colloquialisms which may strike at the first sight, but that necessarily have an important function as illustrated in the following examples:

(49) The first date of the possible functioning of the overwhelmed retirement system, of the second level of retirement plan, was the year 2007; it was the most successful one in both the Ukrainian and world economics. However, the time was wasted. The commands of the reformers were changing, and the carriage is still¹⁷ there (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

(50) During this period the VVP increased in the country in 3.1; the average salary in 3.8 and the average retirement in 5.5.!! Here, grandma, you've got the day of Yura¹⁸! (The *Ykraincka Prabda*, 22/03/2011).

¹⁷ The word used instead of "still" should be the colloquial way of saying the Word "today", which is very popular among non-educated people. And the word "still" was used instead of today because of the commodity in understanding well the sentence when translated from Ukrainian into English.

¹⁸ This is considered to be a holiday in Ukraine.

Taking into consideration that this newspaper article is written in a serious tone, dealing with serious topics such as retirement issues, the writer is using certain colloquialisms and style changes in order to criticize the Ukrainian economic system. Thus, in (49) the colloquial word for “today” is used, breaking completely with the formal style of the article. Similarly, in (50) the writer uses the whole phrase which is highly colloquial and does not correspond to the seriousness of the article in order to emphasize his ironic and critic idea.

To sum up, as it may be perceived, a great amount of irony markers was found in the three newspapers, which indicates that they indeed reinforce irony presence and serve as irony “alarm”. Moreover, some of them, such as, for instance, metaphors and sarcasm as well as contradictions are more frequent than others, such as for instance, polysemy, the reversal of statement or alliterations. Besides, one might say that euphemisms, cut sentences and rhetorical statements might be the possible irony markers, always depending on the context and the intention of the speaker/writer.

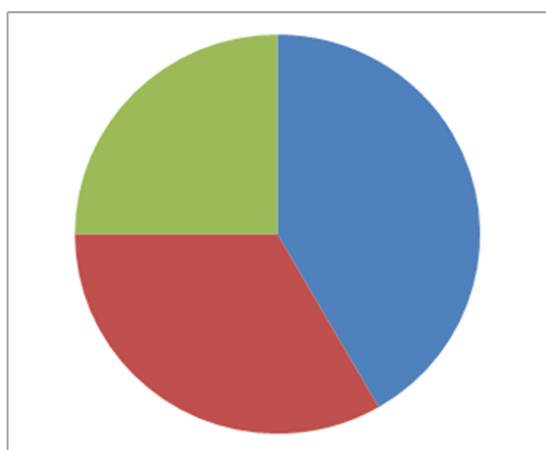
Another important conclusion might be the fact that Ukrainian newspaper articles differ from the English one with regard to the predominance of certain irony markers over others. For instance, rhetorical statements are the ones which predominate in the Ukrainian articles, while there is a big difference in amount of contradictions in British and American newspaper articles with respect to the Slavonic language.

4.4 AGE DIFFERENCES

Some interesting and unexpected differences in terms of age in irony recognition were driven from the research. When studying the results, certain difficulties in irony identification were perceived in participants aged 19-30. The proper respondents indicated that the articles given had some irony but that it was not identified immediately or that, in

some cases, it was not clear whether the chosen word/sentence was ironic or it belonged to some other language device.

The pie chart 1 shows the results of the driven percentage on the accuracy of irony recognition, taking into account all of the participants (i.e. English and Ukrainian speaking ones), since no significant differences were found between the native and the non-native speakers. If the total of irony found in the three newspapers is 561 (i.e. 100%), then the participants aged 35-55 have identified 462 ironic items (i.e. 82.3%), the participants aged 25-35 have recognized 392 ironic words (i.e. 69.8%) and the respondents aged 19-25 have perceived 330 ironic items (i.e. 58.8%):



Interestingly, such difficulty is perceived not only in the politico-economic articles, but also in the newspaper articles dealing with culture and social issues. The possible reasons for such problems might be related to the cognitive development of a person during his/her childhood. That is, that, perhaps, a child was not frequently exposed to this linguistic phenomenon by his parents and did not learn how to recognize whether the meaning of a certain linguistic utterance was ironic or literal or, even, whether it belonged to irony or to any other linguistic device. Moreover, another reason for such difficulties might be that the younger respondents do not yet have sufficient cultural knowledge so as to understand the ironic meaning of certain statements.

Besides, some linguists as Muecke (1980: 30) take into account the fact that not everybody possesses the cognitive ability to recognize irony with facility; such persons are called *victims* or *alazons* of ironic purpose. He claims that the aforementioned *victim* is an innocent person, who blindly believes that something is or is not true. However, Muecke (1980: 30) assures that:

“this should not imply that the victim is always so arrogantly confident or so willfully blind that we feel he deserves what he gets. All that is necessary is the merest avoidable assumption on the part of the victim that he is not mistaken. For one of the odd things about irony is that it regards assumption as presumption and therefore innocence as guilt.”

Nevertheless, Muecke's (1980) explanation about difficulty of irony perception does not fully correspond to this study, since the most important issue here is the age of the participants. Besides, it is important to underline that the younger respondents had difficulties with only some irony items and not that they did not recognize any ironic instances at all. Thus, this does not mean that they are necessarily the *victims* of the purpose ironic because of being innocent at the time of receiving the message, but because of being young persons who do not yet have enough general cultural knowledge so as to interpret all

ironic words correctly or that generally youngsters are not very familiarized with newspapers. Moreover, it is probable that these youngsters will develop the ability to interpret irony better with the passage of years.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of irony in newspaper articles carried out in this study suggest that the characteristics of irony are more easily recognizable in socio-cultural newspaper articles than in politico-economical articles in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers. Besides, certain difficulties with irony identification, due to the necessity of certain previous cultural knowledge regarding politics and economy for both native and non-native speakers, have been suggested by the research. Moreover, participants only identified part of the possible ironic instances.

Moreover, some empirical support for the distinction between situational irony and ironic statements was provided with the examples from the three newspapers. Besides, some further classification of ironic statements, focusing on the theories presented by Muecke (1980) and Barbe (1995), who make a difference between, respectively, irony of simple incongruity, dramatic irony, irony of events, irony of self-betrayal and irony of dilemma and the diversity between nonce and common ironies, were illustrated with some plausible examples from the newspaper articles.

On the other hand, the study has illustrated the predominance of certain irony signals such as metaphors, sarcasm, contradictions and rhetorical questions over polysemy, replacement of sentence parts, reinforcing expressions and alliteration in the newspaper articles of both languages. Besides, some suggestions regarding the possibility to consider

rhetorical statements, cut sentences, colloquialisms, and euphemisms as potential ironic “alarms” or markers are provided. Cut sentences and colloquialisms were only found in the *Ykraincka Prabda* as ironic devices, which proves that contrastive analysis of irony can enlarge and deepen our understanding of the diverse ways in which irony is expressed linguistically.



Furthermore, some evidence has been offered about the fact that age is an important determiner with respect to the accuracy of irony acknowledgment in written texts, such as newspapers. It has been suggested that participants aged 19-25 had more difficulties in terms

of irony recognition than those aged 30-55. However, the results have offered that the difficulty of irony recognition in this age group lies not only in the political or economical articles of the two languages, but that similar problems have been identified in the socio-cultural texts. Some possible reasons (i.e. the absence of certain cultural knowledge and cognitive development) for such difficulties have also been proposed.

Besides, even though no significant differences have been found in terms of irony predominance between the two English newspapers, it should be stated that British newspaper articles (i.e. the *Guardian*) appeared to have slightly greater amount of irony instances than the American (i.e. the *New York Times*).

Therefore, this paper contributes to the comparison of irony presence and irony identification between English and Ukrainian newspapers and to the predominance of certain lexical irony markers above others. However, for reasons of space, it neither covers all of irony classifications presented by (Littman and Mey, 1991; Beals, 1995; Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989 and Hutcheon, 1995), nor the purpose of irony usage in newspapers as Hutcheon (1995), Stanel (2006), Littman and Mey (1991) and others suggested. Moreover, a greater amount of data may be chosen for more reliability in terms of a quantitative research on irony identification in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers in further studies. Besides, some psycholinguistic studies might be done with regard to some plausible cognitive reasons with regard to the difficulties of irony perception by the youngsters.

Overall, even though; the American, British and the Ukrainian newspaper articles have turned out to have similarities in terms of the type of irony signals, some differences with respect to the quantitative predominance of irony have been found. Besides, both the English and Ukrainian informants aged 19-25 have appeared to have certain difficulties with regard to the accurate irony identification.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES

- A questionnaire for Ukrainian respondents

Юлія Росоловська

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Опитування для мастера

Іронія в Американських , Британських та Українських газетах

Шановний учаснику!

Я вивчаю те, як люди сприймають іронію та її відповідні характеристики в письмовому тексті, а також - чи вона пізнається з певною легкістю. Як Ви вже, мабуть, знаєте ми всі сприймаємо іронію по різному. Саме тому, я хотіла б опитати Вас письмово, за допомогою декількох питань на саме цю тему, для того, щоб краще зрозуміти іронію та її функції. Кожний учасник отримає статтю з української газети “Українська правда” та відповідь на декілька питань- це у Вас займе не більше 30 хвилин.

Дуже дякую за Вашу увагу та участь!

Запитання для українських учасників:

1. Прочитайте уважно статтю та попробуйте знайти фрази з проявом іронії.

Підкресліть їх.

2. Після того позначте за наступною схемою, чи Вам було важко або легко знайти іронію:

1. Стаття є насичена іронією і її легко знайти.
2. Стаття має фрази з іронією, але їх не так легко розпізнати, як у першому випадку.
3. Стаття має декілька фраз з іронією, але я би не сказала що стаття є іронічна.
4. Стаття має пару фраз з іронією, але їх дуже важко розпізнати.
5. Мабуть ця стаття має іронію, але я не впевнений/на чи це саме іронія чи це інший феномен мови.

3. Усі фрази з іронією прошу виписати і перефразувати без іронії. Наприклад:

“Легко любити Україну до глибини душі й дуже важко- до глибини власної кишені”→ Тобто легко любити Україну як свою батьківщину, але важко бути задоволеною/ним нею якщо вона не дає хорошу економічну базу для життя.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15

4. Прошу вказати, чи Ви використовували словники, інтернет для кращого розумння статті.

5. Прошу коротко проніформувати про себе:

a) Вік

b) Національність

c) Рід жіночий/чоловічий

d) Яка Ваша професія/спеціалізація

- **A questionnaire for British respondents:**

Yulia Rosolovska

Email: yulianoor@hotmail.es

Questionnaire MA Thesis:

Irony in American, British and Ukrainian newspapers

Dear participant,

I am interested in how people perceive irony and its different aspects in newspapers and whether it is easily perceived or just the other way round. Therefore, I have prepared this questionnaire with some questions for you to answer and, this way, to help me understand irony perception better. You will be given a British or an American newspaper article from *The Guardian* or *The New York Times*, respectively, about which you will have to respond to a few tasks. It might take you about 30 minutes to go through the questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Tasks for the English-speaking respondents:

Task A:

1. Read the article given carefully and try to identify ironic aspects and irony signals used in it. If there are some, underline them.
2. Now, try to rate the perception of those ironical aspects according to the following scale:
 1. The text is highly ironic and irony aspects are easily recognized.
 2. The article is ironic, but not as easily recognized as in number 1.
 3. Certain sentences of the article have some irony, but the article as a whole cannot be considered as ironic.
 4. The text has some irony, but it is hard to recognize.
 5. The text might have some irony, but I am not sure at all if it is irony or some similar language phenomenon.
3. Now write down all of the ironic words/phrases and provide a possible non ironic (literal) explanation of them. (If you have no space on this page, you can freely use the other side of it for your answers)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.
 - 9.
 - 10.
 - 11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

4. Have you searched for some information about the meanings of some words or phrases in the dictionaries or in the Internet? If so, mention which sources turned out to be useful for you.

5. Give me some information about yourself:

a) Age→

b) Nationality→

c) Gender→

d) Education background→

APPENDIX B: NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

*The Ykrainska Prabda*¹⁹

- **Socio-cultural articles**

1. Матч "Севастополь" VS "Карпати" - "договірняк"?

На футбольних Інтернет-форумах та в коментарях під звітними статтями про матч чемпіонату України з футболу в Сімферополі, де львівські "Карпати" несподівано поступилися одному з клубів, який веде боротьбу за виживання в елітному дивізіоні - кримському "Севастополю" - з рахунком 1:3, ширяться припущення про замовний характер поєдинку.

Багато хто з Футбольних вболівальників висловлюють свої підозри про продаж матчу почесним президентом "Карпат" Петром Димінським, закидаючи йому неодноразові махінації чи спроби подібних афер у минулому.

Нищівний для галицької команди результат послідував після вольової перемоги львів'ян над лідером першості - донецьким "Шахтарем" в домашньому матчі попереднього туру. А така обставина ще більше посилює сумніви вболівальників в чесності сімферопольського поєдинку.

Також робляться закиди на адресу конкретних футболістів "Карпат", зокрема голкіпера команди, щодо незадовільної гри в певних епізодах.

При цьому в обґрунтування "договірняка" висувається така мотивація: "севастопольцям" потрібно зберегти прописку в Прем'єр-лізі, а "Карпатам" головне - здобути право участі в єврокубках. Отже в даному випадку, враховуючи турнірну таблицю, виграють кримчани, котрим вкрай потрібно наздогнати "Кривбас", а львів'яни нічого не втрачають, залишаючись в потрібній для них зоні з 36-ма очками.

"Дніпро" перед матчем з "Динамо" випереджає "Карпати" всього на одне очко. Є серйозні підстави розраховувати на збереження такої різниці і після зустрічі, що відбудеться цієї неділі в Дніпропетровську.

Найближчий переслідувач львівської команди - луцька "Волинь" - цього ж дня гратиме в Донецьку з "Шахтарем" і навряд чи зможе відібрати в гірників очки. Тож і тут дистанція між "Волиню" і "Карпатами" зберігається такою, якою є. Нині вона складає аж 7 очок.

До речі, з "Волиню" львівська команда зустріне в Луцьку у наступному, 23 турі. Матч відбудеться за два тижні, третього квітня.

В той же час інші вболівальники, щиро співчуваючи поразці улюбленої команди, пояснюють цю прикрість спадом ігрових та психологічних кондицій футболістів "Карпат" після надважливого й принципового поєдинку з грандом вітчизняного футболу. Мовляв, не налаштувалися на матч, недооцінили суперника, "перегоріли" та й просто гра не пішла.

Дехто іронізує з приводу негативного впливу на футболістів максимального наближення до Землі її природного супутника - Місяця, яке сталося в день зустрічі.

¹⁹ Available online in <http://www.pravda.com.ua/> (20/03/2011)

Отже, на те, чи був матч в Сімферополі "договірняком", чи ні, є аргументи як "за", так і "проти". Наскільки вони ґрунтовні, нехай залишається на розсуд шанувальників футболу, які спостерігали за матчем і все бачили на власні очі.

2. Концепція мовної освіти в Україні: перезавантаження

Похвалімо себе: громадськість стежить за діяльністю робочої групи, котра працює над Концепцією мовної освіти в Україні. Але в цій пильності бувають закономірні паузи. Користуючись ними, члени робочої групи – хвалити Бога, не всі – намагаються гнути свою лінію. Їм це частково вдається – адже інформація про роботу зазначеної групи просочується в ЗМІ лише час від часу й дозовано.

А якщо ці паузи зменшаться, то ймовірність того, що під тиском громадської думки концепція мутуватиме в якомусь більш прийнятному напрямку, зростатиме.

Не повірите – мені вдалося дістати текст останньої редакції Концепції мовної освіти в Україні!

Не питаєте, як – відбудуся жартом про розрекламовану здатність журналістів у разі потреби просочуватися в шпаринки. І похвалюся, що деякі члени робочої групи цієї редакції й в очі не бачили – а в мене є! Ганьба, звичайно. Але що вдієш – такий стиль гуманітарної політики чинної влади. У каламутній водичці легше рибку ловити.

Ба більше – знаючи чарівні слова, в інтернетрях можна скачати попередню редакцію цієї самої Концепції, і порівняти два тексти.

Ну, що можна сказати...

Концепція й далі не читається як цілісний документ – видно, що її текст насмикано з різних джерел. Одне її положення може спокійно суперечити іншому, як і ті документи, на яких вона ґрунтується.

Зате в списку цих документів спостерігається прогрес: до них тепер включено указ президента № 161/2010 "Про Концепцію державної мовної політики", який всупереч законодавству не був згаданий у першій редакції Концепції мовної освіти, та закон "Про мови в УРСР". На його місці раніше була розпливчата фраза "закон про мови" – судячи з усього, мався на увазі проект закону "Про мови" № 1015-3 авторства Єфремова-Гриневецького-Симоненка. Але під тиском громадськості надії не справдились, і проект не було прийнято. Тож довелось повернутися до набагато більш проукраїнського закону радянської (!) доби.

У нинішній редакції Концепції мовної освіти російська мова згадується лише раз – у такому реченні: "Для частини громадян рідними є російська та мови національних меншин".

Себто всі мови нацменшин рівні, а російська нехай трошечки, але рівніша!

Скидається на те, що якогось особливого статусу російської мови творці концепції намагаються добитися за будь-яку ціну.

Нікуди не зникло речення, заради якого, либонь, і створювалася вся ця концепція: "Вільний вибір мови навчання є важливою характеристикою демократичного суспільства та концепції мовної освіти в Україні".

І хто тільки не заломлював руки над цією фразою! Слід віддати належне нашій інтелігенції: і письменники, і науковці, та й просто небайдужі піднялися на захист державної мови, використовуючи для цього всі можливі мирні засоби: писання відкритого листа Дмитрові Табачнику, публікацію численних статей у ЗМІ, проведення перформансів...

Але фраза про вільний вибір мови навчання як важливу характеристику демократичного суспільства все одне на місці. Хоча про який саме "вільний вибір" ідеться, і так зрозуміло. Бо навряд чи якийсь кримський татарин чи караїм на практиці зможе скористатися цією "волею". Йому запропонують вибір між такими двома мовами навчання: українська (державна) і... і...

Другу впишіть самі.

Закон – як дишло: куди повернув, туди й вийшло. Це відомо давно. Але нинішня влада перейшла на ще вищий щабель – забивання на закон. Юрист громадського руху "Не будь байдужим!" Юрко Фартушний може багато розповісти про процедурні порушення, що їх неозброєним оком видно в процесі проштовхування сумнозвісної Концепції мовної освіти в Україні.

По-перше, існує чинний "Порядок проведення консультацій з громадськістю з питань формування та реалізації державної політики". Він регулює порядок проведення громадських обговорень.

Перше порушення – відсутність інформації про громадське обговорення "Концепції мовної політики в Україні" на урядовому веб-сайті "Громадянське суспільство і влада". Бо відповідно до пункту 16 "Порядку проведення консультацій..." вона мусить там бути.

Друге видиме порушення – 17-го пункту. Він визначає, що на тому ж урядовому веб-сайті та на офіційному веб-сайті органу виконавчої влади має з'явитися:

– інформаційне повідомлення про проведення публічного громадського обговорення;

– текст проекту акта, винесеного на обговорення;

– електронна адреса для надсилання пропозицій та зауважень і номер телефону, за яким надаються консультації з питання, що винесено на публічне громадське обговорення.

А коротенька замітка від 27 грудня 2010 року на веб-сайті Міністерства освіти та науки, молоді і спорту України не відповідає вимогам, що ставляться до інформаційного повідомлення в 15-му пункті.

Далі – ще веселіше.

Відповідно до пункту 18 публічне громадське обговорення розпочинається із дня оприлюднення інформаційного повідомлення про його проведення. А оскільки нормального – у сенсі відповідності нормам – повідомлення на цих сайтах *так і не з'явилося*, то можна вважати: станом на сьогодні інформаційне повідомлення про проведення громадського обговорення "Концепції мовної політики в Україні" не було оприлюднене, відповідно, громадське обговорення "Концепції мовної політики в Україні" *de jure* – не розпочалося.

Але й це ще не все.

Навіть якщо визнати заміточку від 27 грудня про громадське обговорення "Концепції мовної політики в Україні" *de facto* є інформаційним повідомленням, тоді варто згадати про строки проведення публічного громадського обговорення.

Бо відповідно до 18-го пункту "Порядку проведення консультацій...", строк проведення публічного громадського обговорення визначається органом виконавчої влади і повинен становити не менш як один місяць.

Питання: скільки минуло від 27 грудня до 20 січня, коли було повідомлено про те, що громадське обговорення зазначеної концепції вже відбулося?

Може, у творців концепції – свій календар?!.

Коротше, з якого боку не кинь, усіди клин.

Це якщо навіть не брати до уваги, що на цей момент на сайті МОН у розділі "Громадське обговорення" взагалі відсутня інформація про той фарс, який мав місце з 27 грудня 2010 року по 20 січня 2011-го. Наче не було такого громадського обговорення взагалі.

Себто МОН визнав, що обговорення таки не було?..

Хоча про інші обговорення, навіть позаторішні, спокійно можна там же дізнатися.

Чи не диво? І відбувається це диво на наших очах.

Тож чи не час ці очі розплющити?

3. Яка не є ворона, а хаті – оборона

Зі статті Михайла Дубинянського взяв, що в Україні "живуть нещасливі люди-дікарі".

Сподобалось. Оригінальне мені завжди подобається. Та маю із приводу викладеної автором позиції декілька міркувань.

Ось вони:

– класно бути раціоналістом і модерновим хлопцем, коли за твоїми плечима стоїть сила імперії й потужність Газпрому;

– коли потужна медійна машина та кіноіндустрія відстоює твої світоглядні переконання без твоєї в цьому участі. Ідеологічні цукерки клепаються як на конвеєрі, аби всі їли досхочу;

– коли величезні гроші вкидаються в створення осередків "Русского міра";

– коли церква є всього лише інструментом для втілення думки, що бути таким як ти – це бути найкращим;

– коли тобі, аби звабити жінку, котра сподобалась, не треба переходити на не рідну мову. Бо смішно виходить: ти їй нашіптуєш ніжні слова однією мовою, а вона муркотить – іншою. Який же тут контакт?

– коли співробітник правоохоронних органів твоєї країни не наважиться назвати державну мову "телячою", яким би він не був великим раціоналістом і прихильником зручностей;

– Тоді можна закликати інших не зациклюватися на містиці, і тихенько плідно працювати "на унітаз", не озираючись на те, що відбувається за плечима.

Насолоджуйся життям і не бійся, що твої діти виростуть не схожими на тебе.

А в нас, в українців, уже кілька століть нічого, крім містичної віри в нашу окремішність і самотність, немає.

І завдяки саме їй, та гонору нашому дикунському, ми не зникли, не розчинилися у вашій "правді". Живемо у своїй хаті мільйонами й муляємо очі сусідам своїм дикунством до нестями.

Наразі ця містична впевненість – єдина наша зброя.

Бо:

У нас немає грубих грошей. Навіть у своїй країні "касу тримають" не українці.

У нас при владі люди, які щиро не сприймають українське.

Більшість книжок у країні друкується іноземною мовою.

Підпільна діяльність міністерства освіти не переслідується законом.

Вечірні новини на центральному телеканалі йдуть не українською мовою.

Що нам лишається, аби мати можливість стверджуватись у своїй країні? Лишатися українцями попри заклики до такої "солодкої" уніфікації під дахом, який давно вже тече?

Бажання бути своєрідним – це більш природне бажання людини, ніж бажання бути модерним та модним.

Заклики покінчити зі своєрідністю завжди лунають від невпевнених у собі осіб, для яких належність до організованої сили є сенсом життя. Тому вони й бояться неорганізованої "містики". Усього, що не вкладається в рамки доцільності, як вони її для себе розуміють.

Дикун – це ті, хто боїться незрозумілого для них.

Наприклад, української мови, української культури, української ментальності.

Бог для них теж категорія незрозуміла. Тому вони й висувують у якості аргументу "беспристрастний мировой обзор", бажаючи довести, що між високим рівнем кількості атеїстів у суспільстві й високим рівнем цивілізованості та достатку існує прямий зв'язок.

Як на мене, це аргумент дикуна.

Людина не може жити без Бога, пане Дубинянський, бо втратить себе. Для чого тоді жити?

І якщо вона відмовляється від Бога в українській іпостасі, то служитиме поганському. Згадайте відомий вислів: хто не хоче годувати свою армію, годуватиме чужу. Або, що гірше, поставити на це місце у своїй душі якого-небудь Лідера. Онде скільки людей моляться на Сталіна. Є й такі, що ходять із плакатами "Янукович – наш бог".

Людина без фетишу, як армія без прапора.

Будь-яка боротьба з нашими фетишами – це завжди бажання нав'язати нам власний фетиш. Визнайте це для себе.

Від "прима ратіо" до "ултіма ратіо" у дикунів шлях короткий. Тому таке дикунство під шаром інтелектуальності – небезпечне.

4. Протівсіхам" присвячується

В Україні зберігається тенденція до зростання кількості виборців, які виступають "проти всіх" або взагалі не мають бажання брати участі у виборах. Останні соціопитування показують, що їхня загальна частка вже складає 21% і 10% відповідно.

Не звертати уваги на таку ситуацію – неможливо, особливо нинішній владі. Тим більше, що на фоні подій в африканських країнах ця проблема набуває особливої актуальності.

Зрозуміло, що дані соціологічних опитувань не можна автоматично переносити на результати реального голосування. Відомо, що ближче до виборів відсоток протестного електорату суттєво зменшується. Разом із тим, число незадоволених може бути набагато більшим. Просто хтось іде на виборчу дільницю й голосує "проти всіх", а хтось своє незадоволення владою конвертує в голоси за альтернативні політичні сили.

Тому хотілося б звернутися не стільки до влади, скільки до тих, хто її формує – до народу.

Традиційно вважається, що голосування "проти всіх" є можливістю висловити протест діям влади або загальній ситуації в країні.

Але насправді реального впливу ця опція не чинить – ані на владу, ані на політичний процес загалом. Це все ілюзія.

Таким чином, виборець свідомо залишає себе можливості щось змінити в країні. Він віддає свій голос на відкуп іншим.

Поясню чому.

1. Протестне голосування вигідне великим партіям.

Припустимо, що на найближчих парламентських виборах близько 20% громадян усе ж-таки проголосує "проти всіх". Оскільки з юридичної точки зору ці голоси не враховуються, у такому випадку саме на ці 20% збільшать своє представництво в Раді ті партії, які подолають установлений виборчий бар'єр. Тобто, нинішні Партія регіонів, БЮТ та всі інші.

Виникає ситуація, коли дія суперечить меті – голосуючи "проти всіх", виборець опосередковано підтримує тих, проти кого власне й бореться.

2. Опція "проти всіх" шкодить опозиційним, а краще альтернативним політичним силам.

Протестний електорат – їхні потенційні прихильники. Саме цих голосів може не вистачити альтернативним партіям із конструктивними ідеями подолати прохідний бар'єр і потрапити до парламенту.

3. Сумнівним є твердження, що високий відсоток голосів "проти всіх" заставить владу змінитися.

Адже згідно законів "Про вибори президента" та "Про вибори народних депутатів" – жодних безпосередніх правових наслідків у такій ситуації не передбачено.

4. Популярність графі "проти всіх" свідчить про досить низький рівень політичної культури українського суспільства.

Для незадоволеного життям виборця легше проголосувати проти "всіх і вся", ніж проаналізувати наявну політичну пропозицію, і підтримати ту чи іншу політичну силу. Для критиків додаю, що необов'язково на кожних виборах обирати "менше зло" між Януковичем і Тимошенко.

Уже давно у всьому світі відмовилися від опції "проти всіх" у виборчих бюлетенях. Переважно ця графа зберігається в перехідних державах, які знаходяться на етапі так званого демократичного транзиту.

На пострадянському просторі проголосувати "проти всіх" ще можуть виборці Азербайджану, Вірменії, Казахстану, Білорусі. Росія від такої практики вже відійшла.

Стосовно України, можливо досі голосування "проти всіх" було деякою мірою виправданим. Проте, настав час змінювати підходи.

Ми повинні нарешті усвідомити, що вибори – це не акт висловлення довіри/недовіри до влади, це не чергове соціологічне опитування, це врешті-решт не "іграшка для дорослих". Вибори – це можливість задати вектор розвитку нашої держави на найближчі декілька років.

І відноситися до цього потрібно відповідально.

Наразі в Україні в міжвиборчий період, в умовах нового конституційного процесу, в умовах підготовки нового виборчого законодавства, є хороша нагода відмовитися від голосування "проти всіх". Для цього необхідно, щоб спочатку це питання стало предметом розгляду Конституційного суду.

Відміну граfi "проти всіх" вітатиме Європа, вітатиме Венеціанська комісія, а згодом вітатиме й український виборець.

Особисто я не бачу обмежень своїх виборчих прав у відміні голосування "проти всіх".

Не підтримую я й аргументу про те, що європейська практика для нас не підходить, бо, бачте, ми – інші. Можливо, тому й живемо ми по-іншому ніж європейці.

І в цьому питанні я повністю розділяю позицію визнаного морального авторитета нашого часу Любомира Гузара: "Голосування "проти всіх" – це втеча"

5. Симптом і синдром Чепак

Одні вважають, що все дуже просто – в усьому винні ті сакраментальні лакомства нещасні, на ось уже впродовж кількох сотень років спокушаються далеко не найбездарніші українці.

Другі наполягають – нарешті українці почали керуватися не романтичними придибенціями, а суто прагматичними раціональними розрахунками, стратегією "step by step" задля того, щоб цивілізувати апріорі нецивілізовану владу.

Треті все валять на загальний стан суспільства – мовляв, лайно навколо, чого дивуватися.

Четверті наполягають, що настав, нарешті, час бодай трохи потіснити донецьку за походженням номенклатуру у президентському оточенні.

Є й п'яті, і шості, і сьомі...

Як ви вже зрозуміли, мова йде про жваве обговорення указу Віктора Януковича № 313/2011 – одного із найлаконічніших документів такого роду: "Призначити Чепак Дарію Олександрівну Прес-секретарем Президента України". Ось так, кожне слово з великої літери, кожне слово – це Велика Історія.

Воно й справді: йдеться про речі значно більш серйозні, ніж персональні витівки однієї, бодай і талановитої та до цього моменту вельми принципової журналістки. Йдеться про певний симптом настроїв, поширених сьогодні серед однієї з найчутливіших до політичних процесів і найпоінформованіших суспільних груп – серед журналістів.

Чи не найкраще ці настрої охарактеризував на своєму блозі Юрій Луканов. Його колега написав йому: "99 відсотків нас усіх погодилися б на таку пропозицію". Ця думка була негайно підтримана іншою дописувачкою, Але багато хто заперечив. Виникла гостра суперечка. – пише Луканов. – Але на практиці автор цитує про 99 відсотків таки правий. Зайдіть на стіну до Дарки у Фейсбук і ви побачите купу привітань і побажань успіху. Лише в голосах окремих людей звучить стримане розчарування, а то й осуд. З'являються дописи на блогах, де містяться міркування, мовляв, якщо Дарці вдасться зробити те і те, змінити роботу Адміністрації ось так і так, то це буде дуже добре".

Власне, про те ж саме говорить і сама героїня скандалу: "Ситуація розвивалась дуже просто: мене запросили на розмову до президента. Зателефонували з приймальні і запросили прийти за такою-то адресою. І я прийшла. Ми якийсь час розмовляли. І потім через місяць мене запросили ще раз"... За її словами, під час співбесіди Віктор Янукович розповідав переважно про те, якою він бачить Україну і яку країну він буде: "І я можу сказати, що поки я слухала його, я насправді повірила в нашого президента і в те, що він справді може змінити нашу країну. Власне, тому я й тут. Моя мотивація

дуже проста: президент України – це президент України. І для будь-якого журналіста честь працювати на цій посаді".

Означає це, втім, не зовсім те, про що говорить Луканов: мовляв, "наше суспільство таке ж лайно, як і еліта". Або й зовсім не те. Бо ж маємо симптом готовності значної і не найдурнішої частини журналістського корпусу розглядати чинну владу не як одне з угруповань еліти, що може бути змінено інституційним шляхом на чергових виборах, а як можновладну корпорацію, яка прийшла всерйоз і надовго".

Тобто – не на кілька років, а на десятиліття.

На час, за який устигнуть народитися й вирости діти. На час, за який зістаріються і відійдуть на маргінес опоненти, той не буде перед ким соромитися.

На час, коли будь-яка опозиційна політична діяльність втрачає сенс, а то і стає небезпечною для життя, відтак залишається лише намагатися якимось пом'якшити владну жорстокість і вести боротьбу із цензурою зсередини тих органів, які цією цензурою керують.

В підсумку це означає, якщо перейти на мову теорії, поширення й усталення психологічної настанови на прийняття неототалітаризму по-українськи як доконаного факту вітчизняного політичного, економічного й мас-медійного життя на невизначену перспективу.

І не ми перші на цьому шляху: скільки вже подібної аргументації (мовляв, "народ Німеччини обрав канцлером і президентом фюрера") було до нас...

Ні, звичайно, таких масштабних репресій, які дозволяли собі класичні тоталітарні режими, в Україні немає. Можливо, і не буде – якщо сильно не припече.

Втім, хіба режим Муссоліні був кровожерним у перші 15 років свого існування? Він проводив "точкові репресії" – так само, як і чинна в Україні влада. А польський та східнонімецький комуністичні режими базувалися на позірній багатопартійності.

Проте, з іншого боку, класичні тоталітарні режими, крім сталінського та ще кількох, реально дбали про своїх підданих, забезпечуючи їм такий-сякий добробут в обмін на свободу.

У нас же добробут забезпечується тільки обраним, наближеним, причетним до "великих справ". Усі ж інші є біомасою, бидлом, а тому з психологічного погляду можна добре зрозуміти тих, хто не хоче бути цією біомасою – навіть якщо ціною прориву "нагору" буде зрада самого себе.

Відтак не треба новопризначеній прес-секретарці дурити публіку: "Чесність, відкритість та оперативність – це ті речі, які для мене дуже важливі. І це те, як я працювала у всіх редакціях і зі всіма журналістами. І саме так я працюватиму і тут". Ага. А слабо чесно сказати, що їхати столицею своєї держави так, як це робив у день підписання указу новий шеф – це означає зневажати все, що тільки можна зневажити? Сергій Лещенко назвав ці дії Януковича "звичайним жлобством". Та ні, це мабуть усе-таки надзвичайне жлобство, перетворене на стиль державної політики.

Власне, таке жлобство виявив Віктор Федорович і на засіданні Гуманітарної ради, говорячи про кримінальне переслідування представників колишньої влади: "Я запитую в одного з керівників правоохоронних органів: "Ви знаєте, де він знаходиться? Ви, що не можете його привезти в країну, чи ви не знаєте, як це робиться?" Мені кажуть: "Вікторе Федоровичу, не дай Боже хтось дізнається, що ми послали до цієї країни людей, одразу буде підстава за всіма міжнародними правилами дати йому політичний притулок... А я питаю: "А що можна?" Кажуть, виконати всі міжнародні норми і закони".

Уявляєте? Минув рік із гаком перебування Віктора Федоровича на посаді глави держави і тільки тепер він дізнався, що не можна посилати "бригади" до Праги чи Парижу ловити своїх опонентів, яким "найсправедливіший суд" шіє справи...

Що ж, бачили очі, що купували. А навіщо купували – ми розуміємо.

Бо ж Янукович так і сказав, перефразуючи Леніна, що має намір встановити в країні закон і порядок назавжди. Щоправда, він ще додав "для всіх", опісля сів у машину з блимавкою, і кортеж рвонув по перекритому для руху простих смертних Києву, наче згряя назгулів із уславленої трилогії Толкієна.

Тому що послідовний – чи ви ще не зрозуміли? Президент є президент, невже не ясно? Отож слід поспішати виявити свою лояльність і почати робити корисні для людей малі справи зсередини владних структур, якими б вони не були.

А загалом усе діється за неперевершеним у точності формулювань Мойсеєм Фішбейном: "Хочете спокійно жити в товаристві людоджера? Станьте худобою".

Ось тут симптом і переростає у синдром, тобто у притаманне для певної групи населення явище патологічної природи, яке має й інші симптоми.

Не варто сьогодні вести мову про всю країну і про все суспільство – зупинімося на журналістах. Якщо коротко, то має йтися про відсутність елементарного етосу, притаманного журналістському середовищу.

У жодній нормальній країні в такому середовищі були б неможливі певні персонажі. Навіть за нинішніх безсторонньо-плюральных обставин, в Австрії чи Німеччині ніхто б не надав місцевому

Бузині програму на одному із основних каналів із проповіддю, що німці й австрійці – одна нація, місцевому Чаленку, який хвалився б дідом-гауптштурмфюрером СС, - посаду у серйозному виданні, а Піховшеку, котрий займався 2004 року цензурою на "плюсах" – будь-якого місця у журналістському співтоваристві.

У нас же не тільки журналісти, а й знані інтелектуали сідають поруч із Олесем Бузиною і дискутують із ним на серйозні теми. Із людиною, котра, скажімо м'яко, "творчо запозичила" свої інвективи проти Шевченка з київської чорносотенної преси початку ХХ століття або не раз демонструвала своє невігластво з питань далеко не тільки української історії.

Навіть якщо не вести мову про стиль цих писань – їхній зміст доводить, що дискутувати там нема із ким.

Але знані інтелігенти йдуть та дискутують, а журналісти їм асистують, тим самим автоматично опускаючи й себе всіх до рівня плінтусу. До рівня масових "ідеальних виконавців" нашого часу, котрі слухняно рухаються у заданій сильними світу цього системі координат, для заповзятих споживачів телешоу та серіалів, пива та футболу. А водночас ці "плінтусники" тішать себе своєю суспільною вагою, хоча одні з них запобігають перед Бузиною, інші – перед Януковичем, а ще хтось – перед інвесторами видань, в яких працюють...

Це тільки один із симптомів загального синдрому, пов'язаного з вітчизняною інтелігенцією загалом та журналістською спільнотою зокрема, який виявляє себе у позірних намаганнях стати над двобоями дрібних скалок добра та зла, над своїм "песим обов'язком" (І.Франко) служіння істині і нації, але реально завжди кидає своїх носіїв на бік консолідованішого і грошовитішого зла.

Тим більше, що прислужництво великому злу справді дає можливість здійснити якісь окремі й малі добрі справи, отож замість "боротьби із вітряками" люди свідомо обирають схиляння перед неототалітарною силою.

Цілком імовірно, що тією чи іншою мірою цим синдромом вражено 99% журналістів, частина із яких втішає себе самонавіюванням: такі часи... інакше не можна і не варто.

Але ж бували і значно гірші часи. Вже сьогодні є ті, хто на нарах за політичними мотивами, завтра їх може стати куди більше. Що тоді розказуватимуть ті, хто "не змінився", йдучи у владні пахолки? Що вони нічого не могли зробити, бо один у полі не воїн?

...Австрійський психолог Бруно Бателґейм, автор вжитого вище терміну "ідеальний виконавець", багаторічний в'язень нацистських таборів, писав: *"Людина, знаючи, проти чого вона бореться, здатна боротися на самоті. Я дуже не люблю це знамените: "Один у полі не воїн". В історії, починаючи з давньої і до наших днів, були випадки, коли лише одна людина говорила: "Ні. Не буду", - і тем зупиняла несправедливу справу. Проте, навіть якщо не було видимих наслідків такого вчинку, в таборі ставало одним "ідеальним в'язнем" менше – значить, табір не переміг".*

Можливо, втім, Дарія Чепак якраз і вважає себе отим "самотнім воїном", котрий зупинить несправедливу справу?

Ні. Вона пише у блозі: "...Я хочу жити в цій країні, і хочу пишатися нею... Я втомилася жити у війні всіх проти всіх. Ділити людей на своїх і чужих. На ворогів і друзів. На наших і їхніх. Я маю цього досить".

І це означає, що влада збагатилася ще одним "ідеальним виконавцем".

6. Колгосп імені Тараса Бандери: дещо про убогість українства

"Ти, брате, любиш Русь, Я ж не люблю, сарака! Ти, брате, патріот, А я собі собака. Ти, брате, любиш Русь, Як хліб і кусень сала, — Я ж гавкаю раз в раз, Щоби вона не спала", — з цих прекрасних Франкових слів і хотілося б розпочати чергове гавкання на тему того, через що українці постійно опиняються при розбитім кориті.

Як пам'ятає дехто з читачів, перший ювілей Помаранчевої революції був людний, як і сама революція: сніг, натовп, сцена – і ще не до кінця втрачений ентузіазм перемоги. Натомість другий ювілей зібрав сотню-півтори "тусівників".

І от, серед цієї "тусівки" з'явилися кілька хіпуватого виду молодих людей з плакатами "я зрадив Майдан".

Не знаю, як хто – а я зразу зрозумів, що це перформенс, що висміює гасло НСНУшної передвиборчої кампанії "Не зрадь Майдан". Однак "тусівка" розцінила це інакше і загрозово оточила молодих людей.

"Як можна, — кричала тусівка, — зраджувати Майдан?!" Вияв Святого Духу Української Нації, пронесений з часів Великих Оріїв та Трипільців, загартований Мужніми Лицарями-Козаками та Героями-Повстанцями виплеканий?!!"

Ну, можливо сформульовано все було не так послідовно і красиво, але щось таке. Якби не міліція – "тусівка" б охоче порвала на шмаття цих "зрадників" і втішилась би Великою Перемогою над Ворогами Неньки.

Головна проблема більшості з тих, хто називає себе "націоналістами" в Україні – це їхня совкова убогість. Їхня "національна ідея" – це відкрутити голову пам'ятнику Леніну і прикрутити туди голову Бандери або Шевченка, залежно від ступеня радикалізму.

В їхніх мріях всі повинні поводитись так само, як в Радянському Союзі, тільки замість червоних галстуків мають бути вишиванки, замість наукового комунізму – науковий націоналізм, замість віршів про Леніна та міць Червоної Армії – вірші про Бандеру та міць УПА.

Саме тому будь-яку критику на свою адресу чи іронію на адресу своїх цінностей ця "тусівка" сприймає досить гостро, як і належить типовим "радянським людям". Одразу ж з'являються звинувачення у "зраді", погрози "натовкти пику" або "закатати в асфальт" – типово більшовицька реакція на будь-які прояви інакодумства.

Убогість української "націоналістичної" думки є ключовою відмінністю між націоналізмом українським та, скажімо, литовським чи естонським.

Коли наприкінці 1980-тих балтійські народи боролися за Незалежність – в них позаду був принаймні досвід 20-річної державності, вони усвідомлювали всі складнощі існування себе як державних націй. У нас же панувало переконання, що у всьому винен хтось зовнішній, тож якщо цього зовнішнього прибрати – все влаштується саме собою.

Як з'ясувалось – все значно складніше. Держава – це не лише "комуняку на гілляку", це відповідальність перед народом. А от відповідальності брати на себе ніхто не хотів і не вмів, тому влада залишилась за номенклатурними пристосуванцями, а "свідоме українство" залишилось "за бортом", далеке від сфери прийняття рішень.

Помаранчева революція стала сигналом: суспільство готове об'єднуватись заради майбутнього своєї держави. Однак "свідоме українство" цього героїчно не помітило, продовжуючи варитися у власній "тусівці" і даючи суспільству відповіді на питання, яких воно не потребувало.

Наприклад, одна "націоналістична" партія йшла на вибори до Київради з листівками, в яких довго й ретельно розповідала про те, що "націоналізм" і "нацизм" – різні речі, а Степан Бандера сидів у гітлерівському концтаборі.

Не знаю, як кому – а мені для вибору значно важливіше, яким чином міська влада вирішить проблему засміченості, незаконних забудов та поганої якості доріг. Про Бандеру та УПА я можу прочитати на численних історичних сайтах, в книжках, або ж дізнатися з бесід із ветеранами-повстанцями. Не дивно, що ця партія на виборах пролетіла.

Зараз "свідоме українство" маргіналізується просто ударними темпами. З одного боку, розумніша його частина гостро переживає нинішню суспільно-політичну ситуацію, а тому нічого не робить.

Цим вона якісно відрізняється від польських, чеських чи балтійських побратимів, які в найскладніші моменти вміли організуватись і діяти ефективно. Менш розумна частина – в кращому разі героїчно бореться з пам'ятниками давно померлим диктаторам, в гіршому – знаходить "воріженьків" за кольором шкіри чи сексуальною орієнтацією.

Дивлячись на другу частину – перша зневірюється ще більше і ще міцніше утверджується у тому, що в цій країні нічого зробити не можна. Такі собі "націонал-емо", котрі постійно скаржаться і нічого не роблять.

Майже всі "акції на захист", "акції протесту", "відзначення річниць відбуваються в неймовірному убогому совково-колгоспному стилі. В цьому стилі друкують листівки та макетують наліпки, проводять "перформенси", пишуть промови.

Власне тому, що вітчизняний "націоналізм" не є альтернативою совку, лише частковим його проявом – він і не може перемогти совок російсько-радянський, котрий символічно та матеріально є значно сильнішим.

Висловлю припущення, що націоналізм естонців лежав у зовсім інакшій площині ніж тамтешній совок – а отже совок і не зміг нічого йому протиставити. "Мені тяжко уявити собі естонців, які принижено сплять по московських вокзалах", – сказав про це Юрій Андрухович у "Московіаді".

Я переконаний, що народження нової України буде можливим лише тоді, коли в "націоналістичному" чи то "свідомому" дискурсі найактивнішим буде той, хто вміє правильно визначити наше нинішнє місцезнаходження і кінцеву точку призначення. Той, хто чітко визначатиме перешкоди, які стоять на цьому шляху та засоби подолання цих перешкод. Той, хто боротиметься проти причин проблем, а не проти їхніх наслідків.

Це означатиме, що в Україні з'явилась національна еліта, повноцінна альтернатива совковим мародерам.

І така альтернатива цілком матиме шанс прийти до влади, відродити нашу мову і культуру, збудувати рівні дороги, обмежити корупцію та дати українцям впевненість у завтрашньому дні.

Тоді пам'ятники злочинним тиранам зникнуть з наших вулиць цілком закономірно і без жодних заперечень з боку суспільства, шляхом офіційного демонтажу, а не нічного довбання молотком чи різання автогеном. Дуже сподіваюсь це побачити

7. Туринський кінь і японський апокаліпсис

Що спільного між туринським конем кінця XIX сторіччя та японським апокаліпсисом початку XXI-го? Упевнений, що це події одного ряду з однаковим за масштабом змістом.

Зовсім нещодавно на Берлінському міжнародному кінофестивалі відбулася прем'єра чорно-білого художнього фільму угорського режисера Бели Тарру "Туринський кінь", прологом до сюжету якого стала історія про Фрідріха Ніцше, який у 1889 році в Туріні став свідком побиття коня візником. Візник відчайдушно бив свого коня, який невідомо чому зупинився на одній із вулиць італійського міста та застопорив на ній весь тогочасний рух екіпажів та людей. Намагаючись врятувати бідного коня, Ніцше зі слізьми кинувся до нього, обійняв... та втратив свідомість.

Прийшовши до тями, Ніцше замовк назавжди. Останні одинадцять років свого життя він провів у лікарні для душевно хворих.

Чому замовк Ніцше, здебільшого пояснюють його душевним захворюванням. Можливо й так.

Я ж, не претендуючи на оригінальність чи першість такого висновку, пропоную читачам самим подумки перенестися в Турін 1889 року.

Подивимося разом із Ніцше на туринську вулицю. Звичайний кінь зупинив звичний хід життя звичайної вулиці. І хтось не встиг не побачення, хтось не народиться, хтось на встиг когось позбавити чи комусь врятувати життя... Мільйон подій не відбулися чи відбулися зовсім іншим чином. Розвиток Італії та всієї Європи змінили свій напрямок через звичайного коня, який тільки на мить замріяно подивився на небо.

Біль – ніщо, коли над тобою таке чарівно-блакитне небо.

Усе. Дійшли до краю, пане Ніцше. Адже тоді в Туріні 1889 року Ви зрозуміли, що гріш ціна Вашому вченню, коли хід історії людства може зупинити чи повернути в будь-який напрямок звичайний кінь. Не Бог помер, як Ви мали зухвалість висловитися, а Ви, і Вам не забракло мужності визнати це. "Я мертвий, тому що дурний" – такий гіркий, але чесний підсумок свого вчення та життя взагалі підвів сам Ніцше, фактично переховуючись у божевільні від божевілля навколишнього світу.

Не знаю чому, але факт – не міг Ніцше знищити свої "мертві душі", як Гоголь.

"Ця книга належить небагатьом. Може бути, ніхто із цих небагатьох ще й не існує. Ними можуть бути ті, хто розуміє мого Заратустру; як міг би я змішатися з тими, у кого лише сьогодні відкриваються вуха? Тільки післязавтра належить мені. Інші люди народяться posthum", – жадібно продовжує читати божевільний світ XXI сторіччя, штовхаючи падаючого та потайки втішаючись, що Бог умер, і це я – та надлюдина, до якої звертався Ніцше.

Двом панам одночасно служити не можна, тим більше, коли один із них, за словами Ніцше, помер.

Однак, не дивлячись на те, що туринський кінь примусив Ніцше покаятися в сказаному, "мертві душі" його вчення ожили в нашому сьогоденні та справно служать іншому пану. І оскільки, основне питання теперішнього буття "по скільки долар", – назвемо цього пана-бога "долар".

А цей пан не говорить любити ближнього. Він методично вчить продавати, купувати та знову перепродувати ближнього.

Таким шляхом іде людство останнє сторіччя. Проголошуючи демократичні свободи, сучасний умовно цивілізований світ демонструє ніщо інше як свободу своєї нікчемної плоті, нещадно визискуючи для свого збочення навколишню природу та умовно нецивілізований решту люд.

А тепер, щодо японського апокаліпсису.

Його велетенські цунамі, землетруси та ядерна катастрофа є таким же знаком для людства, як туринський кінь для Ніцше, що не Бог вмер, а його вчення мертвонароджене.

Так і для людства японський апокаліпсис – це знак. Знак про неправильний шлях розвитку й неминуче послідує загибель у разі продовження богослужіння пану – долару.

Який же правильний шлях?

Можливо, він стане очевидним для всіх, коли спустіє ця сатанинська меса.

Чи зрозуміє людство цей знак японського апокаліпсису, як зрозумів туринського коня Ніцше? Хотілося б вірити...

Але, поки що, Європа кинулася підмуровувати атомні електростанції. Звичайно, це треба робити. Але кладку у своїх мізках потрібно було перекладати ще вчора.

Чим завила, і чому саме Японія обрана для такого апокаліптичного знаку зверху, здогадатися не важко. Інші не витримали. Тому й обрана Японія, бо вона частина цього знаку.

Чорнобиль людство не захотіло помічати. Тепер прийдеться.

Кого цікавить, по скільки сьогодні долар – по тому вже сьогодні дзвенить дзвін.

- **Political**

1. Такий дуже Близький Схід...

"Кольорові" революції на Близькому Сході змушують замислитися щодо того, чи є ці події суто регіональними, чи вони віддзеркалюють щось таки для сучасного світу універсальне.

Навіть побіжний погляд на те, що сталося в країнах від Атлантичного до Індійського океану, розкриває цілу низку закономірностей, що далеко виходять за межі арабської лише цивілізації.

Справді, у подіях було дуже багато арабської специфіки, особливого менталітету і темпераменту, але причини, що спровокували саме таку реакцію, присутні в багатьох регіонах Східної Європи, Азії, Африки і Латинської Америки.

Якщо самі протести тунісців, єгиптян, єменитів, лівійців, бахрейнців, народів Оману і Алжиру можна вважати локальними, то причини є глобальними.

Вони зводяться до хибної організації суспільства, коли обмежене коло людей, використовуючи політично-пропагандистські маніпуляції і корупційні схеми, узурпують державну владу, змушуючи державу перетворюватися на механізм визиску і гноблення абсолютної більшості в інтересах привілейованих груп.

Відчуження влади від суспільства, а суспільства від влади, робить будь-який режим дуже хитким, здатним існувати до першого соціального вибуху.

Для такого вибуху зовсім не обов'язковим є граничний ступінь зубожіння мас чи недостатній рівень подачок із боку влади. Тут незрідка на перший план виступає так званий демонстраційний ефект майнового розшарування, коли на одному полюсі концентрується фантастичне багатство, а на другому – вражаючі злидні.

Дуже важке враження справляє на маси відсутність соціального поступу і розвитку країни, коли мільйони людей відчують, що завтра і позавтра для них і для їхніх дітей ніщо не зміниться на краще, а це означає, що вони позбавлені перспектив і надій.

Це здебільшого підкріплюється відсутністю чи обмеженістю соціальних ліфтів через корумпованість і кастовість кадрових процесів, коли навіть університетська освіта нічого не обіцяє молодій людині.

На барикади мільйони людей може гнати не голод, а масове гостре відчуття соціального глухого кута. Люди бачать, що в їхній країні влада існує абсолютно автономно від них, від громадян геть нічого не залежить, влада перебуває в якомусь іншому вимірі, достукатися до неї неможливо і "посполити" їй зовсім не цікаві.

Громадяни не можуть не помічати, що нація поділена на два світи зі своїми різними законами, несумісними стандартами повсякденного буття і ці світи співіснують паралельно.

Однак верхній світ постійно якимсь чином (законодавчо, фінансово, адміністративно) тисне на нижній, у свою чергу не сприймаючи жодних імпульсів від тих, хто внизу.

Хіба це типово тільки для арабських країн?!

А система кастово-кланового станового правосуддя, де пересічній людині годі й шукати справедливості, хіба процвітає лише в Каїрі чи Тріполі? Те, що в Російській Федерації називають з іронією "басманним правосуддям", поширено на всьому пострадянському просторі за винятком країн Балтії.

Якщо в Україні навколо владні кола через невиліковну провінційність ще не збагнули, що їм несе близькосхідний "привіт", то в Москві реакція в тих же самих колах була блискавичною.

Цілі орди політологів і аналітиків на багатьох телеканалах наввипередки намагаються запевнити себе та інших, що в Росії нічого подібного ніколи не станеться.

Причому аргументи наводяться здебільшого "технічні", мовляв, дуже велика країна, важко зібрати протестувальників, немає такого високого відсотка запальної молоді, тощо.

Симптоматично, що ніхто не стверджує, що немає тих же самих соціальних причин.

Відчувається патологічний страх кремлівських політехнологів та їхніх працедавців перед революцією. Через те всілякі маркови, павловські, кургиняни по-шаманськи проклинають "кольорові" події в колишніх республіках СРСР.

Ситуація зрозуміла, нинішні режими в Росії, Україні, Вірменії, Азербайджані, Центральній Азії типологічно не дуже відрізняються від режимів Бен-Алі в Тунісі та Хосні Мубарака в Єгипті.

А за рівнем корумпованості, наприклад, Україна перебуває за міжнародними рейтингами дуже близько до цих двох країн, трохи випереджаючи (в кращій бік) Лівію.

Політичні системи Росії і України (не кажучи вже про Закавказзя, крім Грузії, та Центральну Азію) є дуже, як на XXI століття, архаїчними.

Від близькосхідних відрізняються лише тим, що несуть в собі ще й певні латиноамериканські елементи, зокрема, величезну імітаційність, коли є всі формальні ознаки демократії за фактичної її відсутності.

Вибори регулярно відбуваються, але їхні чесність, справедливість і прозорість вельми сумнівні. Працюють парламенти, але вони лише легітимізують рішення, що ухвалюються за їхніми межами групами олігархів і найвищих чиновників у спосіб, який не передбачений Конституцією.

Силові структури перебувають де-факто поза громадським контролем. Правосуддя репресивно-вибіркове. Привілейовані групи і особи мають фактичний імунітет від сили Закону.

Цей гібрид формальної демократії з фактичною диктатурою один латиноамериканський письменник дотепно назвав словом – "демократ ура".

На відміну від однозначних диктатур, "демократури" залишають простір для мирних революцій. Хоча й не виключаються інші варіанти розвитку подій.

Між іншим, всупереч переляканим "кремлівцям", які стверджували, що нічого схожого з Близьким Сходом у Росії не буде, колишній заступник начальника Генштаба ВС РФ з міжнародної військової співпраці, а нині віце-президент Академії геополітики генерал-полковник Леонід Івашов у програмі телеканалу НТВ заявив, що в Росії станеться те ж саме, що в арабів, але значно радикальніше...

Це вже точно, враховуючи специфіку російської ментальності, про яку яскраво висловився депутат Держдуми РФ Олексій Митрофанов: "Они там у себя на Майдане (він мав на увазі ситуації в Києві у листопаді-грудні 2004 року – Автор) місяць простояли, и ни одной разбитой морды. А случись такое у нас, на Красной площади, не успевали бы трупы вывозить".

Колишній же шеф Служби зовнішньої розвідки РФ і відомий сходознавець академік Євген Примаков пояснив: "Корупція – головна причина того, що відбувається на Близькому Сході".

Буквально днями відомий бізнесмен і громадський діяч Петро Порошенко публічно на Першому національному телеканалі поскаржився, що нині в Україні вільній людині жодного кроку не можна ступити без хабара, без потрапляння в корупційну пастку.

Деякі бізнесмени в приватних розмовах стверджують, що такого феноменального здирництва, хабарництва, нахабного вимагання "відкатів", як тепер, вони не пам'ятають за всі роки державної незалежності.

Влада робить все, щоб якнайскоріше дочекається свого "Каїру"? Нищачи поліцейськими методами попередню, кволу і слабку політичну опозицію, чи не створює влада нову, потужну і радикальну, готову йти до кінця без страху і сумнівів?

Адже часто, нищачи слабких, звільняють простір для сильних...

А як показали події в арабському світі, наявність визначних лідерів і структурованих організацій, не є обов'язковою, стихійний вибух гніву може змести всю владну надбудову.

Єгипетській владі (як і туніській) ще пощастило, адже в цих країнах залишилася добре організована і шанована народом сила – армія, що виконала стабілізуючу роль у суспільстві.

Але ці армії не нищилися владою їхніх країн протягом десятиліть, про ці армії якось дбали, бо лідери, будучи пов'язаними зі збройними силами своїми попередніми кар'єрами, принаймні, розуміли важливу роль і значення цього державного інституту...

Саме тому військовим вдалося підхопити владу, що впала з рук диктаторів. А в Лівії, де збройні сили не були важливим самостійним чинником, масові протести громадян швидко переросли в громадянську війну.

Зрозуміло, що зовні стабільні режими, збудовані на принциповій внутрішній нерівності, на відстороненні абсолютної більшості населення країн від впливу на визначення напрямку їхнього розвитку, на диктатурі олігархату і бюрократії (в умовах Росії і України це практично єдина група, яку справедливо можна називати клептократією) є доволі крихкими і можуть впасти навіть внаслідок випадкових подій, що страшенно дивуватиме спостерігачів, адже режими здавалися міцними, допоки не сталося щось непередбачене і сміховинно дрібне...

Так маленький камінчик у горах стає причиною жакливого лавини. Якби жінка-поліцейський в Тунісі не вдарила по обличчю вихованця університету, який торгував на ринку, і якби ображений молодик не спалив себе, то чи сталися б усі ці повстання?

Напевно тоді детонатором стало би щось інше, головне аби було багато вибухонебезпечних матеріалів. На пострадянському просторі їх вистачає, а влада постійно грає із сірниками.

І якщо влада Російської Федерації має потужний "вогнегасник" у вигляді нафто- і газодоларів, то відчайдушність української влади вражає.

А поки що журнал "Форбс" наочно пояснив громадськості, кого саме мав на увазі Азаров, коли заявив, що в Україні жити стало легше і веселіше...

2. Зозулення у політичному гнізді

Український політикум метушиться. Ні, не подумайте, що він "метушиться під клієнтом". Той, монументальний та незворушний, на перший погляд, клієнт перебуває у стані, що є чимось середнім

між депресією та істерикою, і сам метушиться одразу під кількома власними клієнтами – МВФ, РФ, ЄС, США, СОТ...

Протягом останнього року на того клієнта з усіх боків сипалися лише самі невдачі: не зумів втримати зростання інфляції, цін та тарифів, був змушений заговорити про підвищення пенсійного віку, значно погіршив підприємницький клімат в країні.

Це усе на тлі агресивної корупції, некомпетентності безвідповідального чиновництва, яке майстерно нищить паростки реформ.

А якими ж райдужними були балачки про плани модернізації України на початку минулої весни?! Те, що вони не здійснилися, не сховаєш під заявами про "відновлення керованості завдяки непорушній вертикалі".

Про "стабільність" вже й згадувати якось непристойно, так само, як і пояснювати свої системні поразки зловорожими помаранчевими попередниками – рік, бо минув. Звідси й істерика та депресія в головного роботодавця, себто клієнта українського політикуму – влади.

Причини цього почасті лежать за межами України. Світ змінюється на очах: стрімко трансформуються суспільні стосунки, глобалізація розвиває національні суверенітети, з'являються нові мережеві суб'єкти громадянської дії.

Стрімкість та глибина цих процесів неосяжні, незбагнені для тих, хто взявся керувати Україною на зламі індустріальної та інформаційної епох.

Незрозуміле ж часто викликає саме напади істерики, або бажання "сховати голову у пісок".

Непередбачуваність та швидкоплинність глобальних змін, а головне – очевидна і наростаюча неадекватність влади цим процесам, створює в українського політикуму правильне відчуття необхідності якоїсь діяльності, але у чому вона має полягати політики, на загаль, не знають.

Тому вони просто метушаться – метляють перед очима у виборця, і, замість генерації змістів, тобто випереджаючих відповідей на нові цивілізаційні виклики, що постають перед Україною, створюють банальні інформаційні приводи.

Фантазії для цього в них катма, отож політики годують "шановану публіку" нафталіновими заготовками на кшталт гучних заяв про об'єднання. Ніби ми маємо повірити у те, що одні учорашні злившись із іншими учорашніми створять нарешті якісні політичні інструменти планування та здійснення суспільного розвитку.

Наразі, об'єднавча пошесть зачепила увесь політичний спектр.

Скільки існують в Україні праві - націоналістичні, народно-демократичні, консервативні, вони лише тим і займаються, що об'єднуються. Роблять вони це так натхненно, що розплодилися вже у кількості десятків, нікому не цікавих політичних партій.

Яскравою ілюстрацією протилежності результату декларованій меті є склад першої п'ятірки депутатського списку політичного об'єднання "Наша Україна – Народна самооборона".

Ці громадяни на останніх позачергових парламентських виборах агітували за себе, як за монолітну команду однодумців. На сьогодні усі члени першої п'ятірки НУНСу очолюють самостійні політичні сили, які на останніх виборах до місцевих рад у багатьох територіальних громадах запекло конкурували поміж собою.

У передчутті неминучої політичної смерті заходилися об'єднуватися й учорашньо-ліві – СПУ, СДПУ(о), селянські демократи й т.д. Не об'єднуються вони, бо втрата навіть манісінської та скороминучої політичної суб'єктності – "синиці у руках", гірша за "журавля" депутатського мандату у дванадцятomu році.

На майбутніх парламентських виборах, якщо до них доживе нинішня політична система країни, виборець знову буде поставлений перед необхідністю вибирати поміж багатьох: лівих, правих та центристських політичних "проєктів", які перш за все конкуруватимуть із сусідами по політичному спектру.

Окрему групу у цих розкладах створюють розкручені політичні проєкти, які асоціюються перш за все з конкретними особистостями: "Партія Регіонів" Януковича; "Батьківщина" Тимошенко; "Фронт змін" Яценюка; "УДАР" Кличка; "Сильна Україна" Тігіпка.

Усі вони підтвердили свою життєздатність на місцевих виборах та демонструють політичну волю до подальшої діяльності. Окрім, хіба що, Сергія Тігіпка, який конвертував власний політичний бренд у посаду, та в очах виборців міцно "афельований" з владою.

Щодо Комуністичної партії та партії "Свобода", подобається це комусь, чи ні, але їхні виборці вважають їх ідеологічними політичними силами і саме тому голосують за них. У цьому випадку постать лідера не має першорядного значення.

Є цілком природним, що правляча партія бореться зі своїми найближчими конкурентами, та неприродно те, що для цього використовуються переважно не політико-ідеологічні, а широкий спектр адміністративних засобів. Втім, як згадувалося вище, "клієнт сам метушиться" і йому не до інтелектуальних зайвостей у своїй різновекторній бурхливості.

Природною також є конкуренція серед політичних проектів, що асоціюються з конкретними постатями, але засоби цієї конкуренції теж не є ідеологічними.

Можна зрозуміти, але не виправдати, логіку Юлії Тимошенко, яка, мов зозулення, що першим вилупилося у гнізді, інстинктивно прагне підвищувати своїх найближчих конкурентів за політичний харч, викриваючи їхні зв'язки з владою та поділяючи на "справжні та несправжні" опозиційні політичні **сили**.

Але ж хіба не вона своїм авторитетом привела до парламенту громадян які тепер голосують в унісон з ПР та її сателітами? Третина списку депутатів фракції партії "Батьківщина", які отримали мандати у сьомому році, нині перекинулися до табору її опонентів.

Напередодні, вельми імовірних, нових суспільних **збурень** роздмухування конфлікту в таборі опонентів влади є ірраціональним, бо роботи вистачить усім, хто здатен будь-чим підтримати "революцію знизу".

Різнокаліберна трійка: Тимошенко-Яценюк-Кличко наразі має шанс продемонструвати суспільству інтелектуальне лідерство щодо правлячої партії, і перший хід тут природно мав би бути за дамою, натомість опозиціонер номер один розминається на дрібні, як для її ваги, капості своїм сусідам по українській політичній комуніці.

Звісно, що нинішньому становищу Тимошенко не позаздриш. Річ не лише у порушенні проти неї кримінальної справи, але й у тому, що виборець - істота злопам'ятна. Він розуміє і пам'ятає, що в економічному та соціальному занепаді восьмого року винна не лише світова криза, а коли трохи й почне забувати, то є ж кому нав'язливо про те нагадувати.

Політичний background Арсена Петровича також безбездоганий – забагато високих посад обіймав молодий чоловік при усіляких "зловорожих" режимах. І про це є кому повсякчас балакати.

Тим паче вони обоє мають демонструвати нові інноваційні підходи у політичній діяльності, вести компетентний і доброзичливий діалог, займаючи справжню позицію інтелектуального лідерства. Цього наразі не видно.

Щодо Віталія Кличка, то отримані його партією 395 депутатських мандатів на місцевих виборах - це звичайно добре, але вони являють собою лише суспільний аванс. Виданий він тим виборцем, який зневірився у "чистих політиках", тобто таких, які більше нічим не здатні займатися.

Прихильники "УДАР" голосували перш за все за лідера, який досяг безсумнівного успіху у сфері дуже далекій від професійного політиканства. Позитивним знаком є те, що на відміну від депутатів, що належать до більш ваговитих опозиційних сил, обрані від партії Кличка не порозбігалися до провладних фракцій, а тримаються купи у своїх радах.

Втім, щодо них рідко застосовують ті "аргументи", які влада широко пропонує іншим місцевим політикам. Якщо Кличко має намір розвивати свій успіх та стати політичним лідером нової доби, то йому вкрай важливо не опинитися одним з тих, хто в очах суспільства асоціюється з середовищем "українського політикуму".

Схоже, що це добре зрозумів і Арсеній Яценюк. Принаймні, він, не **дозволив** "впасти на хвіст його рейтингів" любителям експлуатувати чужу популярність, і не працюватиме паровозом для усіляких учорашніх політичних курдуликів.

3. "Народ проти Кучми" - нове шоу від продюсерів серіалу "ГПУ проти опозиції"

Порушення кримінальної справи проти екс-президента Леоніда Кучми за вбивство журналіста Георгія Гонгадзе можна було б лише вітати, якби не багато "але", які виникають, при більш уважному аналізі можливих причин цього неочікуваного кроку з вулиці Банкової.

У багатьох журналістів та громадян України ця новина скоріше за все викликала певну ейфорію та навіть деяку повагу до влади, яка наважилася на такий крок. Мовляв "помаранчеві" не змогли, а от Янукович зміг.

Однак не потрібно тішити себе ілюзіями. Скоріше за все справа проти Кучми в саму останню чергу стосується справедливого суду над ймовірними замовниками вбивства журналіста та їх покарання. Без великої політики тут явно не обійшлося.

Давайте поміркуємо, які політичні цілі можуть переслідуватися тими, хто стоїть за порушенням кримінальної справи проти Кучми.

Перше, що спадає на думку – це особиста помста Віктора Федоровича - Леоніду Даниловичу. Те, що між Кучмою і Януковичем до останнього часу залишалися нібито дружні стосунки – це міф.

Як би не старався Кучма публічно нахвалявати Януковича після його перемоги на президентських виборах 2010 року, всім, хто знає трохи більше про українську політику, ніж з екранів телевізорів,

давно відомо, що причиною своєї поразки на виборах 2004-року Янукович вважає не Майдан, не Ющенко, а саме Кучму. Кучму та позицію, яку той зайняв під час "помаранчевої революції".

З точки зору Януковича вина Кучми полягає у тому, що той не розіграв в силовий спосіб "заколотників" на Майдані й не забезпечив таким чином перехід влади до Януковича. А йому бідному через це довелося цілих 5 років поневирятися в опозиції.

Друге, що спадає на думку. Порушення кримінальної справи проти Кучми це вже мабуть останнє попередження спікеру Володимирі Литвині.

Останнім часом Литвин знову почав виходити з під контролю. Згадаємо як він грозився самостійно підписати розпорядження про запровадження системи сенсорного голосування у Верховній Раді.

Хтось сумнівається, що фракція Народної партії підтримає антисоціальні ініціативи влади, зокрема підвищення пенсійного віку, яке поки що відклали, але скоріше за все ненадовго?

Тепер же варто очікувати, що Литвин і його команда стануть більш покірними. Так це чи не так, ми побачимо вже під час розгляду резонансних для суспільства "реформ" у парламенті, і що найважливіше - під час розгляду нового виборчого законодавства, яке потайки пишеться в адміністрації президента в зрозуміло чітких інтересах.

Третє завдання, яке можуть переслідувати на горі – показати всім українським олігархам, хто в домі хазяїн і, що ніхто з них та їхніх родичів не захищений від неприємностей в разі неправильної поведінки напередодні парламентських виборів.

Порушення кримінальної справи проти Кучми – це свого роду "привіт" всім мільярдерам загалом і зятю экс-президента Віктору Пінчуку та його медіа-активам зокрема. Не виключено, що тепер інформаційна політика цих медіа-активів увійде в правильне і потрібне русло.

В те саме русло, в яке нещодавно увійшов Ігор Коломойський зі своїм медіа-холдингом, просто закривши неугідні видання, і залишивши лише ті, які не створюють видимих проблем владі.

Четверта обставина, яка вочевидь змусила відкрити кримінальну справу проти Кучми саме зараз, а не рік тому, хоча й тоді при бажанні це можна було зробити – це відвертання уваги суспільства від гострих соціальних проблем та бунтів шахтарів, вчителів, працівників заводів, хвиля яких вже почала котитися Україною.

Кримінальні справи проти опозиції не дали жодного позитивного іміджевого ефекту владі, навпаки лише посприяли зростанню рейтингів опонентів.

Тому влада вдається до контрпрограмування на шоу "Генпрокуратура проти опозиції". Вона сподівається, що нова програма під назвою "Народ проти Кучми" за своїми рейтингами, за увагою до цієї справи з боку журналістів та світової громадськості – повністю затулить собою події навколо переслідування опозиціонерів. І як наслідок позбавить їх можливості конвертувати пресинг влади в незначне, але все ж таки зростання підтримки опозиційних сил.

Який там суд над Тимошенко, Луценком, Корнійчуком, Діденком, Макаренком? Тут самого Кучму тягають в Генпрокуратуру й судять!

Можна не сумніватися, що усі підконтрольні владі ЗМІ будуть приділяти справі Кучми якомога більшу увагу, адже тема буде важлива та актуальна.

Хтось дуже добре дивився культовий фільм "Хвіст крутить собакою". Тільки вирішив дещо адаптувати його сценарій під українські реалії.

Чим Кучмагейт-2 гірший за маленьку віртуальну й переможну війну, влаштовану політтехнологами в цьому фільмі, щоб врятувати президента, який стрімко втрачає рейтинг?

4. Україна-Росія: чи вийде пристяжний з молодшого брата?

Вони, звичайно ж, промовчали! У цьому, втім, ніхто не сумнівався: для нинішньої української влади коментувати слова російського прем'єр-міністра Володимира Путіна – практично святотатство.

Навіть якщо ці слова – про можливі санкції до України і жорстке небажання бачити її у зоні вільної торгівлі з ЄС, – просто просякнуті неповагою і зверхністю до країни та її керівництва.

Чого ж ще чекати від чиновників, якщо навіть вітчизняні ветеранські організації напрочуд благодушно і з повним розумінням поставилися до слів ВВП, що українці, мовляв, не так вже й сильно були задіяні у битвах Другої світової війни – тієї самої, яку влада прагне називати лише Великою Вітчизняною, і не дуже активно, виявляється, боролися з гітлерівцями.

Бо ж Україна активно "інтегрується" з північною сусідкою, а якщо та намагається її шантажувати, то можна використати чудовий народний метод – заховати голову в пісок.

Навіть попри те, що Путін своєю жорсткою риторикою тільки набирає політичну вагу серед свого електорату, а його українські колеги – втрачають. І не факт, що тільки електоральну підтримку.

Так, дещо із запізненням і на неофіційному рівні міністр закордонних справ сказав, що Україна не має наміру вступати до Митного союзу Росії, Білорусі і Казахстану і що вона однозначно визначила для себе пріоритет: входження до Євросоюзу.

Це плюс, однак видається, що такі відповіді варто чекати від керівників найвищого рівня.

Залишається питання – чи зможе Путін і справді виконати свою погрозу й "виставити кордон", якщо Україна не скасує свої перемовини з Брюсселем і не ввійде у контрольовані Росією структури: Митний союз або Єдиний економічний простір?

Це черговий шантаж, чи цілком логічна відповідь на економічні загрози?

Аби дати на нього відповідь, варто співставити – що насправді сказав, а про що промовчав керівник російського уряду. Насамперед трохи ревнива теза, що Київ – на відміну від Москви – такий собі простячок і дав хитрим брюссельським дядям обвести себе навколо пальця.

"Рівень митного захисту, який обумовила для себе Україна при вступі до СОТ, удвічі нижчий, ніж наш єдиний митний тариф. І після приєднання до СОТ він майже не зміниться: буде вдвічі вищим за український", – двічі повторив Володимир Володимирович.

Міжнародні успіхи російських дипломатів можна було тільки вітати – якби бажання прем'єра РФ перетворилися у довершені факти. Тобто, результати перемовин. На яких кожна із сторін відстоюватиме свої інтереси.

Наразі ж бачимо лише прагнення, прогнози, передбачення, а також слово "майже". Іншими словами – боротьба уявного з реальним. Тобто намагання порівняти те, що вже є у України, з тим, що невдовзі може мати Росія.

"Якщо Україна створить зону вільної торгівлі разом з Євросоюзом і буде змушена уступити за багатьма позиціями, чутливими для української економіки...", – прогнозує далі керівник уряду сусідньої держави.

Така запрограмованість на український всеохопний провал – з уст російського прем'єра – звучить трохи дивно. З одного боку, ЗВТ – це, звичайно, не райський сад, який сам по собі гарантує всім радість, щастя та процвітання. Й перемовини про створення ще одного наддержавного органу мають враховувати і захист вітчизняних державних економічних інтересів, і їхній баланс: чим українці готові пожертвувати і що отримають навзаєм.

Процес непростий, таїть на своєму шляху підводні камені, не гарантує успіху, – але не містить передумов для такого чорного песимізму від іноземного політичного діяча. І навіває якісь недобрі спомини у стилі старого анекдоту: "Чому ваш космічний корабель "Коламбія" розбився? – Та ні, у нас політ триває за графіком. – Вибачте, мій годинник поспішає".

Особливо враховуючи фразу Володимира Володимировича 2004 року, мовлену міністру закордонних справ Нідерландів Бернаруду Боту: "ЄС має триматися якнайдалі від України, так, як це робить Росія. Адже через тісні україно-російські зв'язки Україна ніколи не буде західноєвропейською державою...". Якщо, звичайно, вірити "Вікіліксу"...

І нарешті чисто політтехнологічна фраза про безпеки, які й нібито змушують керівника російського уряду думати про шляхи і методи "виставлення кордонів".

"Вона (Україна), звичайно ж, сподіватиметься, що ці товари (європейського походження – Авт.) підуть на російський ринок. А ми не зможемо собі цього дозволити... адже нас завалять цими товарами", – заявив прем'єр РФ.

На перший погляд, цілком логічна заява. Але! Кожен бізнесмен, який намагався продати хоча би найменшу партію товару до Росії, знає: цього неможливо зробити без спеціальної процедури квотування. Явної, прописаної у відповідному законодавстві, чи прихованої, яка здійснюється за допомогою бюрократичних важелів.

Владна вертикаль у Росії збудована настільки міцно і є такою всеохопною, що пересічні учасники ринку-приватники можуть відмовитися від серйозних контрактів після одного лише натяку "згори", що така співпраця може не сподобатися "там".

Можливо, Володимир Володимирович сподівається, що замість власної продукції українці завалять російські магазини польською? Чи, скажімо, дешевою китайською, яка потраплятиме до сусідньої з Китаєм країни, здійснивши антилогістичний гак у півсвіту?

Але ж супровідні документи, відповідні штрих-коди одразу на місці дозволять відстежити походження товару. І обсяги китайського ширпотребу, які можна завезти до Російської Федерації через море, Одеський порт і сухопутний кордон Хутір-Михайлівський, – це просто сльози у порівнянні з тим, скільки її реально потрапляє на російський ринок через напівпрозорий від корупції далекосхідний кордон РФ.

Зрештою, Росія ніколи не зупинялася перед власним бажанням без "оголошення війни" раз – і закрити кордон для українських товарів. Якщо для цього існують економічні чи політичні мотиви.

Або якщо ці мотиви можна об'єднати. Як було, скажімо, коли до влади прийшла "не та" політична сила, і держава Росія закрила свої границі для української молочної продукції.

Відтак, приватний російський бізнес задешево скупив частину переробних заводів, які їх власники не погоджувалися продати раніше, – і, внаслідок "добровільно-примусових" злиттів і поглинань, переструктуризував цей ринок. І про жодний Євросоюз тоді не йшлося...

Можна згадати про "м'ясні війни", коли продукція вітчизняних комбінатів раптом виявлялася шкідливою для здоров'я росіян. А потім, після відмашки "старт", з'ясовувалося, що вже не така вона й небезпечна, ця українська ковбаса з холестериним...

Безсумнівно, що пропозиція "закрити" кордон – не що інше, як шантаж з боку Володимира Путіна. Безсумнівно, російський прем'єр перегинає палицю – і це очевидно, мабуть, всім.

Але напередодні чергових двосторонніх перемовин жодна жорсткість, вважають у Кремлі, не може бути надмірною.

Україні вчергове продемонстрували: треба поступатися. Якщо не напрямком руху, то "хоча би" майном. Тому вже найближчим часом можна очікувати на нові "інтеграційні" проекти: про авіа- й суднобудування вже чули, про атомну енергетику знаємо.

На які галузі вітчизняної економіки зверне увагу команда Володимира Путіна, почуємо невдовзі. Не виключено, що це аграрні проекти: влада нині активно готується до скасування мораторію на продаж сільськогосподарських земель.

Боротися з "ножницями", в які потрапила Україна через черговий приступ багатовекторності, буде непросто.

5. Справедливість є

У відповідь на "Уряд - пільговикам: кому я винен – всім прощаю" та "Янукович хоче приватизувати ГТС, об'єкти енергетики і скасувати пільги мільйонам українців. Одним законом!"

Проект закону про гарантії держави щодо виконання рішень суду вирішує нагальну та болючу проблему України щодо системного невиконання державою рішень суду, що ухвалюються проти неї національними судами.

Пройшовши всі судові інстанції і отримавши рішення суду про стягнення з держави (державного органу, установи або підприємства), особа в Україні не обов'язково отримує реальне поновлення її порушеного права через виконання рішення.

Чинний порядок виконання судових рішень зобов'язує особу розпочати нову, ще складнішу боротьбу з державою за свої права. Змушуючи особу звертатись до Державної виконавчої служби, держава наче говорить їй: "Виграла? Ну добре, а тепер спробуй забрати у мене присуджене!"

Враховуючи масштабність проблеми, вже кожен, навіть не юрист, знає, що чинне законодавство дозволяє Державній виконавчій службі за певних умов взагалі відмовити особі у виконанні судових рішень, винесених проти держави.

Це призвело до накопичення великої кількості невиконаних рішень вказаної категорії і призводить до зневір'я особи в силі законів, обов'язковості рішень судів і, як наслідок, стосовно влади загалом.

Шукаючи захисту, українці масовим потоком звертаються до Європейського суду з прав людини (далі – Європейський суд), який розглядаючи відповідні скарги на невиконання державою судових рішень на підставі пункту 1 статті 6 Конвенції про захист прав людини і основоположних свобод (далі – Конвенція), повсякчасно визнає порушення Україною вказаного положення Конвенції.

Відсутність адекватних дій з боку держави для виправлення ситуації протягом багатьох років та стрімко зростаюча кількість відповідних скарг проти України змусили Європейський суд ухвалити пілотне рішення у справі "Юрій Миколайович Іванов проти України".

У цьому рішенні Європейський суд зобов'язав Україну протягом року від дати набуття рішенням статусу остаточного (до 15 січня 2011 року) вжити заходів для усунення вказаної проблеми невиконання судових рішень державою.

Після надання Європейському суду інформації про розроблений проект закону строк виконання пілотного рішення було продовжено до 15 липня 2011 року.

Здебільшого невиконання судових рішень має місце в зв'язку з тим, що:

- діють законодавчо встановлені мораторії на примусову реалізацію майна боржників;
- протягом багатьох років не передбачені в державному бюджеті кошти для виконання рішень національних судів про відшкодування шкоди, завданої державними органами (установами, організаціями, посадовими особами);
- наявні гарантовані законодавством пільги, фінансування яких ніколи в повному обсязі в державному бюджеті не передбачалось.

З метою надання роз'яснення порядку виконання рішень, який пропонується вказаним проектом закону, доцільно детально зупинитись на основних його новелах. Так, вказаний проект передбачає:

по-перше, запровадження нової процедури виконання рішень судів про стягнення коштів з державних органів (державних установ, організацій, підприємств) та юридичних осіб, примусова реалізація майна яких забороняється законодавством.

Так, проектом закону передбачається, що виконання судових рішень про стягнення коштів з державного органу здійснюватиметься за рахунок держбюджету протягом 3 місяців, а у разі невиконання у вказаний строк особі виплачуватиметься компенсація. При цьому сам порядок виконання для особи є максимально спрощеним.

Рішення про стягнення коштів з державних підприємств та юридичних осіб, примусова реалізація майна яких забороняється законодавством, виконуватиметься за рахунок державного бюджету у випадку, якщо у строк до 6 місяців таке рішення не виконано за кошти боржника.

При цьому для стягнення з державного бюджету також передбачається 3-місячний строк, у разі порушення якого особі виплачується компенсація;

по-друге, скасування різного роду мораторіїв на примусову реалізацію майна юридичних осіб, дія яких унеможлилювала процес примусового виконання рішень суду, що є підставою для визнання Європейським судом порушення Україною прав стягувачів за пунктом 1 статті 6 Конвенції.

Виконання відповідних рішень Європейського суду передбачає, що за рахунок державного бюджету виконується рішення національного суду та виплачується присуджена компенсація, розмір якої є значно більшим, ніж розмір заборгованості за рішенням національного суду.

Відповідно, фактично держава несе фінансову відповідальність за невиконання відповідними боржниками-юридичними особами – здебільшого частка державної власності в яких становить не більше 25 % – рішень суду.

Натомість, проект закону передбачає повноваження Кабінету Міністрів визначати перелік юридичних осіб, щодо майна яких вводиться заборона на примусову реалізацію.

Таким чином, встановлюється можливість здійснення постійного моніторингу діяльності юридичних осіб, відповідальність за борги яких несе держава, та у випадку, коли причини, що зумовили необхідність захисту майна конкретної юридичної особи, втратили свою актуальність, така особа має бути виключена з відповідного переліку, що, в свою чергу, призведе до звільнення держави від вказаної фінансової відповідальності;

по-третьє, механізм погашення вже існуючої заборгованості за судовими рішеннями вказаної категорії. Погашення такої заборгованості здійснюватиметься в порядку та строки, встановлені Кабінетом Міністрів з урахуванням результатів опрацювання отриманих Державною виконавчою службою невиконаних рішень судів та наявних фінансових ресурсів держави;

по-четверте, унормування і уніфікація порядку та розміру виплат соціальних пільг, передбачених різними законами України, які ніколи в повному обсязі не фінансувались державним бюджетом з огляду на обмежені фінансові можливості держави.

З одного боку, про це свідчить порівняльний аналіз дат прийняття відповідних законів та проведення виборчих кампаній, з іншого – подальша багаторічна відсутність фінансування обіцяних пільг.

Зараз ці пільги люди мають відвойовувати спочатку в судах, при чому це може продовжуватись роками, потім в Державній виконавчій службі доводити своє право на виконання відповідного рішення, і зрештою, отримавши відмову цієї служби знову ж таки в зв'язку з відсутністю відповідного фінансування, вони мають звертатись до Європейського суду і ще чекати на його рішення приблизно чотири-п'ять років.

Виникає запитання, чи цю систему соціального забезпечення так відстоюють всі критики проекту закону "Про гарантії держави щодо виконання рішень суду"?

Якщо так, тоді ці критики є людьми, яким вигідно існування повної невизначеності та безладу в цій сфері.

Адже наразі вибиття з держави відповідних коштів перетворилось на бізнес окремих організацій, які на системній і звичайно платній основі займаються пошуком відповідних пільговиків, потім представництвом їх інтересів в судах і Державній виконавчій службі та, зрештою, в Європейському суді.

Замість існуючого безладдя проектом пропонується, щоб розмір пільг встановлювався Кабінетом Міністрів, виходячи з реальних фінансових можливостей держави і коштів, передбачених парламентом у законі про державний бюджет.

При цьому варто пам'ятати, що Кабінет Міністрів є органом виконавчої влади і має виконувати те, що передбачає парламент. Кабмін не може дати більше грошей, ніж Верховна Рада виділила у відповідній статті бюджету, але й не може дати менше.

Прийняття вказаного проекту закону безперечно усуне підстави невиконання судових рішень вказаної категорії, але без одночасного внесення змін у відповідні закони, що встановлюють порядок і розмір виплати компенсацій та пільг, призведе до надмірного фінансового навантаження на державний бюджет України.

За таких умов забезпечити швидке та безумовне виконання відповідних судових рішень не вбачається можливим.

Щодо гучних промов відносно явної суперечності запропонованих положень Конституції варто зазначити, що Конституція не може гарантувати конкретний розмір тих чи інших пільг, адже це є юридичний акт, який визначає основоположні засади правовідносин, наприклад, про те, що виплати, що є основним джерелом існування, мають забезпечувати рівень життя, не нижчий від прожиткового мінімуму, встановленого законом.

У цьому зв'язку варто звернути увагу, що сам проект закону не містить жодної норми, яка б суперечила цьому положенню.

Відтак, підсумовуючи, варто наголосити, що вперше влада спробувала бути чесною з своїм суспільством, не обіцяє того, що ніколи не зможе виконати, а намагається навести лад в сфері виконання державою рішень.

Те, що зараз відбувається навколо цього проекту, свідчить про те, що є велика кількість людей, яким просто не вигідно, щоб, по-перше, нарешті влада в повному обсязі виконувала свої обіцянки (тому що тоді зникає підстава для критики).

По-друге, щоб існувала прозора, доступна та швидка система виконання рішень суду, ухвалених проти держави, оскільки тоді деяким ділкам доведеться шукати інше джерело свого власного доходу.

6. Епідемія відмов

Уже після того, як парламентська більшість відклала розгляд закону про пенсійну реформу, спочатку прем'єр, а потім і сам президент заявили, що були ініціаторами такого відтермінування. Причину назвали одну й ту саму: потребу додатково поінформувати населення.

Не порадитись, аби щось змінити в проекті – а просто продовжити пресинг на мізки людей, котрі мають здавати гроші в пенсійно-інвестиційні фонди влади.

Чомусь Янукович не згадав, що ще підчас свого спілкування із країною вже жорстко наполягав: хоч-не-хоч, а ухвалювати пенсійний закон доведеться. Нині він, схоже, наввипередки із прем'єром і своєю парламентською більшістю намагається виправити собі "людське обличчя".

Пояснення відмови від швидкого темпу введення нової пенсійної системи могло б бути зовсім просте: може, комусь конкретному треба встигнути оформити необмежену за розміром пенсію, бо закон таки ставить верхню межу.

Але, з поваги до президента як начебто ворога корупції, треба припустити більш вагомі причини.

"Ініціатива" Януковича покликана приховати визнання спротиву, який чинять реформаторським ініціативам президента депутати його більшості.

Адже насправді загальмувала розгляд пенсійної реформи саме вона. Нехтуючи інтересами гаранта й переслідуючи виключно власні інтереси. Електоральні, пов'язані з майбутніми парламентськими виборами. Не зважаючи на те, що заздалегідь запаслась надлишком тушок на випадок, коли від голосування за "реформу для пенсіонерів" (назва від пана Симоненка) відмовляться комуністи.

Хоч і відкладені на півтора роки, вибори до парламенту вже зараз стрімко мінімізують так звану політичну волю великої "команди" Януковича. Яка, у свою чергу, залежить, знов же попри міф стосовно індивідуальних вольових чеснот гаранта, від волі депутатів. Котрим доведеться брати участь у парламентській кампанії й намагатись через вибори продовжити свої повноваження у владі.

Вочевидь, справа не в поточному низькому рейтингу правлячих сил. А в тому, що стиль проведення реформ, які вражають уже з перших своїх візрів типу Податкового кодексу – не обіцяють жодного відновлення довіри до цієї влади. Ані наприкінці 2012 року, ані пізніше.

Особливо це стосується пенсійної реформи.

Її тяглість у часі обіцяє саме наступного року виявити найбільочіші для її "реципієнтів" аспекти. І відповідно відбитися на настроях найчисельнішої й найдисциплінованішої (в сенсі – відвідання виборчих дільниць) верстви електорату.

А тут іще заздалегідь оголошено про запровадження на наступних виборах мажоритарної або змішаної системи виборів. Абсолютно очевидно, що намір такий був спочатку продиктований елементарним переконанням, що гроші й адміністративний тиск на мажоритарних округах зроблять наступні вибори веселою прогулянкою для провладної команди.

Не врахували, схоже, лише одного: кожен кандидат із теперішніх депутатів більшості матиме на мажоритарному окрузі не так будувати чергову піраміду з нових обіцянок, і навіть підкуповувати громадян дрібними подачками – як **відповідати за щойно ухвалені ним персонально реформаторські закони.**

Як не дивно, а це – досить таки нова ситуація для України: коли те, що називають політичною відповідальністю, з міфу перетворюється на реальність.

І це точно не найсприятливіша обставина для відновлення мажоритарного принципу виборів. Як тут звалити провину на президента й партійну дисципліну, коли ти виборюєш індивідуальний мандат, що забезпечує відповідальність твого персонального голосу?

До речі, про персональний голос.

Не виключено, що зволікання із відновленням в парламенті такого от особистого голосування депутатів пов'язане не так із відсутністю дисципліни чи загрозою зриву роботи більшості ВР, як, навпаки, з побоюванням вияскравлення особистої відповідальності за ухвалені рішення. Адже роздруківки парламентських голосувань, треба думати, під час виборчої кампанії будуть дуже популярним засобом антиреклами з боку опонентів...

Побіжний штрих. Аби спекатися обов'язку особистим рішенням ввести систему для персонального голосування "Рада-3", спікер Литвин в останньому інтерв'ю 5 каналу, з посиланням на якихось анонімних юристів, вже не просто заперечив наявність у 88-й статті Конституції 1996 року 5-го пункту, котрим голова ВР "організовує роботу апарату Верховної Ради", а й трьох попередніх пунктів – щодо організації ним підготовки питань до розгляду на засіданнях ВР, підписання ним актів ВР та представлення ним парламенту в стосунках з іншими (а також іноземними) органами влади. Так і сказав: "повноваження голови обмежуються веденням засідань парламенту. Крапка".

Цікаве публічне зречення повноважень спікером, після якого пан Литвин мав би чесно подати у відставку.

Може, так і станеться. Бо хто ті загадкові юристи, що не радять йому підписувати якесь дріб'язкове розпорядження для апарату? І, чи обмежаться вони лише такими порадами?

Та поведінка Литвина – лише симптом.

Але справа в тім, що начебто "гармонійний" трикутник досягнення й утримання влади з одночасним збагаченням команди – *вертикаль, "реформи" і мажоритарка* – втратив гармонійність і перетворився на джерело суперечностей. Хоч як це неймовірно звучить, а може таки до очільників режиму нарешті дійшло, що рухатись далі обраним "курсом" повного зневажання законами суспільних відносин – значить вирити собі глибоку яму.

Тож зупинка на цьому шляху має означати пошук зміни якогось з елементів замкненої системи, у котру влада сама загнала себе. Простіше кажучи, від чогось треба буде відмовитись. Або від "вертикалі" – але це вже запізно. Або від "реформ" – але це призведе до фінансового краху олігархічних проєктів. Або від мажоритарки на майбутніх виборах.

Звісно, неможливо точно відтворити логіку правлячої нині команди. Але за логікою звичайною, нинішні депутати від владних фракцій мали б виставити президенту ультиматум, що голосуватимуть за абсолютно непопулярні й значною мірою неконституційні закони виключно у випадку, якщо їм самим буде забезпечено уникнення політичної відповідальності.

А це можливо за збереження пропорційної моделі виборів за закритими списками, без внутрішньої мажоритарної конкуренції. Гарантії щодо списків – це питання кожної з партій. Загалом же збереження переваги Партії регіонів над усіма іншими політсилами, навіть за її спільної відповідальності за реформи, – річ досяжна. Принаймні, судячи з рейтингів, ближчим часом.

Звісно, знов доведеться включати спеціальні виборчі технології типу відомих мовних і зовнішньополітичних важелів, а також маніпуляцій стосунками з опозиційними силами. Але це все речі владі знайомі й звичні.

Особливо стосовно опозиції: як би нині не провалювався режим у суспільній свідомості, але опозиційні сили так і не можуть похвалитися ані тим, що впливають на цей процес, ані тим, що здатні отримати від нього користь. Для себе й для країни.

7. ... Повернувся

16 березня Генеральна прокуратура України з N-націятої спроби дала дозвіл на мій виїзд за кордон для участі в саміті Європейської народної партії, що відбудеться 24 березня в Брюсселі.

Хочу сказати декілька слів з приводу цієї події.

Перш за все, я хочу висловити щирі слова подяки на адресу президента ЄНП Вільфреда Мартенса, президента Європарламенту Єжи Бузека, сенатора США Джона Маккейна, міністра закордонних справ Швеції Карла Більдта, всіх моїх колег з Європейської народної партії, моїх друзів-членів Європарламенту, всіх людей і за кордоном, і в Україні, які підтримували мене в цей час та закликали українську владу не чинити політичних репресій. Солідарність працює.

Це наша маленька, але перемога. Перемога не в тому конкретному факті, що "Тимошенко їде до Брюсселю", а в тому, що ця влада вже не може закривати на очі на реакцію цивілізованого світу, на

його оцінку стосовно того, що сьогодні відбувається в країні. Вона змушена, хай з примусу та з неохочу, але бодай тримати ілюзію якоїсь мінімальної показової демократії.

Я чудово розумію, в якій ситуації знаходиться сьогодні країна.

Коли для того, щоб лідера найбільшої опозиційної сили, экс-прем'єр-міністра "відпустили" в Європу, знадобилося втручання політичних лідерів світу, то можете собі уявити з якими труднощами, проблемами та несправедливістю стикається звичайна людина в реальному житті.

Коли репресивна система намагається тебе розчавити і знищити, а серед знайомих і друзів немає ані європейських лідерів, ані європейських політиків.

Я знаю про це, і саме тому сьогодні я говорю: треба боротися. Мені, вам, нам, всім. Боротися, щоб подолати, щоб перемогти, щоб повернути людині честь, гідність, справедливість та правду, і право називатися Людиною.

Це потрібно українському суспільству, яке заслуговує на чітку європейську перспективу.

Я хочу нагадати, що минулого року Європарламент і Парламентська Асамблея Ради Європи прийняли резолюції по Україні, в яких чітко вказали на загрозу розвитку тих процесів, що знищують демократію в Україні.

Прийшов час для Януковича звітувати і перед власним народом, і перед європейською спільнотою про те, що він робить, а вірніше – про те, чому він нічого не робить для зупинення цих процесів та продовжує знищувати демократичні основи в країні.

Я буду говорити про це в Брюсселі. Ми продовжуємо роботу по інтеграції в Європейський Союз і обов'язково досягнемо цієї мети, всупереч тим людям, які сьогодні тимчасово прийшли до влади в країні. Вони не розуміють Європу і бояться її.

І ще про одне. Мене тут запитують, чи не вдячна я Януковичу, який милостиво відпустив мене до Брюсселю.

Так, я дійсно далека від думки про те, що звичайний слідчий ГПУ раптом вирішив лібералізувати режим мого переслідування. Бо якби він так справді зробив, то завтра вже сам ходив би на допити.

У нас така країна, що питання про те, кого посадити і кого відпустити вирішується особисто Януковичем. Це загальновідомий факт. Так що "відпускав" дійсно Янукович.

Однак, поспішати з подяками я не буду.

Бо:

По-перше, Янукович схоже ще й сам не визначився, коли йому гірше – коли я в Брюсселі, чи коли я в Україні.

По-друге, сам факт надання дозволу на мій виїзд до Брюсселя свідчить про те, що кримінальна справа проти мене успішно розвалилася і не має жодної судової перспективи. Це ясно вже не тільки в Києві та в Брюсселі, але, мабуть, і в Міжгір'ї.

По-третьє, може хтось там десь думає, що я якось не повернуся з Брюсселю. Так я відразу кажу: марні надії. Повернуся. Зустрічайте. 25-го...

• Economic

1. Віктор Янукович прогресує

Віктор Янукович в черговий раз продемонстрував неабияке бажання зазирнути в реальність. В четвер президент вдруге за своє президентство публічно заговорив про Інтернет.

Уперше в липні минулого він публічно продемонстрував наркотики, які йому вдалося купити через інтернет-магазини. А цього четверга під час засідання гуманітарної ради він запропонував розпочати створення єдиного інтернет-ресурсу про культурну спадщину України, активно закликаючи використовувати для цього гранти.

Іронія ситуації полягає в тому, що за минулий рік влада та медійний простір – в особливості інтернет – настільки віддалились один від одного, що будь-які прагнення здатися друзями виглядають як бажання похилої людини з хоспісу розпочати нове життя з участі у чемпіонаті з легкої атлетики.

"Діти і онуки", до яких намагався апелювати Віктор Янукович, інформаційно та ментально живуть у настільки іншому житті мережі Інтернет, що сигнали з Банкової не мають навіть теоретичного шансу стати інформацією, якій повірять.

І символічно, що саме в цей день президент нарешті призначив собі прес-секретаря. Новий "голос глави держави" за усіма ознаками – біографічними, обставинами призначення та відгуками про самого Віктора Януковича нагадують вже звичний образ Ганни Герман.

Зустрічаючи членів громадської ради, Ганна Герман усім своїм видом демонструвала, хто в домі хазяїн. Особливо важливих гостей пані Герман особисто проводила до їх місць, іншим в присутності співробітників адміністрації натякала, що за столом не повинно бути пустих крісел. Їх і не було – прийшли майже всі: в новій системі взаємовідносин с главою держави вважається за честь побачити президента або поспілкуватись з людьми навіть з другого ешелону з його оточення.

Віктора Януковича зустрічали стоячи. Розіграна по нотах вистава почалась з промови президента про провали гуманітарної політики впродовж 20 років незалежності.

Поки глава держави вчитувався в написаний текст, Ганна Герман гордо вдивлялась в обличчя присутніх. Вона пишалась тим, що змогла зібрати таку громаду, вона пишалась своїм текстом, який читав Віктор Янукович, пишалась собою, що сидить поруч з першою особою держави.

Перша частина виступу була присвячена намаганням запевнити присутніх у модернізації поглядів адміністрації на розвиток культурної спадщини. Шлях був обраний точно і без апеляцій – треба рухатись в бік новітніх технологій, уособленням якого в очах чиновників Банкової є Інтернет.

- В умовах жорсткого ліміту часу в нас просто немає іншого вибору, аніж зосередитися на новітніх технологіях. Ні для кого не секрет, що наші діти та внуки значно більше інформації беруть в Інтернеті, аніж у книжках та підручниках.

Крокуючи словами написаної крупним шрифтом промови, Віктор Янукович дедалі ступав на невідому йому територію.

- Знаю і вірю, що саме Інтернет, саме нові технології в перспективі не лише дадуть поштовх розвитку книговидання, кіно, музиці, театру, музейній справі, а й сприятимуть розвитку громадянського суспільства загалом....

Члени громадської ради з розумінням дивились на президента. Дехто кивав головою, дехто робив помітки і кидав схвальний погляд на усміхнену Ганну Герман... Втім, поза регаліями будь-який пересічний користувач Інтернету мав би обірвати пафосну промову президента гучним сміхом.

Про розвиток культурної спадщини України в інтернеті говорили люди, які усіма своїми діями роблять все, аби інформація з мережі не потрапляла до традиційних засобів масової інформації.

Все той же пересічний мешканець світової мережі з подивом би сприйняв слова Віктора Януковича, який за рік президентства жодного разу не зустрівся з блогерами, колективний вплив яких в мережі на ставлення до голови держави визначальний.

Та й сам Віктор Янукович не представлений у мережі, його офіційний сайт досі пропонує віртуальні екскурсії у вигляді застарілих слайд шоу, а у адміністрації президента немає жодного альтернативного каналу інформації в жодній з соціальних мереж.

- ...Давайте створимо ресурс, на якому у відкритому доступі буде представлено все найважливіше, що створене на нашій землі впродовж віків. Давайте доповнимо його тим, що впродовж 20 років продукувалося науковими інститутами та театрами, видавництвами і студіями звукозапису, - закликав президент.

Під час промови пролунала і крамольна пропозиція використати... гранти для просування культурної спадщини України в Інтернеті. Історія дивна, адже деякий час тому одним з членів Партії регіонів на прикладі історії з "чикагськими хлопчиками" була висунута теорія про те, як "корпоратократія через гранти і фонди набуває контроль над цілими державами".

Ще більш дивною видалась би мешканцям мережі друга частина громадської ради, присвячена збереженню національних пам'яток.

- ...Закликаю громадськість активно повідомляти про всі випадки порушень законів у цій сфері та незаконного будівництва. Для цього існують відповідні структури, зокрема, служба з охорони національної культурної спадщини, що зобов'язана оперативно реагувати на всі порушення...

В інтернеті є тисячі публікацій з цього приводу, на які, згідно із законом, правоохоронні органи мають реагувати самостійно. Не завжди така інформація потрапляє до традиційних ЗМІ. А адміністрація президента все ще чекає сигналів від "відповідних структур", голова одної з яких – керівник СБУ Валерій Хорошковський – може мати особисте відношення до знесення, наприклад, історичної садиби архітектора Казанського у столиці.

Емоційний виступ одного з членів ради завершився закликом до президента, щоб були названі прізвища та імена чиновників, які давали дозволи на руйнування пам'яток архітектури. У відповідь Віктор Янукович видав досить оригінальну тираду про своє бачення роботи правоохоронних органів.

- Я вам скажу так: частини з них немає, дійсно вони втекли, але прізвища залишилися. Сьогодні йдуть суди, йде слідство по всім напрямкам. Є намагання, як кажуть, називати це політичними переслідуваннями. Дехто каже, що будемо шукати політичний притулок.

Так Янукович зіскочив з однієї теми на іншу.

...От мені сьогодні доповідали... Я задаю питання одному з керівників правоохоронних органів. Кажу: ви знаєте, де він знаходиться? Знаю! І що? Ви не можете привезти його в Україну? Чи ви не знаєте, як це робиться?

Дехто з присутніх здивовано зітхнув. Що саме мав на увазі глава держави, коли казав про можливість привезти людину з іншої країни, невідомо. Втім, президент продовжив.

- Вони кажуть мені: Вікторе Федоровичу, не дай боже, хтось дізнається, що ми послали туди людей за ним в цю країну, одразу будуть підстави по всім міжнародним правилам дати йому політичний притулок. Він знаходиться під слідством! Певна частина людей вже сидить! А він каже про політичний притулок! Кажу, а що тоді можна? Каже: виконати всі норми і закони міжнародні, - зі сміхом завершив голова держави.

Ще більш іронічними виглядали скарги членів громадської ради з приводу стану справ у столиці. Найбільш красномовним був виступ Михайла Резніковича, художнього керівника театру імені Лесі Українки.

- Знаєте, Віктор Федорович, отдельное внимание надо уделить проблеме тротуаров и проезжей части. Из-за этих джипов невозможно пройти по городу! Они стоят на тротуарах, везде...

Зал притих, Віктор Янукович уважно слухав Резніковича. На словах про джипи він кинув красномовний погляд на голову КМДА Олександра Попова.

- Я вот вам расскажу, я недавно шел по Крещатику и вот стоят джипы. Я иду, а рядом медленно идет пожилой человек. Я огибаю джип, и он огибает джип. И я вдруг слышу, как этот человек подошел к джипу и тихо спрашивает: "Я вам не мешаю?!". Вы представляете?

Президент захитав головою. Очевидно він розумів і похилу людину, що мала огинати джипи на тротуарі, і інтелігентне обурення Михайла Резніковича, і проблему кількості автомобілів в центрі міста. Але все це десь далеко – поза межею життя голови держави. В той же день, за кілька годин після засідання гуманітарної ради, тисячі машин по місту мали огинати джипи супроводу та кортеж самого Віктора Януковича. І обурення водіїв навряд чи було таким же стриманим і інтелігентним, як промова художнього керівника драматичного театру.

Системність роботи влади та відірваність глави держави від суспільства, а тим більше – Інтернету, доволі комічно проілюстрував сам Віктор Янукович.

- Попов от не каже, що я його декілька днів тому викликав. У мене з'явилась інформація. Ну... яка інформація... Я вам відверто скажу. Один з моїх водіїв живе там в районі, в якому почали вирубувати дерева. І він вранці приїхав, я тільки сів в машину, і він каже: "Віктор Федорович, а у мене в районі дерева рубають отакий ліс, так жалко!".

Хтось в залі тихо засміявся. Янукович з жалістю вдарив кулаком по столу.

– Я кажу "Де?! Поїхали!". І ми поїхали. Я подивився – дійсно: ну отакі дерева – президент виставив руки, ніби охоплюючи стовбур дерева. – Сльози на очах у людей! Ми вийшли з машини: люди стоять, а дерева лежать! А люди... діти виросли біля цих дерев, це їх життя! Знайшовся якийсь негідник і...

Засмученню Віктора Януковича не було межі. Він передзвонив Олександрові Попову, негайно викликав його до себе, і в той же день з ситуацією під будинком водія президента зайнялася прокуратура.

Почувши таке, будь-яка людина, що проводить в мережі більше двох годин на добу, залилася б у гомеричному реготі. В мережі існують сотні ресурсів, присвячених знесенню пам'яток архітектури, незаконним забудовам та знищенню зелених насаджень, які поповнюються новими даними. Ще тисячі блогерів на своїх аккаунтах, не приховуючи, називають імена та прізвища забудовників та чиновників, що цьому сприяють.

Мабуть, все, що їм потрібно – скontaktувати з водієм глави держави. Іншого каналу зв'язку поки немає. Але в оточенні самого президента абсурдність ситуації ніхто не помітив.

2. Сім міфів пенсійної реформи

Іноді увечері я читаю міфи Древньої Греції, які є чудовим снадійним.

Десять хвилин ознайомлення з подвигами Геракла, Ясона, Персея та інших героїв Еллади достатньо, щоб захопитися їхніми вчинками і поринути у царство Морфея.

Мабуть, щось схоже відбувається і з політиками, відповідальними за пенсійну реформу. Їм досить почути міфи пенсійної реформи, які з усіх боків розповідають різні фахівці, як виникає глибока апатія до практичного здійснення перетворень.

Відтак, на відміну від грецької міфології, яка прославляє дії богів та напівбогів з грецького Олімпу, на українському Олімпі поки що панують невизначеність та невпевненість у напрямках, строках та змістовному наповненні пенсійної реформи.

Першим терміном можливого запуску накопичувальної системи пенсійного страхування - другого рівня пенсійної системи - був 2007 рік, найуспішніший в розвитку світової та української економік. Однак час було безнадійно згаяно. Команди реформаторів змінювалися, а віз і нині там.

Є одна проста формула з'ясування стосунків: якщо ти не розумієш, у чому проблема, вважай, що це гроші, і майже ніколи не помилишся.

Грошей на реформу в Україні ніколи не вистачало. Тобто вони були, але не для реформи. Відтак, раз-по-раз виникали пропозиції ще раз вивчити світовий досвід, адже нові когорти службовців, що приходили на зміну попередникам, нічого не знали про глобальні пенсійні системи, і кожен відкривав для себе пенсійну Америку.

Водночас, пенсійна реформа обростала новими міфами і "страшилками". Мовляв, люди не встигнуть накопичити гроші до виходу на пенсію. Якщо встигнуть, їх у них вкрадуть. Якщо не вкрадуть, то не повернуть. Якщо повернуть, то не всі і не все.

Можливо, більш детальне знайомство з міфологією вітчизняної пенсійної реформи дозволить послабити вплив міфічного Морфея на українську дійсність?

Міф перший. Щоб запустити другий рівень, треба збалансувати бюджет Пенсійного фонду, а для цього слід підвищити пенсійний вік.

Якщо підвищити пенсійний вік чоловікам навіть на два роки, вони будуть помирати, не доживаючи до пенсії. За офіційною статистикою, середній вік життя українських чоловіків - 62 роки. Однак середня очікувана тривалість життя чоловіків, які досягли 60-річного віку, становить 74,5 року.

Тобто, у разі своєчасного виходу на пенсію, чоловіки мають шанс у середньому отримувати пенсійні виплати протягом більш ніж 14 років. При досягненні 62 років чоловіки мають середню очікувану тривалість життя 75,5 року, отже, перебуватимуть на пенсії протягом 13,5 року. При підвищенні пенсійного віку до 65 років чоловіки мають шанс дожити до 77 років і отримувати пенсію протягом 12 років.

Для порівняння: середня тривалість життя українських жінок - 74 роки. Середня очікувана тривалість життя жінок, які досягли 55-річного віку, - 79 років. Отже, середньостатистична українська пенсіонерка має шанс отримувати пенсію протягом 24 років - період, рекордний серед усіх розвинутих країн світу.

Середньостатистична тривалість життя українок, які досягли 60-річного віку, становить 80 років. Тому у разі підвищення пенсійного віку на п'ять років, українська жінка має шанс отримувати пенсійні виплати протягом 20 років.

Міф другий. Причиною дефіциту бюджету Пенсійного фонду України є "спеціальні" пенсії, які призначаються за окремими законами.

Спеціальні пенсії, сума місячної виплати за якими перевищує 10 тисяч гривень, отримують лише 3 856 осіб, а питома вага їх виплат у бюджеті ПФУ - менше 1%. До того ж, спеціальна частина таких пенсій сплачується за рахунок коштів держбюджету, тому в економічному плані вони "не роблять погоди". Хто ж тоді "робить погоду"?

У країні майже дві третини пенсіонерів - 8,5 мільйона осіб - отримують менше 1 тисячі гривень, ще майже 4,5 мільйона осіб мають пенсію на рівні середньої і трохи вище. Халепа у тому, що за шість останніх років коефіцієнт заміщення пенсією зарплати в Україні зріс майже у 1,5 рази: з 30% у 2004 році до 47% у 2010 році.

За цей же період ВВП у країні в поточних цінах збільшився у 3,1 разу, середня зарплата - в 3,8 разу, а середня пенсія - у 5,5 разу! Ось вам, бабусю, і Юрійів день.

Тобто причиною розбалансування бюджету ПФУ є не спеціальні пенсії, а, як це не парадоксально, пенсії більшості пенсіонерів, які на хвилі соціального передвиборчого популізму зростали у відриві від бази нарахування пенсійних внесків. Це шлях в нікуди. Ще три роки, і в системі державних фінансів буде повний колапс.

Ситуацію не врятує і просте збалансування темпів приросту середньої пенсії і середньої зарплати, адже загальний дефіцит бюджету ПФУ за 2010 рік становив 60 мільярдів гривень, а власний дефіцит - 26,6 мільярда гривень, і цей розрив між доходами та видатками буде відтворюватися в майбутньому.

Міф третій. 95% росіян висловили недовіру недержавним пенсійним фондам - НПФ - як установам, які обслуговують кошти накопичувальної системи.

Справді, 95% російських громадян, які стали учасниками обов'язкової системи пенсійного страхування, спочатку не хотіли передавати накопичувальну частину трудової пенсії в управління приватних КУА або НПФ. Однак більшість з них не виявляла бажання доручати управління страховими внесками і державному Внешекономбанку - ВЕБ, який отримав право на їх обслуговування.

Основна частина росіян взагалі не виявила з цього приводу жодного бажання, та й часу для визначення було відведено надто мало. Відтак, держава кошти усіх "мовчунів" віддала в управління ВЕБ.

3. Львів – корупційна столиця України?

Після несанкціонованого затримання контрабандного вантажу на мільйон доларів львів'яни дізналися, що живуть у найбільш корумпованому місті України.

На львівську владу вилили стільки відер помийв – за рік не відмиється. Після прочитаного у пересічного читача мало скластися враження, що вся українська "мафія" зосереджена у Львові.

Під час сесії обласної ради підходжу до одного "мафіозі" у званні генерала й запитую:

– *Хто ж тебе так "мочить" на київських сайтах?*

– *Калетнік!*

– *За що?*

– *Заступник голови облради з депутатами затримали контрабанду. У Києві подумали, що це моя робота. Жодного відношення до контрабандної історії не маю, – виправдовується "мафіозі".*

Звичайно, що Львів має свої регіональні проблеми в боротьбі з корупцією та хабарництвом. У менталітеті в галичан закладено, що за добрі справи треба обов'язково віддячити. Інша справа, що нині це поставлено на конвеєр.

Тільки чому протягом останнього тижня зі Львова зробили корупційну столицю України?

До влади на Львівщині прийшла нова команда, де більшість має "Свобода". Молоді та запальні хлопці ще не знають усіх підводних каменів. Побачивши кадри з прихованих камер СБУ, як у кабінет заступника Львівської митниці Клавдії Кутикіної митники 15 і 30 числа кожного місяця заносять стоси доларів, нова влада взялася за митниці.

І перекрила кілька контрабандних схем.

Як розповідав перший заступник голови облради Петро Колодій, три фірми мали зелене світло для контрабандних потоків. За останній рік перегнали 700 недоторканих фур. Один із таких вантажів депутати з інспекторами ДАІ зупинили у Львові. Водій відразу залишив машину й утік. Митники теж не поспішали брати під варту фуру. Радилися аж 10 годин. Депутати весь час самі охороняли машину. Коли митники наступного дня зняли пломби, виявили контрабандного вантажу понад мільйон доларів. На митному посту Рава-Руська задекларували товарів лише на 236 тисяч гривень.

Ось після чого хлопці "Свободи" відчули, що воно таке – воювати зі справжньою мафією, у розпорядженні якої мільйони доларів, підтримка правоохоронців на всіх рівнях та потужний медійний ресурс.

Це не бідну владу брати на книпи.

"Свобода" зіткнулася з реальною владою, яка нині править бал в Україні.

22 лютого депутат облради Андрій Холявка із трибуни сесії обласної ради заявив про ввезення в Україну контрабанди на суму 3,1 мільярда гривень. Для порівняння – дохідна частина бюджету

Львівської області становить 3,7 мільярда. Прозвучали назви трьох фірм, через яких ідуть контрабандні потоки.

Три тижні прокуратура Львівської області вагалась, як бути. На 21-й день прес-служба заявила, що розпочато перевірку заяви Андрія Холявки.

Що ж, за три тижні документи зачистили, вантажі поховали. І з нетерпінням чекають заспаних прокурорів, які, звичайно, можуть нічого не знайти.

У депутатів облради накопичилось чимало запитань до "силовиків".

Як дожилися до того, що контрабандні вантажі затримують – на прохання депутатів облради! – інспектори ДАІ?

Де оперативні служби митниці, СБУ та міліції?

Чому для окремих фірм створили зелену вулицю для перевезення контрабанди?

Та прокурор Львівської області Віталій Ковбасюк не знаходить часу для спілкування з народними обранцями, на сесію приходить лише бойовий перший заступник Володимир Гураль.

Керівники правоохоронних органів дуже рідкі гості на телебаченні чи радіо. На прямі ефіри із глядачами бояться приходити. Рідко спілкують з простими людьми. Схоже, їм легше й комфортніше жити в звичному трикутнику: кабінет – шикарна іномарка – ресторан. І ховатися за ширмами кишенькових прес-служб.

Та що може сказати простій людині львівський генерал, який їздить на джипі ціною 80 тисяч доларів США, і носить годинник за 18 тисяч доларів США?

За конкретну допомогу в боротьбі з корупцією й контрабандою на кордоні – депутатів назвали "мафією", бо розрухали осине гніздо.

У Львові своїх "горбохватів" вистачає. Для чого ще столичні заслуги вішати на Львів?

У Львові нема "львівської мафії". У Львові безкарно діє мафія київська.

Лише суддя Зварич місцевий кадр. Усі решту затриманих за хабарництво – це столичні "десантники". Ось яка доля кількох "цінних" кадрів, присланих до Львова з Києва. Начальник управління захисту прав споживачів змушував підопічних збирати данину й потрапив до буцегарні. Начальник ветеринарної служби на кордоні погорів на хабарі. Заступник начальника Львівської митниці Клавдія Кутикіна опинилася в СІЗО за хабар.

Це все столичні кадри.

І побори, які збирають місцеві начальнички, теж возять до Києва.

Львовом давно керують не львів'яни. Губернатор із Франківщини, прокурор точно не галичанин, шеф спецслужби – з Буковини, головний податківець з Волині, начальник митниці з Хмельниччини.

Виникає закономірне питання: хто ж перетворює Львів у корупційну столицю України?

4. @Prezident_UA проти @YuliaTymoshenko

Новітні інформаційні технології відкривають безліч перспектив перед сучасним політиком. Ефективність використання комунікативних можливостей мережі Інтернет під час передвиборчої боротьби наочно показала президентська кампанія Барака Обами. Саме після її успіху українські політики по-справжньому зацікавились можливостями соціальних медіа. З того часу у вітчизняних політичних діячів почали масово з'являтися особисті акаунти та представництва в соціальних мережах та блогосфері.

Втім, у порівнянні з країнами Заходу, і навіть Росією, де моду в цьому напрямку задає сам президент, особиста активність вітчизняних політиків у соцмережах – явище досить рідкісне.

Здається, для українського політикуму, як і раніше, "найважливішим з усіх мистецтв" та головним ретранслятором політичних гасел залишається телебачення, а контроль над ним – запорукою політичного успіху.

В умовах коли переважна більшість телеканалів в тій чи іншій мірі контрольовані владою, опозиції все важче донести власну точку зору до населення. Політичні ток-шоу на головних кнопках країни все частіше виглядають ретельно причесаними дискусіями, до яких практично не допускаються (а точніше просто не запрошуються) небажані спікери з числа опонентів нинішньої владної верхівки.

Останні тенденції переконують, що вони й надалі дрейфуватимуть в бік скандальних, але безпечних з точки зору влади, видовищ. Бійка між Поярковим та Бузиною в прямому ефірі "Великої політики", що виходить на "Інтері", наочно засвідчила актуальність знаменитої цитати Віктора Пелевіна про клоунів.

Працювати клоунами таки краще, і, безперечно, на українському телебаченні знайдеться безліч бажаючих приміряти на себе цю роль на благо високих рейтингів. Бо, зважаючи на рівень самоцензури у питаннях критики влади, сподіватися на реальну цікавість телеглядача таким політ-шоу все важче.

От і залишається впроваджувати у політичний контекст давно випробувані сценарні ходи російської програми "Окна". І наразі важко уявити за рахунок чого може зупинитися ця запланована деградація. Втрата вільного доступу до телебачення змушує опозиційно налаштованих політиків знаходити для себе інші канали комунікацій, в тому числі, активізуючи роботу в соціальних медіа.

Про важливу роль соціальних мереж у політичних перетвореннях в черговий раз заговорили після революцій, що відбулися в країнах Північної Африки. В умовах жорсткого владного контролю над інформаційною сферою, Facebook та Twitter стали для повстанців важливим інструментом для організації та координації своїх зусиль.

Втім, основна помилка, якої припускаються в новій для себе сфері більшість політиків – це не розуміння принципової різниці між присутністю політичного бренду у інтернет-середовищі (як правило, через створення особистого чи партійного сайту) та особистою присутністю у соціальних мережах.

Якщо немає часу чи бажання для особистого спілкування з аудиторією соцмереж, краще визнати це чесно, бо фальш відчувається відразу. Крім того, коли замість політика пише та коментує інша людина, зберігається висока ймовірність epic fail – "серйозного проколу", що може створити неприємний скандал на рівному місці.

Згадати хоча б знамениту історію про коментар з блогу Арсенія Яценюка, що вже давно став "інтернет-мемом". Хочеш здобути повагу серед користувачів соцмереж – маєш не лише інформувати, але й спілкуватись, бути готовим аргументовано відповідати на критику, реагувати на гострі репліки, та мати достатньо почуття гумору, щоб не піддаватися на очевидні провокації.

Тобто періодично злазити зі свого політичного Олімпу до простих смертних.

І якщо блогосфера (в основному сервіс Livejournal) вже давно є звичним середовищем для політичної агітації, то до новомодних соціальних мереж українські політики поки що лише приглядаються. Наприклад, дуже цікаво спостерігати за їх освоєнням сервісу мікроблогів Twitter, популярність якого останнім часом стрімко збільшується (понад 200 мільйонів користувачів).

Очевидно, що перші політичні твіттер-представництва в Україні функціонували не через бажання комунікувати зі своїм народом, а скоріше, просто як данина світовій моді.

Приміром, твіттер Віктора Ющенка виглядав типовим продуктом роботи прес-служби, яка старанно намагалася копіювати стиль спілкування гаранта, але так і не змусила повірити, що він пише повідомлення власноруч.

У нинішнього президента теж є свій твіттер, але Янукович не був би Януковичем, якби ця подія не відзначилася черговим ляпом. Оскільки @President_UA був зарезервований Ющенком, у Віктора Федоровича не придумали нічого кращого, як назвати акаунт словом з помилкою – @Prezident_UA.

В будь-якому випадку, він нічим не відрізняється від свого попередника, "розмовляючи" з аудиторією тією ж мовою офіціозу та прес-релізів.

В той самий час, президент сусідньої Росії Дмитрій Медведєв має навіть два акаунти в Твіттері, один робочий і один особистий, ще й доволі активно веде обидва. Не дивно, що мікроблогінг став таким популярним серед російських політиків та чиновників, як великий теніс у Єльцинські часи, чи дзюдо за президентства Путіна.

У середовищі української опозиції найширше у Твіттері представлені політики від БЮТ. Твіттери Андрія Шевченка та Олександра Турчинова існують порівняно давно, нещодавно до них приєдналася і Юлія Тимошенко.

Очевидно, роль соціальних мереж у політичних зрушеннях в Тунісі та Єгипті справила враження на Юлію Володимирівну, адже вже скоро вона сама закликала опозиційно налаштованих українців переходити в Twitter та Facebook для консолідації та оперативного обміну інформацією.

Вочевидь, лідерка "Батьківщини" швидко зрозуміла суть мікроблогінгу, почавши вести твіттер-трансляції з допитів у Генпрокуратурі, відповідаючи на питання "твіплів" та особисто коментуючи політичні події в країні.

На її твіттер, як джерело, досить часто посилаються інформаційні сайти. Звичайно, Юлія Тимошенко – не Леді Гага з 8 мільйонами "фолловерів", але в масштабах України їй вдалося набрати велику кількість читачів свого мікроблогу з рекордною швидкістю.

Вдалим прикладом діяльності політика в Твіттері є акаунт депутата Лесі Оробець, яка крім того веде власний блог в Livejournal. Також одним з "найпросунутіших" в Інтернеті опозиційних політиків є лідер "Громадянської позиції" Анатолій Гриценко. Його особистий сайт – один з найбільш відвідуваних сайтів українських політиків. Гриценко власноручно відповідає на питання на своєму сайті, веде блог та твіттер.

Серед політиків провладного табору традиційно активним в Інтернеті є Михайло Бродський. Його блог в Livejournal довгий час вважався найпопулярнішим серед політичних блогів України. Крім того, практично у всіх більш-менш популярних соціальних мережах присутні представництва Сергія Тігіпка.

Твіттер віце-прем'єра регулярно поповнюється оперативною інформацією і є, по суті, єдиним в Україні прикладом того, що представник вищих ешелонів влади надає значення комунікаціям з інтернет-аудиторією.

Вся інша владна верхівка, схоже, живе, працює, а головне – мислить "по старинці".

На жаль доводиться констатувати, що переважна більшість відомих українських політиків – люди, які свідомістю застрягли у іншій епосі. Небажання пристосовуватись до нових реалій дуже чітко характеризує всю консервативність їх мислення, світоглядно вони так і залишилися у минулих часах. Тому й існують "політики минулих часів" в тій же сфері мікроблогінгу переважно у вигляді "фейків"-пародій на кшталт твіттера Азарова чи Вітренко.

Відсутність інтересу до нових комунікативних майданчиків є яскравим прикладом світоглядного сприйняття владою як ролі виборця у політичному процесі в країні, так і бачення шляхів розвитку країни загалом.

Сприяння та толерування стрімкому розвитку новітніх технологій (хоча б і на власному прикладі), залучення інноваційних ідей мали б бути одними з основних завдань влади по виведенню України на якісно новий рівень інформаційного суспільства. Але, схоже, інтелектуальна модернізація та доступність інформації не являються для неї пріоритетними.

Мабуть, ідеальним варіантом для нинішньої влади було б роздати кожному українцю по телевізору з "прошитим" єдиним провладним телеканалом, де транслюватимуть "правильні" новини та дозволені видовища. Бо правити такими українцями можна легко і довго.

І в той час коли, наприклад, в Естонії вже можна голосувати за допомогою Інтернету чи мобільного телефону, українська влада, схоже, й надалі розраховує на потужності контрольованого "зомбовізора".

Очевидно, у Хосні Мубарака та Бен Алі було приблизно таке ж ставлення до нових інформаційних віань.

5. "Пузата хата" не хоче годувати Укрсоцбанк

В понеділок стало відомо, що Господарський суд Києва 9 березня визнав банкрутом товариство з обмеженою відповідальністю "Пузата хата", яке володіє однойменною мережею ресторанів.

Такий розвиток подій навряд чи влаштує підприємства, яким заборгувала ця відома мережа, адже на балансі збанкрутілої установи суцільні "нулі".

Майже рік тому суд порушив щодо неї справу про банкрутство. Підставою для цього стали позови низки кредиторів.

Ключова проблема "Пузатої хати" - боргові відносини з одним з найбільших банків країни - Укрсоцбанком, яким володіє італійська *Unicredit Group*.

У докризовий 2007 рік мережа отримала в банку семирічний кредит розміром 70 мільйонів доларів під 11% річних. У той рік оборот мережі становив 30 мільйонів гривень на місяць, рентабельність - 10%. Щомісячна виплата банку сягала 4 мільйонів гривень.

Однак у вересні 2008 року, коли в Україну прийшла криза, курс долара різко зріс, і виплати банку підстрибнули до 7 мільйонів гривень. Скоротилося й число клієнтів, які теж постраждали від кризи. Ці фактори призвели до зниження обороту на 20%.

На початку 2009 року становище "Пузатої хати" ще більше зіпсувала паніка, яку викликала епідемія свинячого грипу. Тим не менш, річний оборот підприємства був на досить високому рівні - 350 мільйонів гривень, а збитки становили 59 мільйонів.

За словами економіста інвестиційної компанії "Арт Капітал" Олега Іванця, 2009 року дешеві харчові мережі, порівняно з "побратимами" з дорожчого сегменту, страждали менше.

Керівництво мережі сподівалося, що йому вдасться знайти компроміс з кредиторами і продовжити нормальну діяльність. Утім, домовитися з Укрсоцбанком було не так легко.

Фінансова установа у кризовий час підвищила ставку кредиту з 11% до 12,5% і відмовлялася іти на реструктуризацію кредиту. Менеджмент "Пузатої хати" навіть припускав, що Укрсоцбанк хоче поглинути їх компанію.

За словами керівників мережі, *Unicredit Group* неодноразово пропонувала "Пузатій хаті" продати мажоритарний пакет акцій мережі ресторанів. Мова йшла про продаж пакетів італійським мережам швидкого харчування, таким як "Бюргер Кінг" та "Автогріль".

Однак цього не сталося, а суперечка між кредитором і позичальником ще більше загострилася.

Улітку 2010 року прес-служба Укрсоцбанку розіслала пресі гнівного листа. У ньому вона звинуватила власників ресторанного бізнесу в тому, що вони без згоди банку змінили компанію, яка керує закладами громадського харчування, і вивели з неї активи. Операційні потоки начебто було перенесено на нову структуру - "ПХ Груп".

Це, зокрема, підтверджується даними виручки "Пузатої хати" за 2010 рік.

Експерти стверджують, що перший квартал 2010 року підприємство закінчило з приблизним вибором 50 мільйонів гривень, а наступні квартали не дали результату вище "нуля". "Це досить дивно, зважаючи на покращення ситуації у ресторанному бізнесі", - дивується Іванець.

Окрім цього, в банку наголошували, що у лютому-березні 2010 року господарі мережі ініціювали процедури банкрутства дев'яти компаній: позичальника ТОВ "Пузата Хата" та ще восьми установ, які здають приміщення під ресторани. Відповідна нерухомість виступала заставою за кредитом фінустанови.

Процес банкрутства "Пузатої хати" стартував з позову однієї з фірм-засновників - ТОВ "Динаприс". Ця компанія пред'явила боржнику вимоги у розмірі 50 мільйонів гривень. Після цього Укрсоцбанк теж подався до суду з позовом на 592 мільйони гривень, утім вимоги банку не включили до загального реєстру вимог кредиторів.

Відтак, фінансова установа опинилася за бортом комітету кредиторів і втратила можливість впливати на процес санації або ліквідації підприємства. Спроби фінансистів стягнути борг з поручителів "Пузатої хати" теж були безуспішними. Компанії, що заставили свою нерухомість у банку, також збанкрутували.

Першочергове право на задоволення вимог отримало ТОВ "ТМ-МСК" - компанія, яка спільно з ТОВ "Динаприс" є співзасновником "Пузатої хати". При цьому "Динаприс" має свою частку власності і у новій "ПХ Груп".

Однак, не дивлячись на банкрутство, мережа продовжує розширюватися - недавно відкрився новий ресторан "Пузатої хати" в торговому центрі *Skymal*. Учасники ринку вважають, що ініціатори банкрутства контролюються власниками боржника.

На цьому наголошував і голова правління Укрсоцбанку Борис Тимонькін. На його думку, господарі харчової мережі використовують банкрутство для тиску на банк у переговорах або для того, щоб уникнути погашення боргу.

До того ж, власники "Пузатої хати" переживають не найкращі часи. За інформацією преси, підприємство належить засновникам девелоперської компанії *KDD Group* - В'ячеславу і Олександрі Константиновським. До співвласників цієї групи також відносять экс-міністра вугільної промисловості Віктора Тополова.

"KDD Group може відчувати труднощі із залученням фінансування. Тільки для погашення кредитної заборгованості компанії потрібно майже 100 мільйонів доларів у наступні два роки", - каже аналітик *BG Capital* Олександр Цапін.

6. Етанол збалансує світовий ринок пального?

Глобальне виробництво етанолу у 2010 році сягне 68,2 мільйона тонн. Приріст порівняно з 2009 роком становитиме 16,3%. У 2011 році випуск етанолу замінить потребу у 370 мільйонах барелів нафти.

Політичні події в нафтових країнах Північної Африки та Близького Сходу на початку 2011 року сколихнули світ. Зростання цін на сировину не змогла спрогнозувати жодна провідна аналітична компанія.

У 2010 році, коли на Близькому Сході ще було спокійно, великі західні банки і консалтингові компанії передбачали, що ціна за барель північноморської нафтової суміші марки *brent* в 2011 році становитиме близько 90 доларів.

Цей прогноз був майже на 19 доларів вищим за фактичну середньорічну ціну на нафту в 2010 році. Однак оцінки зросли лише трохи - на 1,5-2% за підсумками подій в Тунісі у грудні, але суттєво помінялися після зміни режиму в Єгипті та в ході заворушень у Лівії.

Нинішні прогнози щодо цін на *brent* у 2011 році зросли на 20% порівняно з очікуваннями в середині 2010 року. 6 березня 2011 року барель нафти марки *brent* коштував 115,97 долара.

В міру посилення хвилювань на Близькому Сході ціна ростиме за рахунок падіння видобутку сировини у Лівії, хоча його і намагається компенсувати Саудівська Аравія, та через збільшення попиту у зв'язку з початком автомобільного сезону.

За прогнозами, у 2011 році світовий попит на нафту збільшиться майже на 1,5 мільйона барелів на добу до 88 мільйонів барелів.

Сумарні доведені запаси нафти Тунісу, Єгипту, Лівії і Оману становлять майже 54 мільярди барелів або близько 7 мільярдів тонн. При цьому найбільші запаси припадають на Лівію - 43,66 мільярда барелів.

З 2002 року ціни на нафту в світі лише ростуть - за рахунок збільшення попиту на сировину і через війну в Іраку. За вісім років ціни підвищилися утричі. У цей період найвища середньорічна ціна за барель нафти спостерігалася у 2008 році - 91,48 долара, після чого у 2009 році на тлі світової рецесії вона впала до 53,5 долара.

У 2011 році аналітики прогнозують, що нафтові ціни перевищать рівень 2008 року.

Висока ціна на нафту *brent* у Європі сприяла зростанню березневої ціни на бензин у Роттердамі до 938 доларів за тисячу тон, що на 104 долари за тисячу тонн більше, ніж у середині лютого 2011 року.

Літр бензину на АЗС на початку березня у США коштував 0,89 долара, у Німеччині - 2,09 долара, у Польщі - 1,72 долара, у Росії - 0,89 долара, в Україні - 1,15 долара.

Паливний етанол - найбільш ємний продукт, який додається до бензину, становив у 2009 році 6% від світового споживання бензину. Світове споживання паливного етанолу в 2009 році сягнуло 58,7 мільйона тонн.

Сьогодні у світі налічується 575 заводів з випуску етанолу загальною продуктивністю 80,6 мільйона тонн. Основною сировиною є цукрова тростина, кукурудза, цукрові буряки, пшениця.

Компанія *The Global Renewable Fuels Alliance - GRFA* - пророкує, що глобальне виробництво етанолу у 2010 році досягне 68,2 мільйона тонн. Приріст порівняно з 2009 роком становитиме 16,3%. За даними *GRFA*, в 2011 році випуск етанолу замінить потребу у 370 мільйонах барелів нафти або 50,7 мільйона тонн. У Німеччині в 2009 році споживання біоетанолу збільшилося на 44%, а в 2010 році його щомісячне використання становило 83 тисячі тонн, що дорівнює 5,5% від місячного споживання

бензину. Польські НПЗ вже в 2011 році подали заявки на постачання біоетанолу: *Lotos* - 4 тисячі тонн на місяць, *Orlen* - 10 тисяч тонн.

Сьогодні етанол - складова світової енергетики. Він заміщає більше 1 мільйона барелів нафти на день. Етанол стає слабкою, але єдиною альтернативою нафті.

***The New York Times*²⁰**

- **Socio-cultural articles**

1. Once in the Public's Hands, Now Back in Picasso's

Supreme Court arguments often concern not just the narrow issue in the case but also the implications of a ruling. You sometimes catch the justices squinting, trying to see over the legal horizon.

Nine years ago, for instance, the court heard arguments in a case about whether Congress was free to add 20 years of copyright protection for works that had not yet entered the public domain.

Several justices asked about a different and even tougher question: Was Congress also free to restore copyright protection to works that had entered the public domain and become public property?

"If Congress tomorrow wants to give a copyright to a publisher solely for the purpose of publishing and disseminating Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, it can do it?" Justice Stephen G. Breyer asked a lawyer for the government.

"It may," said the lawyer, Theodore B. Olson, who was United States solicitor general at the time. But he did not sound too sure.

A little later, Justice David H. Souter pressed Mr. Olson on the same point and elicited the concession that restoring a copyright presented a much harder case.

"There is a bright line there" for "something that has already gone into the public domain," Mr. Olson said.

Justice Souter seemed satisfied. "If you don't throw out a line there," he said, "then Ben Jonson certainly gets recopyrighted."

The court ended up ruling, by a 7-to-2 vote in 2003 in *Eldred v. Ashcroft*, that extensions for works still under copyright are allowed.

This month, the court agreed to hear a case on the question Justices Breyer and Souter anticipated, one that will test whether there is indeed a constitutional line Congress may not cross when it comes to the public domain.

The new case asks whether Congress acted constitutionally in 1994 by restoring copyrights in foreign works that had belonged to the public, including films by Alfred Hitchcock and Federico Fellini, books by C. S. Lewis and Virginia Woolf, symphonies by Prokofiev and Stravinsky and paintings by Picasso, including "Guernica."

"The works that qualify for copyright restoration probably number in the millions," Marybeth Peters, the United States register of copyrights, said in 1996.

²⁰ Available online in <http://www.nytimes.com/> (20/03/2011)

The plaintiffs in the new case, *Golan v. Holder*, are orchestra conductors, teachers and film archivists who say they had relied for years on the free availability of works in the public domain that they had performed, adapted and distributed.

The 1994 law, they told the justices, “did something unprecedented in the history of American intellectual property law and constitutionally profound.”

Lawrence Golan, the lead plaintiff, teaches conducting at the University of Denver and is the music director and conductor of the Yakima Symphony Orchestra in Washington State. He said the 1994 law made it very difficult for smaller orchestras to play some seminal 20th-century works that had once been a standard part of their repertoires.

“Once you own a Beethoven symphony, you own it till it falls apart,” he said. “That used to be the case with Stravinsky, Shostakovich and Prokofiev. Now an orchestra that wants to play, say, Shostakovich’s Fifth has to rent it for \$800 for one performance.”

He said he had no quarrel with providing financial incentives to people who create art. “Obviously, current composers need to be encouraged to create their works, and they should be getting royalties,” Mr. Golan said.

But he said withdrawing works from the public domain did great harm to the cultural life of small communities for no good reason.

That analysis, Mr. Golan’s lawyers say, is consistent with the constitutional balance between property and speech. The Constitution authorizes Congress “to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.”

In other words, said Anthony T. Falzone of the Stanford Law School Center for Internet and Society, which represents the plaintiffs, the Constitution meant to create incentives, not monopolies. “The whole point wasn’t to protect stuff,” he said. “It was to encourage people to make stuff, and everybody’s lost sight of that.”

The government counters that nothing in the 1994 law did damage to the constitutional structure or to free speech rights.

The government adds that the 1994 law applies to foreign works “previously ineligible for protection or whose authors were unfamiliar with the technicalities of United States law.” Every work brought back into copyright protection, the government says, “expires on the same day as if the work had been protected since its creation.”

The federal appeals court in Denver, in upholding the law, said there were important First Amendment interests at stake on both sides. It concluded that there was reason to think that American authors and artists would be better off abroad if foreign authors and artists received expanded copyright protection here.

That economic calculation rankled Mr. Falzone. “You’re selling public property,” he said. “Congress literally took the public’s property and handed it over to foreign copyright owners.”

2. For Law Students With Everything, Dog Therapy for Stress

Yale Law School, renowned for competitiveness and its Supreme Court justices, is embarking on a pilot program next week in which students can check out a “therapy dog” named Monty along with the library’s collection of more than one million books.

While the law school is saying little so far about its dog-lending program, it has distributed a memo to students with the basics: that Monty will be available at the circulation desk to stressed-out students for 30 minutes at a time beginning Monday, for a three-day trial run.

“It is well documented that visits from therapy dogs have resulted in increased happiness, calmness and overall emotional well-being,” Blair Kauffman, the law librarian, wrote in an e-mail to students.

The school is not saying what sort of dog Monty is; what happens to him when school is out of session; or how Monty himself may be kept from becoming overstressed with all his play dates.

Sebastian Swett, 26, a second-year student at the law school, said he had signed up for a session with the dog, but does not necessarily think that it will relieve all the pressures that come with being a student at Yale. "I don't think its going to solve anybody's anxiety problems, but it's certainly nice to play with a dog for half an hour."

Monty, according to the memo to students, is hypoallergenic and will be kept in a nonpublic space inside the library, presumably away from those who don't much like dogs.

"We will need your feedback and comments to help us decide if this will be a permanent ongoing program available during stressful periods of the semester, for example, during examinations," the note to students reads.

A handful of other universities offer similar services, including the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh.

Yale Law School has kept its dog-lending plan so quiet that some faculty members were not even aware of it.

"I'm surprised to hear of it," said John Witt, a professor who was awarded a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship last year for a project on the laws of war through American history. "I've always found library books to be therapeutic. But maybe that's just me."

3. Stanford Women Oust St. John's

STANFORD, Calif. — One minute the St. John's basketball team was forcing turnovers, making baskets and grabbing rebounds as if its players had tapped into a supercharged energy source. And then Stanford pulled the plug.

St. John's, a No. 9 seed, led the top-seeded Cardinal by 8 points after 10 minutes and trailed by 8 after 20 minutes on its way to a 75-49 defeat in the second round of the N.C.A.A. Tournament. Although it was far from a flawless performance, the Cardinal's win spelled perfection for its seniors, who compiled a career record of 63-0 at Maples Pavilion.

It was the first meeting between the teams, but the Cardinal had seen St. John's type before: a young, hungry, scrappy squad playing as if it had nothing to lose. Four years ago, Florida State upset the Cardinal at Maples in a second-round tournament game. It was the last loss Stanford has sustained at home, and the Cardinal faithful no doubt experienced flashbacks when the Red Storm jumped out to a 22-14 lead.

St. John's was outscored by 61-27 the rest of the way.

"They just got momentum going there," said the Red Storm's Da'Shena Stevens, who finished with 11 points, "and got it inside and hurt us. Then when we tried to pack it in, they hit open shots, so it was hard to try to take something away."

After producing 22 points in the paint in the first half, Stanford came out in the second and converted 4 of 9 three-pointers. Chiney Ogumike, a freshman, scored all 13 of her points in the first half and added 12 rebounds.

Her sister, Nnemkadi Ogumike, a junior, finished with a game-high 22, earning praise from St. John's Coach Kim Barnes Arico, who said: "I thought she made some extremely difficult shots. She did everything and we couldn't stop her. I think she really wore us down."

The Cardinal, led by the elder Ogumike, surged to a 23-point lead midway through the second half, setting the stage for the grand exits of Jeanette Pohlen and Kayla Pedersen, the team's two senior starters.

With a little over four minutes left, Pohlen left the game. While she had been relatively quiet, with 8 points and 4 assists, the ovation she received was thundering. No surprise there. It was so loud throughout that

parents cupped their hands over their children's ears, as if they were watching a 747 take flight and not a basketball team's Final Four dreams.

"Walking off the floor, I took an extra look around and saw Maples packed and all the fans cheering," Pedersen said. "It was a very special moment."

The scene would have been unfathomable in the early days of Tara VanDerveer's 25-season coaching reign at Stanford. Her first season, she said, 100 fans represented a big turnout. "I remember thinking, 'Tara, you're in a nightmare. Wake up. This is not happening,'" she said, adding, "It was depressing. It wasn't until the third year we had any atmosphere."

The next stop for Stanford (31-2) is Spokane, and a third-round game on Saturday night against North Carolina. The Red Storm (22-11) will return home with the small comfort of knowing that for a few fleeting minutes, it was the better team.

"We have been talking these past few days about consistency, and how impressive their program has been," Barnes Arico said. She added: "They have played some great teams here and have won some tremendous basketball games. So to keep that level of play and that focus is really unbelievable and I think that is something our team learned from today. You can't do it for 20 or 25 minutes. For them to be able to do it for 40 minutes night in and night out for 61, 62 games, whatever it is, is really a great accomplishment."

4. Elbows Land but Shots Miss as the Knicks Lose Again

Carmelo Anthony lay on the Madison Square Garden floor as blood dripped from his left eyebrow. The blow was the final, lasting image of a night when the Knicks and Boston Celtics traded elbows, shoves and leads in what could be the precursor to a first-round playoff matchup.

Anthony had collided with Rajon Rondo as they jostled for an inbounds pass near midcourt. Anthony lay stunned on the court as Rondo expertly navigated the lane and passed the ball to Glen Davis for a jumper that stretched Boston's lead to 4 points with a minute remaining.

Again, the Knicks' defense collapsed, allowing Boston to rally from a 15-point deficit and post a 96-86 victory Monday night. The Knicks have lost three straight games and are 7-9 since trading for Anthony. There is little relief on the horizon as Dwight Howard and the Orlando Magic will visit the Garden on Wednesday.

The Knicks (35-35) are .500 for the first time since February, when a loss to the Los Angeles Lakers dropped them to 26-26.

Coach Mike D'Antoni expressed concern about how his team faltered in the final minutes.

"We just got to a point there, I just thought we just panicked," he said.

As the loss settled in, Anthony watched from the bench and attended to his eye. "It just got out of our hands a couple plays down the stretch," he said.

Anthony scored a team-high 22 points but had only 5 in the second half. Amar'e Stoudemire added 16. Neither Anthony nor Stoudemire had a field goal in the fourth quarter.

"We have to keep playing the way that we play to get the lead," Stoudemire said. "We can't all of a sudden change our method in the fourth quarter or the second half."

D'Antoni said: "I'm getting to a point where we got to figure something out, because it's not real good right now, obviously. And there's no reason why we can't figure it out. We got two scorers on the floor like Amar'e and Carmelo, then we got to do a little bit better job."

With 12 games remaining, the possibility of a Knicks-Celtics playoff pairing is real. It will be an abbreviated first round if the Knicks and Anthony do not quickly adapt to one another.

If the teams meet again, both will have added motivation. Jared Jeffries glanced Ray Allen with an elbow in the third quarter, leaving Allen with a cut above his right eye while his mother, Flora Allen-Hopson, watched from a courtside seat next to Spike Lee.

Earlier in the game, Anthony grabbed a rebound and struck Davis with an elbow that left Davis momentarily dazed.

Later, Anthony's hard foul sent Paul Pierce sprawling.

"It was a bloodbath, but it was beautiful," Celtics Coach Doc Rivers said. Allen's cut added to his frustrating night. He shot abnormally poor: 5 of 16. Pierce was limited by foul trouble but still managed 21 points, including a key shot with 55 seconds left.

After Pierce's shot, Toney Douglas missed two 3-pointers and Shawne Williams missed one.

Kevin Garnett led Boston with 24 points and 11 rebounds.

An earlier Pierce 3-pointer, Boston's first, brought the Celtics to 4 points behind, at 82-76, with 6 minutes 45 seconds left. The shot came shortly after Chauncey Billups converted a 4-point play, created when Rondo fouled him as he made a 3-pointer, to give the Knicks a 9-point lead.

Garnett tied the score, 82-82, on a layup, and Boston (50-19) did not trail again.

The Knicks returned home after dreadful losses to Detroit and Milwaukee. Anthony performed better Sunday against the Bucks after sulking during a poor performance against the Pistons.

Against Boston, Anthony started efficiently and made quick decisions. He scored 7 points before he picked up his second foul and sat the rest of the quarter. In a display of their erratic play, the Knicks scored 9 points — their total in the first quarter against Milwaukee — in the first 3:27 against the Celtics.

5. Dangers of Leaving No Resident Behind

When the Three Mile Island nuclear generating station along the Susquehanna River seemed on the verge of a full meltdown in March 1979, Gov. Richard L. Thornburgh of Pennsylvania asked a trusted aide to make sure that the evacuation plans for the surrounding counties would work.

The aide came back ashen faced. Dauphin County, on the eastern shore of the river, planned to send its populace west to safety over the Harvey Taylor Bridge.

"All well and good," Mr. Thornburgh said in a recent speech, "except for the fact that Cumberland County on the west shore of the river had adopted an evacuation plan that would funnel all exiting traffic eastbound over — you guessed it — the same Harvey Taylor Bridge."

Nearly 250,000 people would have been sent in opposite directions over the same narrow bridge.

Mr. Thornburgh quickly corrected the plans, but more problems would soon arise — just as they have in many other disasters. As the Japanese are learning, the science behind herding thousands, sometimes millions, of people from danger to safety is uncertain at best. And the lessons learned from one disaster can both hurt and help with the next.

For instance, not enough people left New Orleans and the surrounding areas before Hurricane Katrina struck on August 29, 2005, and more than 1,800 people died. At least part of the cause may have been that Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans waited until the day before the storm hit to order a mandatory evacuation.

The lesson of Katrina? Get everybody out, and get them out early.

Three weeks later, a second major storm, Hurricane Rita, came barreling toward the Gulf Coast. Mayor Bill White of Houston, intent on avoiding the mistakes that plagued New Orleans, told everybody in the city to get out, and get out now. "The time for waiting is over," he said.

Oops. Within hours, the interstates around Houston were at a standstill. When mandatory evacuations were later ordered for areas most at risk, those residents could not get out of harm's way because the interstates were already packed with people from low-risk areas. Some spent days in their cars.

The state police set about turning inbound lanes into outbound ones, but that took hours. More people died or suffered health problems from the bungled evacuation than from the storm itself.

The lesson of Rita? Limit evacuations only to those most at risk, and have plans in place well in advance to reverse traffic flow patterns on major arteries.

Every one of the nation's 104 nuclear power plants is required to have detailed evacuation and incident plans in place before operating. The plans are reviewed by federal, state and local authorities. But problems crop up and almost certainly keep being created.

Brian Wolshon, the director of the Gulf Coast Center for Evacuation and Transportation Resiliency, said that he was analyzing one county's emergency plans that seemed to have every detail covered.

"It was a wonderful report, with plans to move senior citizens out of care facilities and even out of hospitals, and they had signed contracts with bus and ambulance providers," said Dr. Wolshon, who is also a professor at Louisiana State University. "But that same low-cost provider had the same contract with the county next door, and they had the capacity to evacuate only one of these counties."

Indeed, emergency authorities have only in recent years begun to realize that evacuations are often regional and even multistate events. Evacuating almost any city in the United States requires significant preparation and resources in surrounding cities. And some events are simply too resource-intensive or too complicated to plan for.

"What if you had a tsunami warning in the Atlantic Ocean and had to evacuate the Eastern Seaboard? You're talking about tens of millions of people. Where are you going to put those people? How are you going to get them there? Good luck with that," Dr. Wolshon said.

Residents in the 10-mile radius surrounding a nuclear power plant are supposed to receive evacuation plans routinely. Those near the Indian Point plant in Buchanan, N.Y., receive such plans annually, according to officials there. The plans are also posted on local government Web sites. And municipal authorities in towns around such plants often have stores of potassium iodide. Potassium iodide can protect people by ensuring that the thyroid gland does not take up radioactive iodine, which can cause cancer.

But Kelly Classic, a physicist at the Mayo Clinic and spokeswoman for the Health Physics Society, warned that people should not take these pills unless instructed to do so. Potassium iodide can cause problems in those with shellfish allergies or kidney, thyroid or heart ailments, she said, and its benefits are fairly short-lived. Federal health officials warned recently that consumers who try to buy the pills on the Internet may get ineffective or dangerous pills.

Radioactive fallout in Japan has so far been almost entirely confined to the 19-mile zone around the Fukushima Daiichi plant that the authorities have designated as posing the highest risk. But weather modeling has suggested that fallout from the disaster could circulate as far as Alaska and Southern California, although officials have said that there is little cause for concern.

"It won't even be at the level of a chest X-ray," Ms. Classic said.

Still, there may be some reasons for worry. A study of Swedish children who were in utero at the time of the Chernobyl accident in 1986 found that they fared worse on standardized academic tests than a control group of subjects. Children in the most affected parts of Sweden — hundreds of miles from the accident site — fared particularly poorly, showing scores about 5 percent lower than the control group. There is no hard evidence, however, of cause and effect.

The developing fetus is particularly sensitive to the effects of radiation.

President Obama recently asked the nuclear commission to review the safety of all of the nation's nuclear power plants, but whether that review will include evacuation plans is as yet unknown, Mr. Burnell said.

For Mr. Thornburgh, the lessons of the Three Mile Island accident were to restrain emergency personnel who wanted to act even if such action was not warranted; to resist what he called “emergency macho.” or the tendency to stay up all night so as to be able to brag about it later; and to stay calm.

“Not helpful in this effort was the fact that the newly released film ‘The China Syndrome’ had just opened in the area, including its description of the consequences of a nuclear meltdown as rendering permanently uninhabitable an ‘area the size of the state of Pennsylvania,’ ” he said. “This was not a message calculated to put people’s minds at ease.”

6. Tweety Was Right: Cats Are a Bird’s No. 1 Enemy

While public attention has focused on wind turbines as a menace to birds, a new study shows that a far greater threat may be posed by a more familiar antagonist: the pet house cat.

A new study in The Journal of Ornithology on the mortality of baby gray catbirds in the Washington suburbs found that cats were the No. 1 killer in the area, by a large margin.

Nearly 80 percent of the birds were killed by predators, and cats were responsible for 47 percent of those deaths, according to the researchers, from the Smithsonian Institution and Towson University in Maryland. Death rates were particularly high in neighborhoods with large cat populations.

Predation was so serious in some areas that the catbirds could not replace their numbers for the next generation, according to the researchers, who affixed tiny radio transmitters to the birds to follow them. It is the first scientific study to calculate what fraction of bird deaths during the vulnerable fledgling stage can be attributed to cats.

“Cats are way up there in terms of threats to birds — they are a formidable force in driving out native species.” said Peter Marra of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, one of the authors of the study.

The American Bird Conservancy estimates that up to 500 million birds are killed each year by cats — about half by pets and half by feral felines. “I hope we can now stop minimizing and trivializing the impacts that outdoor cats have on the environment and start addressing the serious problem of cat predation,” said Darin Schroeder, the group’s vice president for conservation advocacy.

By contrast, 440,000 birds are killed by wind turbines each year, according to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, although that number is expected to exceed one million by 2030 as the number of wind farms grows to meet increased demand.

The American Bird Conservancy generally supports the development of wind energy, but it argues that wind farms should be “bird smart” — for example, positioned so that they do not interfere with major migration paths or disturb breeding grounds, with their power lines buried to prevent collisions.

“I’m excited about wind; we just have to be careful where and how we put the turbines,” said Dr. Marra, who studies threats to birds, including from climate change and habitat loss. He said the leading cause of bird deaths over all, as opposed to the catbird fledglings in the study, remained collisions with buildings, windows and towers, followed by predators.

Yet wind turbines often provoke greater outrage than cats do, said Gavin Shire, vice president of the Bird Conservancy. “The idea of a man-made machine chopping a bird in half creates a visceral reaction,” he said. “while the idea of a predator with its prey in its mouth — well we’ve seen that on the Nature Channel. People’s reaction is that it is normal for cats to kill birds.”

Household cats were introduced in North America by European colonists; they are regarded as an invasive species and have few natural enemies to check their numbers. “They are like gypsy moths and kudzu — they cause major ecological disruption,” Dr. Marra said.

7. America's Next Top Model: The toughest reality show of them all

Bitchy, physically perilous, pretentious and with no quarter given – the minefield that is ANTM puts X Factor to shame

Make no mistake: America's Next Top Model is as tough as reality TV gets. First there's the physical strain the gaggle of aspiring models are put through: posing in bikinis in ice cold swimming pools; kneeling for hours on burning hot sands; negotiating a high speed travelator catwalk in high heels: the potential for injury and indignity is intense and relentless.

But that's not the half of it. There's the emotional pressure of living in a house with a dozen or so egocentric, sensitive and rilly-rilly good looking young women. The archetypes were the same in this season as any other: the young mum ("I'm doing this for my daughter, Cassidy, so I can give her the life she deserves") the really weird looking girl who always gets through to at least the semi-finals ("I wanna show them back home that I'm not a freak"), the Ivy Leaguer who gave up her place at college to follow her dreams ("Tyra says my intelligence is a flaw as it makes me over-think my poses"), the snobby fashionista ("Patrick De Merchier is a household name to me") and the sassy homegirl ("Who drank my margarita mix! How you gonna disrespect me like that, bitch?").

But the biggest challenge of all is the weekly appearance before the panel of judges: Tyra Banks and her Four Gay Men Of The Apocalypse. There is Vogue's Andre Leon Tally (signature put down: "dreckitude", meaning dreary and unremarkable); Mr Jay (the show's creative director, with the silvery hair, Teflon-like complexion and terrifying perkiness of a benign Star Trek alien); Miss Jay Alexander (imagine Marlo Stanfield from The Wire if he wore dresses and moonlit as a "catwalk expert") and "noted photographer" Nigel Barker, the only non-gay member of the Gay Men Of The Apocalypse who sits beside Tyra like a simmeringly dangerous James Bond villain's henchman (I keep expecting her to say "Show them what you can do Nigel" and for him to crush a snooker ball to dust in his fist while fixing the models with a demented grin). The judges pretty much dismantle the contestants mentally and emotionally one by one at the end of each episode, always referring to themselves reverentially in the third person, with phrases such as: "The judges feel you failed to connect in your groups shot", or – most crushingly of all – "The judges feel your looks are more suited to commercial modelling". The word "commercial" is always delivered with a sneering look, as if a bit of sick has emerged in Tyra's oesophagus.

Last night was the final of cycle 15, the "high-fashion" themed cycle or, as Tyra put it, "America's Next Top Model – elevated!" We were left with a final head-to-head between Ann, the giant/Amazonian from Texas who couldn't walk without falling over, spoke in the voice of an evil computer from a dystopian sci-fi movie but took the best pictures in the history of the show; and Chelsey, the blond, fresh-faced fashion snob who claimed she "wanted it more than anyone else". She obviously hadn't seen as many seasons of ANTM as I have. There's always someone who thinks they want it more than anyone else. But on ANTM, just as in life, wanting something really badly doesn't make you any more likely to get it. Or any more deserving either.

Ann won and immediately began to plan how she would stick it to the kids back home who called her a freak. "Man, they're gonna look at me now and say 'I should have been so nice to that girl!'" The last words went to poor loser Chelsey who said: "I feel cheated. I feel I have the whole package to be America's Next Top Model and Ann doesn't." Graciousness in defeat? You must be joking. This isn't soppy old X Factor or namby pamby MasterChef we're talking about here. This is ANTM, the most merciless reality show in the history of television.

- **Economic**

1. Sharp Scrutiny for Merger of AT&T and T-Mobile

WASHINGTON — Mega-mergers may be celebrated on Wall Street on the theory that bigger is better. But the proposed merger of AT&T and T-Mobile is likely to face intense scrutiny by regulators, lawmakers and consumer advocates.

The review of the merger, one of the largest deals since the 2008 financial crisis, will also be a test for the White House. During his campaign, President Obama criticized the Bush administration's record on antitrust review, and promised to increase scrutiny of merger proposals.

Some analysts say it is too early to see if the merger will pass muster. Part of the difficulty stems from the fact that the two primary agencies that will oversee any merger — the Federal Communications Commission and the Justice Department’s antitrust division — look at it with different goals in mind.

The Justice Department will chiefly examine whether competition among wireless mobile phone providers would remain sufficient after a merger. The department gave some hint to its thinking when it told the F.C.C. last year that the agency needed to use its “policy levers” to encourage more competition among wireless companies, particularly in wireless broadband access.

The F.C.C., on the other hand, has a goal of protecting the public interest in allocating use of the public airwaves, which it does in part by promoting competition. For example, one objective involves pushing the big wireless companies to allow smaller competitors to use their networks for data roaming services. Such policy initiatives give the F.C.C. more flexibility to consider conditions that it could apply to a merger to make it more palatable.

“Normally, competition and the public interest go hand in hand,” said Bert Foer, president of the American Antitrust Institute, a nonprofit agency that generally argues for more competition. But federal courts have recently sided with regulatory agencies instead of antitrust enforcers when conflicts occur, something that perhaps will give the F.C.C. the advantage in setting the conditions under which to approve a merger.

Congress, too, is likely to play a part in scrutinizing the proposed merger. Several Congressional committees have already announced plans to review the deal.

Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, a West Virginia Democrat who is chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, said it was “absolutely essential” for both the Justice Department and the F.C.C. to “leave no stone unturned in determining what the impact of this combination is on the American people.”

Most recently, lawmakers and the White House faced stiff opposition from advocacy groups over the recent merger of Comcast and NBC Universal. That deal was approved by the Justice Department and the F.C.C. with several conditions that subject the expanded company to additional oversight, but many consumer groups and liberal advocacy organizations were unsatisfied with those terms.

“I’m not a huge fan of weighing down a merger with a dozen or more conditions,” said Gigi B. Sohn, president of Public Knowledge, a consumer advocacy group that sharply criticized the proposed merger of AT&T and T-Mobile. “As a regulator, you have to ask yourself how a merger could be in the public interest if you have to do all those things to it to get it done.”

AT&T is already pre-empting any concerns from lawmakers. Its publicity materials announcing the merger (including a dedicated Web site, mobilizeeverything.com), pulled language directly from the president’s State of the Union Message with references to providing wireless high-speed Internet to nearly all Americans in the next five years. And to help Senator Rockefeller with his deliberations, AT&T prominently displayed in its online materials a map of how the merger would expand service in West Virginia.

AT&T contends that the wireless phone market is highly competitive, with 18 of the 20 largest United States markets each having five or more wireless competitors. That may help AT&T, as the Justice Department has traditionally looked at local competition when considering whether a proposed merger will substantially reduce consumer options, said Michael L. Weiner, a partner and co-chairman of the antitrust practice at Dechert, an international law firm.

But national competition also plays an important role in the wireless market. Many mobile phone customers base their buying decisions on whether they will have to pay expensive roaming charges when they travel out of their home area. And after the merger, AT&T and Verizon will between them control nearly 80 percent of the wireless market, with the third-largest competitor, Sprint, lagging far behind.

When AT&T Wireless merged with Cingular in 2004, it emphasized the national benefits of the joined companies, Mr. Weiner said. Now, it is making the opposite argument.

“We’re very confident that we can achieve a successful regulatory review,” Wayne Watts, a senior executive vice president and general counsel at AT&T, said Monday. “The facts show significant, unique public interest benefits from this transaction.”

AT&T also said that it expected to discuss some divestitures with regulators to get approval for the deal. Most likely, those would take the form of the company giving up some wireless airwaves in certain cities where the merger would leave too few competitors.

The F.C.C. could use its leverage over the parties in discussing those possible conditions, under the theory that a company trying to get approval for a merger is unlikely to strongly oppose its chief regulator's policy goals.

2. Natural Gas Now Viewed as Safer Bet

Natural gas may be having its day, as its rival energy sources come under a cloud.

The serious problems at the nuclear power plant in Japan have raised new doubts about the safety of nuclear energy. New exploration has yet to resume in the Gulf of Mexico after last year's blowout of a BP oil well. And coal plants have been under a shadow because of their contribution to global warming.

Meanwhile, natural gas has overcome two of its biggest hurdles — volatile prices and questionable supplies. In large part because of new discoveries in the United States and abroad that have significantly increased known reserves, natural gas prices have been relatively low in the last two years.

It is far too early to say for sure whether the calamitous events in Japan may roll back the global nuclear revival and lead to a surge in natural gas demand. It is also too early to say whether officials in charge of nuclear policy are just paying lip service to the public's safety concerns in the wake of the unfolding disaster.

Still, with the global demand for energy expected to grow by double digits in coming decades, analysts are anticipating a new boom in gas consumption. Given the growing concerns about nuclear power and the constraints on carbon emissions, one bank, Société Générale, called natural gas the fuel of "no choice."

"At the end of the day, when you look at the risk-reward equation, natural gas comes out as a winner," said Lawrence J. Goldstein, an economist at the Energy Policy Research Foundation. "It's a technical knockout."

Financial markets have already started to price in this new interest in gas. Since the disaster in Japan, uranium prices have dropped by 30 percent, while natural gas prices in Europe and the United States have risen by about 10 percent. Officials from several countries, including China, Germany, Finland and South Africa, said they would review their nuclear strategies.

Utilities are also reconsidering natural gas as a potential source of stable power, a function historically filled by coal and nuclear energy. Utility chiefs have been wary of price fluctuations of natural gas, particularly in the last two decades.

But that may be about to change, according to John Rowe, chairman of Exelon, the biggest nuclear utility in the United States. He argued that building a nuclear power plant would be prohibitively expensive, while new rules limiting carbon emissions by the Environmental Protection Agency would require costly investments to scrub emissions from coal-powered plants. This means that utilities will increasingly switch to natural gas.

"Natural gas is queen," Mr. Rowe told a panel at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington this month.

That view was endorsed by a report to be released on Tuesday by the Bipartisan Policy Center and the American Clean Skies Foundation, which predicts that natural gas consumption will increase because of an abundance of new supplies, some of them in the United States, that are likely to keep prices relatively low.

Global natural gas production rose by 44 percent in the two decades from 1990 and 2010, while gas reserves grew by 67 percent. After peaking at \$13.58 per thousand cubic feet in 2008, gas prices in the United States averaged \$4.38 last year. What is more, natural gas emits about half as much carbon dioxide as coal when it is burned to produce one kilowatt hour of electricity.

The immediate market for natural gas will likely be Japan, which is looking to raise its fuel imports after a fifth of its nuclear power capacity was shut down, including the troubled Fukushima Daiichi plant. And Tokyo Electric Power says that the rolling blackouts in the country will continue at least into next winter.

Japan already imports a third of global liquefied natural gas shipments and its import terminals, mostly in the south, were not damaged by the earthquake. Nuclear power and coal each accounts for a quarter of Japan's power generation, while natural gas accounts for 30 percent, according to analysts with the Raymond James financial company.

"It could be that the Honshu earthquake is the catalyst which fundamentally reshapes our approach to global energy," Bernstein Research analysts wrote last week.

Many oil companies have anticipated this shift. At Royal Dutch Shell, natural gas production overtook its oil output in recent years. Exxon Mobil bought XTO Energy last year to raise its presence in the growing domestic shale gas market. It has also developed significant resources in Qatar, which holds the third-largest reserves of natural gas in the world, after Russia and Iran.

Huge new projects dedicated to liquefied natural gas — in which gas is frozen, compressed in liquid form for easier shipment, then returned to a gas state at import terminals — have been mushrooming around the world.

In Papua-New Guinea, Exxon is leading a \$15 billion project to build and develop an LNG plant to supply Asian customers. Chevron recently began engineering work on the \$40 billion Gorgon gas project in Australia, along with Shell and Exxon. Russia, for its part, is planning to develop huge new fields in the Arctic.

Natural gas is not without problems. To unlock methane from hard shale rocks in the United States, energy companies use hydraulic fracturing, a method that has been criticized on the grounds of polluting water sources, including rivers and underground aquifers.

But energy policy must balance out these hazards with the concerns about nuclear power, as well as the still unresolved problem of what to do with spent nuclear fuel that remains radioactive for hundreds of years.

"Nuclear power has suddenly found itself going from being (arguably) part of the solution for future green energy to a now dangerous relic of the cold war era," Deutsche Bank said in a report last week.

In the United States, where no new reactor has been built since the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, the attitude toward nuclear power has been ambivalent. Last year, the president asked the Energy Department to provide some financial backing for nuclear operations, including two reactors planned for Georgia.

But in the aftermath of the Japanese disaster, the administration ordered a comprehensive review of safety at nuclear plants.

At the same time, the industry has found it nearly impossible to develop and finance new plants. In December, for example, Exelon dropped its application to build a plant in Victoria County, Tex., in the face of opposition.

3. Japan's Nuclear Crisis Causes Run on Radiation Detectors

SAN FRANCISCO — Since Japan's nuclear crisis started, Tim Flanegin's phone has barely stopped ringing with orders for Geiger counters, the radiation detectors, to the point that he has no more in stock.

He posted a message on his site, Geigercounters.com, to warn new customers and to reassure those who had already placed orders that they would be filled "in the coming days, weeks and months."

Last Thursday, after receiving hundreds of orders, "I had to shut it down almost completely," Mr. Flanegin said from his home in Prescott, Ariz. Compared with the typical 20 orders a week, he said, "the demand has been so overwhelming."

With small amounts of radiation from Japan's damaged reactors wafting across the Pacific Ocean, relief crews, businesses and ordinary consumers have bought nearly every Geiger counter available from the few retailers that sell them. The run is a grim reminder of the scope of the disaster and the widespread concern about radiation contamination, including in the United States.

Many people buying the devices say they are worried about their food becoming contaminated. One customer, Mr. Flanegin said, was a theme park in Japan that wanted to check its food supplies as a precaution for its visitors.

Radiation detectors come as hand-held devices, wrist watches and pager-size gadgets that hang from the belt. Their cost varies from \$150 for a self-assembled kit to \$4,000 for a more sophisticated version that stores radiation readings along with the GPS coordinates of where those readings were taken.

Technically, Geiger counters are just one type of radiation detector. But many people use the term to describe all radiation detection equipment.

Law enforcement, fire departments, military, hospitals, scientific laboratories, schools and prospectors are the typical customers. Federal government agencies seem to be well enough stocked that they are not scrambling to buy more, according to the sellers interviewed.

Usually, the general public, other than a small group of hobbyists, has little interest in radiation.

But that changed after a devastating earthquake and tsunami set off Japan's nuclear troubles. Demand for radiation detectors, along with potassium iodide pills, which can help prevent radiation-induced thyroid cancer, quickly outstripped supplies and the limited capacity to produce more.

Skepticism that the government will be forthcoming about radiation levels is driving some of the sales, said John Iovine, president of Images SI, a company in Staten Island that makes and sells Geiger counters and other scientific instruments.

"I never really felt it until people started calling up," he said. "They want their own Geiger counter to check up." Radiation levels in the United States remain within the normal range, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, which has a network of monitors across the country. Updates are available on the E.P.A.'s Web site.

During a typical week, Mr. Iovine says, he may get an order for 20 Geiger counters from a local government followed by several weeks without any additional sales. But in the week after the Japan earthquake, he said he received close to 200 orders and was now sold out. Customers are now warned that it will take six to eight weeks to fill any orders.

Still, buying a radiation detector is just the first step, Mr. Iovine said. Owners of the devices need to discern between dangerous radiation levels and a normal background reading.

"To use it is very simple," Mr. Iovine said. "To interpret the results gets a little more difficult."

Naturally occurring radiation varies depending on factors like local geology and altitude. People are exposed to additional radiation when they get an X-ray or fly in an airplane.

Robert Corsetti, director of sales and marketing for Berkeley Nucleonics, which makes and sells industrial-grade radiation detection equipment, said that calls to his company, which is based in San Rafael, Calif., increased up to 15 times the normal level after the problems started in Japan. In some cases, people are simply calling to ask if they are at risk, and not to buy something.

"We send out PowerPoints that dispel rumors," Mr. Corsetti said. "I send the e-mail 20 times a day." In one case, he said, an airline pilot who regularly flies to Tokyo wanted a detector to determine if he was being exposed to more radiation than usual. NBC News crew members in Japan are using radiation detectors from Berkeley Nucleonics that they can wear on their belts, much like beepers. The devices sound an alarm when they detect excessive radiation and when the dose exceeds a specified level over time.

In addition to the detectors, NBC News personnel are equipped with protective masks and suits, along with access to potassium iodide pills.

Mr. Flanegin, the owner of Geigercounters.com, expressed sympathies for the Japanese people, even if their dire situation had lifted his sales. All the scrambling to meet customer orders, he said, "is nothing compared with what the Japanese people are going through."

4. Giving Literature Virtual Life

BRYN MAWR, Pa. — Prof. Katherine Rowe’s blue-haired avatar was flying across a grassy landscape to a virtual three-dimensional re-creation of the Globe Theater, where some students from her introductory Shakespeare class at Bryn Mawr College had already gathered online. Their assignment was to create characters on the Web site theatron.org and use them to block scenes from the gory revenge tragedy “Titus Andronicus,” to see how setting can heighten the drama.

“I’ve done this class before in a theater and a lecture hall, but it doesn’t work as well,” Ms. Rowe said, explaining that it was difficult for students to imagine what it would be like to put on a production in the 16th-century Globe, a circular open-air theater without electric lights, microphones and a curtain.

Jennifer Cook, a senior, used her laptop to move a black-clad avatar center stage. She and the other half-dozen students agreed that in “Titus,” the rape, murders and final banquet — when the Queen unknowingly eats the remains of her two children — should all take place in the same spot.

“Every time someone is in that space,” Ms. Cook said, “the audience is going to say, ‘Uh oh, you don’t want to be there.’”

Students like Ms. Cook are among the first generation of undergraduates at dozens of colleges to take humanities courses — even Shakespeare — that are deeply influenced by a new array of powerful digital tools and vast online archives.

At the University of Virginia, history undergraduates have produced a digital visualization of the college’s first library collection, allowing them to consider what the selection of books says about how knowledge was classified in the early 18th century. At Hamilton College, students can explore a virtual re-creation of the South African township of Soweto during the 1976 student uprisings, or sign up for “e-black studies” to examine how cyberspace reflects and shapes the portrayal of minorities.

Ms. Rowe’s students, who have occasionally met with her on the virtual Globe stage while wearing pajamas in their dorm rooms, are enthusiastic about the technology.

“Until you get Shakespeare on its feet, you’re doing it an injustice,” Ms. Cook said. “The plays are in 3-D, not 2-D.”

Many teachers and administrators are only beginning to figure out the contours of this emerging field of digital humanities, and how it should be taught. In the classroom, however, digitally savvy undergraduates are not just ready to adapt to the tools but also to explore how new media may alter the very process of reading, interpretation and analysis.

“There’s a very exciting generation gap in the classroom,” said Ms. Rowe, who developed the digital components of her Shakespeare course with a graduate student who now works at Google. “Students are fluent in new media, and the faculty bring sophisticated knowledge of a subject. It’s a gap that won’t last more than a decade. In 10 years these students will be my colleagues, but now it presents unusual learning opportunities.”

As Ms. Cook said, “The Internet is less foreign to me than a Shakespeare play written 500 years ago.”

Bryn Mawr’s unusually close partnership with Haverford College (essentially across the road) and Swarthmore College (a short drive away) has enabled the three institutions to pool their resources, students and faculty. In November students from all three participated in the first Digital Humanities Conference for Undergraduates. Hosted by Haverford, the student-run two-day symposium also attracted undergraduates from Middlebury, Brown, Cornell, Hamilton and the University of Pennsylvania, who shared their own projects and discussed other ways in which undergraduates could use new technology for research.

Jen Rajchel, one of the conference organizers, is the first undergraduate at Bryn Mawr to have a digital senior thesis accepted by the English department: a Web site and archive on the American poet Marianne Moore, who attended the college nearly a century ago.

Ms. Rajchel had experimented with building a digital archive at Haverford with Laura McGrane, an assistant professor there who helped create the three colleges' digital humanities initiative last year. But Ms. Rajchel's Bryn Mawr thesis adviser, Jane Hedley, had never worked with an undergraduate on this type of digital project before.

5. The new York Times: Rebuilding Lives and American Ties to Japan

ON BOARD THE RONALD REAGAN — When United States Navy helicopters swept down on the school in a ruined Japanese village, survivors first looked hesitantly from the windows. Then they rushed out, helping unload food, water and clothes. They clasped hands with the Americans. Some embraced them.

A daily tracker of the damage at the two imperiled nuclear plants.

"They are like gods descending from the sky," said a tearful Junko Fujiwara, 37, a secretary at the elementary-school-turned-shelter in the northern coastal town of Kesennuma. "It's cold and dark here, so we need everything: food, water, electricity, gasoline, candles."

Soon after the devastating earthquake and tsunami struck Japan, the United States military began what it calls Operation Tomodachi (Friend), one of its largest relief efforts in recent years. At present, about 20 American ships have massed off Japan's northeastern coast, including the Ronald Reagan, a nuclear-powered carrier whose helicopters are busily ferrying supplies to survivors.

That relief is getting through to sometimes difficult-to-reach coastal areas devastated by the March 11 double disaster. They are also the latest showcase in the Pentagon's efforts to use its forces to win good will for the United States abroad, a strategy that it used successfully in Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami there.

In particular, the United States has grabbed a chance to rebuild ties with a crucial Asian ally that just a year ago seemed to be flirting with pulling out of Washington's orbit. The fact that American ships arrived so quickly on the scene has been a chance to demonstrate the value of having dozens of American bases in Japan, which hosts some 50,000 military personnel.

"What we are doing here is diplomacy," said George Aguilar, the commander of the HS-4 Black Knights, a helicopter squadron on the Ronald Reagan. "This is our best friend in the region."

It seems so far to be a highly successful effort, at least in the areas the helicopters visited. On Sunday, as the squadron ferried supplies to towns devastated by the tsunami, usually to schoolyards or sporting grounds converted into landing zones, Japanese residents welcomed them with deep gratitude. Many were isolated when roads were washed away.

"We will always remember the Americans' coming at a time when we needed help," said Osamu Abe, 43, an official in the town of Minamisanriku, where Commander Aguilar's squadron dropped off bottled water, military rations and children's clothing on Sunday.

At the same time, the American military has found itself trying to achieve a delicate balance. The United States has played a role in many aspects of the response to the recent crisis in Japan, including sending fire trucks to the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. But the Americans seem keen to avoid embarrassing the Japanese, or suggesting that the United States is running the show.

Indeed, Japan has at times appeared overwhelmed by the multiple disasters — the earthquake and tsunami have left more than 26,000 dead or missing, and hundreds of thousands homeless, and the plant still faces a possible meltdown. The United States mustered a large presence in tsunami-hit areas quickly, while Japan has been slow to reach some heavily damaged areas, especially around the nuclear plant. The Navy said Monday that it had delivered 194,700 pounds in supplies to ruined areas, much of it essentials like food, water and clothing.

"We really appreciate this swift and huge capability," said Capt. Hidetoshi Iwasaki of the Maritime Self-Defense Forces, Japan's navy.

Partly, the speedy response was a result of chance: the Ronald Reagan and its battle group happened to be passing nearby en route to war games off South Korea. The carrier, with a crew of 4,500, can launch aircraft and also create drinking water, something needed in the disaster zones.

The Americans said they wanted to stay until the Japanese were able to get regular supplies into the remote coastal towns that were slammed by the waves. Japan appeared to be making steady progress in building such overland links, they said.

The American response to the nuclear crisis includes not only fire trucks, adding to efforts to spray water on the overheating fuel rods, but also United States reconnaissance aircraft, which have been helping the Japanese monitor radiation levels.

On the Ronald Reagan, emissions from the crippled plant have been an acute concern for the Americans. The Navy fliers said they were trying to stay at least 50 miles away. When helicopters returned from relief, they and their crew were carefully scanned with Geiger counters.

The carrier itself has also pulled back to at least 100 miles away from the reactors. When the wind near the plant changed direction, the Ronald Reagan went into what sailors called "Circle William" mode — closing off all hatches and ventilation openings to prevent outside air from entering. Crew members said radiation was something the ship had not had to deal with in years.

"We're digging out the old cold war-era manuals on how to protect the ship from radiation," said Commander Aguilar, the squadron chief.

Commander Aguilar, 40, said the damage and death toll from Japan's tsunami were far larger than another disaster in which he was involved in relief efforts: Hurricane Katrina.

"This exceeds Katrina," he said. "This looks like the arm of God just scraped the land clean."

He and other American helicopter crewmen said they were stunned by the randomness of the tsunami, witnessed by a large ferry boat placed perfectly atop a three-story building, or an entire house floating intact miles out at sea, with curtains still in the window. A debris field of splintered wooden pieces of Japanese homes and capsized boats of all sizes encircled the Ronald Reagan, about 15 miles offshore.

Another surprise, the airmen say, was the lack of injured. The Reagan had considered offering its vast hangars as makeshift hospital space. However, few of the survivors who crowded into schools and other makeshift shelters needed emergency medical attention. The Americans said they evacuated only a small number of injured, including a Swedish national with appendicitis.

"You were either in the way of the tsunami, or not," said Lt. Chad Upright.

At the crowded refugee center in Minamisanriku, where 250 survivors slept on the floor, Mr. Abe said the most urgent thing needed was medicine for colds, fever and allergies. But the American airmen said they could not hand out medicine without the permission of the Japanese government, which they did not have.

Something similar happened after the deadly Kobe earthquake in 1995, when foreign medical supplies and even doctors were turned away at the border by Japanese bureaucrats.

This time, the Americans promised to ask the Japanese for quick permission to hand out American-made medicine, and for help in translating the directions into Japanese.

Much of what the Americans have handed out are goods taken from their own ships: extra food and blankets, and even the sailors' own clothes.

There were stuffed toys for children, too.

To alleviate food shortages in the shelters, the Ronald Reagan sent 77,000 frozen hot dogs to a Japanese warship, which boiled them and gave them out.

6. How Much Technology Is Too Much?

Beck Ag is a small agricultural marketing firm that helps companies get good word of mouth among farmers. Clients often ask the Omaha-based firm to set the farmers up with video conferences, chat groups and Web-based meetings. But John Finegan, founder and owner, offers a surprising response: Nah.

“I try to talk clients out of it,” he said. “Farmers are usually out in the field, or riding in a tractor, and when they’re home they don’t want to spend all their time glued to a screen. They like to talk on the phone.” So Beck Ag focuses on hooking the farmers up via conference calls. And given that the company increased its revenue 30 percent last year, it’s hard to argue that the firm is missing something.

Information technology, as we all know, helps small companies serve more people with lower costs. A Web page can bring in more customers in an hour than a team of cold-callers in a month. But as online interactions increasingly take the place of face time and phone conversations, it’s important to understand that an insistence on applying all those great new tools can actually cause more problems than it solves. Embracing the virtual can be great, but sometimes doing things the old-fashioned way is better, especially when it comes to interacting with customers and partners.

In Beck Ag’s case, there is plenty the six-employee firm likes about I.T. It relies heavily on an online conferencing service, iMeet, to allow constant collaboration among its employees and the dozens of people who work for the company on a contract basis. It has invested \$750,000 over the last four years in software that allows it to provide farmers with their own Web pages and access to various online resources, all as a supplement to the phone conferences, and it has already budgeted about \$100,000 to build mobile apps for farmers. But Mr. Finegan says he doesn’t hesitate to pull the plug on high-tech when he thinks it’s imposing. The company used to rely on an advanced phone conferencing system that tracked who was speaking at all times — but because it required employees to be at headquarters to use it, preventing them from being near customers and farmers, Mr. Finegan got rid of it. “We just asked the farmers to identify themselves when they spoke,” he said. “That worked fine.”

Timothy Donlon figured out when not to use technology after he and his wife set up his small medical testing lab last year in Honolulu. Mr. Donlon’s four-employee company, Ohana Genetics, specializes in looking for abnormalities in chromosomes, the microscopic package of genes at the core of all human cells. The set-up is pretty high-tech, with robotic equipment taking the place of technicians hunched over microscopes, and a line of high-powered personal computers working overnight to crunch through the data on up to 150 samples. Mr. Donlon is even setting up the tools he needs to oversee the system and review individual samples from off-site. But when it comes to marketing, Mr. Donlon isn’t waiting for the world to find his Web site. Rather, he makes a point of personally visiting every hospital and medical center he can get to in order to sell his service. “Just setting up a Web site wouldn’t work,” he said. “We compete on the fast turnaround that doctors want, but the people who make the buying decisions don’t pay attention to that, they just decide on price. So I go to the hospitals to try to motivate doctors to ask for us.”

To be sure, I.T. now offers the opportunity to increase interactions with customers, thanks to Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other social networking tools. For some companies, that’s an unalloyed boon. Allen Murabayashi and Grover Sanschagrin, co-founders of PhotoShelter, a Web service based in New York that helps professional photographers showcase their work, have no misgivings about having to spend, respectively, 25 percent and a hair-raising 80 percent of their time working on the company’s blog and social networking presence.

But for other companies these tools can be double-edged swords. Lex Stevens, who operates the Back Bay Hardware store in Boston, notes that while social media have been good for his business, the effort to keep up an online presence pulls him away from the many other tasks he needs to be on top of. “Finding content and gathering together the information to generate content for my social media is time consuming,” Mr. Stevens said by e-mail. He’s hoping to find a tech tool that will search out the right sort of content for him to post and Tweet about, but in the meantime he’s been forced to curtail his social networking.

I recently had a chance to speak about the limits of technology with Chris McCann, president of 1-800-Flowers 1-800-Flowers .com, one of the great early success stories of the Web (Mr. McCann is the brother of Jim McCann, company founder). Mr. McCann said that in the 1990s he envisioned the Web as allowing the company to build relationships with customers and flower-shop partners that would surpass those of phone calls and in-person contact — but it never did. Now he wonders if social networks might

provide those deeper relationships, but he's not sure they will. By most measures, the company is doing great with social media, having picked up some 50,000 new "likes" on Facebook during the two weeks before Valentine's day. "But we don't know what the value of these new relationships is yet," he said. "We'll treat these folks well, and we'll just have to see how it works out."

For now, he added, most of the magic still happens on the phone, in the shops, and at meetings — partly because most people still aren't fully comfortable with social networks and also because a few lines of text can't always get across the nuances that we hear in a voice or see with body language. "We're handling people's emotions," he said. "We try never to forget that."

For most companies, the obvious way to go is a careful compromise between what gets done online and what happens via phone and face-to-face. The devil is in the details. So discovered Arnold Lewis, president of Ascend Partnerships, which sells a data-protection software package called InformationSafe to small businesses. The company's customer support is entirely Web site- and e-mail-based — until, that is, a customer just doesn't seem to be getting over some hurdle. "When that happens, we pick up the phone and call them," Mr. Lewis said. "Then we can usually clear things right up." And when he hears from a company that's considering making a big bulk purchase of the software as part of a promotion, he's learned he's best off getting on a plane and closing the deal with a good, old-fashioned handshake.

7. Japan Extended Reactor's Life, Despite Warning

TOKYO — Just a month before a powerful earthquake and tsunami crippled the Fukushima Daiichi plant at the center of Japan's nuclear crisis, government regulators approved a 10-year extension for the oldest of the six reactors at the power station despite warnings about its safety.

The regulatory committee reviewing extensions pointed to stress cracks in the backup diesel-powered generators at Reactor No. 1 at the Daiichi plant, according to a summary of its deliberations that was posted on the Web site of Japan's nuclear regulatory agency after each meeting. The cracks made the engines vulnerable to corrosion from seawater and rainwater. The generators are thought to have been knocked out by the tsunami, shutting down the reactor's vital cooling system.

The Tokyo Electric Power Company, which runs the plant, has since struggled to keep the reactor and spent fuel pool from overheating and emitting radioactive materials.

Several weeks after the extension was granted, the company admitted that it had failed to inspect 33 pieces of equipment related to the cooling systems, including water pumps and diesel generators, at the power station's six reactors, according to findings published on the agency's Web site shortly before the earthquake.

Regulators said that "maintenance management was inadequate" and that the "quality of inspection was insufficient."

Less than two weeks later, the earthquake and tsunami set off the crisis at the power station.

The decision to extend the reactor's life, and the inspection failures at all six reactors, highlight what critics describe as unhealthy ties between power plant operators and the Japanese regulators that oversee them. Expert panels like the one that recommended the extension are drawn mostly from academia to backstop bureaucratic decision-making and rarely challenge the agencies that hire them.

Because public opposition to nuclear power makes it hard to build new power plants, nuclear operators are lobbying to extend their reactors' use beyond the 40-year statutory limit, despite uneven safety records and a history of cover-ups. The government, eager to expand the use of nuclear energy and reduce the reliance on imported fossil fuels, has been largely sympathetic. Such extensions are also part of a global trend in which aging plants have been granted longer lives.

Over the next decade in Japan, 13 more reactors — and the other 5 at the Fukushima Daiichi plant — will also turn 40, raising the prospect of gargantuan replacement costs. That is one reason critics contend that the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency's committee in charge of inspecting aging nuclear power plants may play down its own findings.

In approving the extension in early February, regulators told Tokyo Electric to monitor potential damage from radiation to the reactor's pressure vessel, which holds fuel rods; corrosion of the spray heads used to douse the suppression chamber; corrosion of key bolts at the reactor; and conduction problems in a gauge that measures the flow of water into the reactor, according to a report published in early February.

The committee, which convened six times to review findings gathered during inspections of the No. 1 unit at the power station, found that Tokyo Electric had met all required protections from earthquakes. Inspectors, however, had spent just three days inspecting the No. 1 unit, a period that industry experts say was far too brief because assessing the earthquake risk to a nuclear plant is one of the most complex engineering problems in the world.

Despite these doubts, the committee recommended that Tokyo Electric be given permission to run the No. 1 unit, which was built by General Electric and began operating in 1971, for an additional decade. During the approval process, the company claimed that the reactor was capable of running for 60 years.

Mitsuhiko Tanaka, an engineer who worked on the design of the reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, said the reactors there were outdated, particularly their small suppression chambers, which increased the risk that pressure would build up within the reactor, a fault eliminated in newer reactors. Since the tsunami, officials at Fukushima Daiichi have tried to relieve rising pressure inside the reactors, several times resorting to releasing radioactive steam into the atmosphere, a measure that in turn has contributed to the contamination of food and water in the area.

"It was about time the reactor was replaced," Mr. Tanaka said. "The tsunami would have caused great damage, regardless. But the pipes, the machinery, the computers, the entire reactors — they are just old, and that did not help." Somewhat younger reactors, Nos. 2, 3, and 4, also suffered extensive damage.

Regulators approved the 10-year extension even though aging reactors at Tokyo Electric, as well as those at other power companies, had suffered a series of problems as far back as a decade ago. Attempts to cover them up and manipulate data, particularly by Tokyo Electric, the country's biggest utility, underscored not only the problems of the nuclear industry but also Japan's weakness in regulating it. The company has admitted wrongdoing.

A Tokyo Electric spokesman, Naoki Tsunoda, said: "We are committed to carrying out proper inspections in the future. We will study why this has happened and endeavor to inform the public."

In 2000, a whistle-blower at a separate company that was contracted to inspect the reactors told regulators about cracks in the stainless steel shrouds that cover reactor cores at Fukushima's Daiichi plant. But regulators simply told the company to look into the issue, allowing the reactors to keep operating.

Nuclear regulators effectively sat on the information about the cracks in the shrouds, said Eisaku Sato, the governor of Fukushima Prefecture at the time and an opponent of nuclear power. He said the prefecture itself and the communities hosting the nuclear plants did not learn about the cracks until regulators publicized them in 2002, more than two years after the whistle-blower reported the cracks.

In 2003, regulators forced Tokyo Electric to suspend operations at its 10 reactors at two plants in Fukushima and 7 reactors in Niigata Prefecture after whistle-blowers gave information to Fukushima Prefecture showing that the company had falsified inspection records and hid flaws over 16 years to save on repair costs. In the most serious incident, Tokyo Electric hid the large cracks in the shrouds.

"An organization that is inherently untrustworthy is charged with ensuring the safety of Japan's nuclear plants," said Mr. Sato, governor from 1988 to 2006. "So the problem is not limited to Tokyo Electric, which has a long history of cover-ups, but it's the whole system that is flawed. That's frightening."

Like many critics of Japan's nuclear industry, Mr. Sato attributed weak oversight to a conflict of interest that he said essentially stripped the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency of its effectiveness. The agency, which is supposed to act as a watchdog, is under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which has a general policy of encouraging the development of Japan's nuclear industry.

The ministry and the agency, in turn, share cozy ties with Tokyo Electric and other operators — some of which offer lucrative jobs to former ministry officials in a practice known as “amakudari,” or descent from heaven.

“They’re all birds of a feather,” Mr. Sato, 71, said in an interview at his home in Koriyama, in Fukushima Prefecture.

The Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organization, which is supposed to provide a second layer of scrutiny, is understaffed and largely an advisory group. Masatoshi Toyoda, a former vice president at Tokyo Electric who, among other jobs, ran the company’s nuclear safety division, said the organization should be strengthened. The United States had a similar setup until the 1970s, when Congress broke up the old Atomic Energy Commission into the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

“Like the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the United States, they should have full-time engineers who should check the safety of power plants,” Mr. Toyoda said. “I’ve been telling the government that the system should be changed, but any changes to Japan’s nuclear policy take a long time.”

Hidehiko Nishiyama, deputy director general of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, said that “there are no problems with the current safety setup.” He added that the extension of the life of Reactor No. 1 “was approved on the understanding that any problems found would be fixed by Tokyo Electric.”

But critics say the approval process for extending the lifespan of reactors is fraught with problems. Limited amounts of information are disclosed before approval is granted. The government reviews only reports submitted by utilities, and does not conduct its own tests to determine whether those reports are true, according to Chihiro Kamisawa, a nuclear safety researcher at the Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center, Japan’s most vocal nuclear watchdog.

- **Political**

1. U.S. Africa Command Seen Taking Key Role

WASHINGTON — When the United States Africa Command was created four years ago, it was the military’s first “smart power” command. It has no assigned troops and no headquarters in Africa itself, and one of its two top deputies is a seasoned American diplomat.

Indeed, the command, known as Africom, is intended largely to train and assist the armed forces of 53 African nations and to work with the State Department and other American agencies to strengthen social, political and economic programs in the region, including improving H.I.V. awareness in African militaries and removing land mines.

Now the young, untested command and its new boss, Gen. Carter F. Ham, find themselves at their headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, setting aside public diplomacy talks and other civilian-military duties to lead the initial phase of a complex, multinational shooting war with Libya.

“Are they up to the task?” said Kenneth J. Menkhaus, an Africa specialist at Davidson College in North Carolina. “So far, I’d say yes. Down the road, though, if it gets messier, it’ll test the capacity of Africom. This is certainly a baptism by fire.”

The command has faced difficulties in its first few years. Initial statements about its mission and scope of activity alarmed some African leaders and State Department officials, who feared the Pentagon was trying to militarize diplomacy and development on the continent. These concerns led the command to set up its headquarters in Germany.

Congressional critics have warned that the command is understaffed and poorly resourced for challenges that include countering fighters with an affiliate of Al Qaeda in North Africa, Islamic extremists in Somalia, drug traffickers in West Africa and armed rebels in Congo. Other Congressional officials cast doubt on the command’s ability to gauge progress in its programs.

“Africom is generally not measuring long-term effects of activities,” concluded a report issued last July by the Government Accountability Office, an investigative arm of Congress. “Without assessing activities, Africom lacks information to evaluate their effectiveness, make informed future planning decisions and allocate resources.”

Military officials say General Ham’s arrival three weeks ago to replace Gen. William E. Ward, who retired, will inject a new dynamic into the command and its 1,500-member headquarters staff. More than 1,000 other troops are conducting training, security assistance or other temporary duties in Africa at any given time.

General Ham, 59, a native of Cleveland, is one of the Army’s stars, having risen from private to four-star commander in a 38-year career. He has commanded troops in northern Iraq, overseen military operations at the Pentagon’s Joint Staff and helped lead reviews into the Defense Department’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy and the fatal shootings at Fort Hood, Tex.

The son of a Navy PT boat officer in World War II, General Ham enlisted in the Army in 1973 as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division. After earning his officer commission, he served as an adviser to a Saudi Arabian National Guard brigade, commanded the Army’s storied First Infantry Division and, until his current assignment, led all Army forces in Europe, when he worked closely with many of the same European allies now engaged in the Libya operation.

“He’s inclusive and a great team builder,” said Lt. Gen. Mark P. Hertling, who earlier this month succeeded General Ham in the Army’s European command. “He’s not only a great soldier who studies his profession, he’s the kind of normal guy you can drink a beer with.”

Perhaps General Ham’s most wrenching tour was commanding American forces in northern Iraq as the insurgency was strengthening. On Dec. 21, 2004, a suicide bomber killed 22 people, including 18 Americans, in a dining hall at a military base in Mosul. General Ham arrived on the scene shortly after the explosion.

When he returned to Fort Lewis, Wash., a few months later, he sought help for posttraumatic stress, received counseling from a chaplain and later publicly discussed his treatment. “You need somebody to assure you that it’s not abnormal,” General Ham told USA Today. “It’s not abnormal to have difficulty sleeping. It’s not abnormal to be jumpy at loud sounds.”

General Ham’s willingness to speak openly about his personal combat stress sent shock waves through a service in which seeking help has often been seen as a sign of weakness.

That plain-spoken attitude has earned plaudits from top Defense Department officials.

“During our ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ review, he was our conscience and our center of gravity,” said Jeh C. Johnson, the Pentagon’s general counsel and co-author with General Ham of the department’s report on the effects of allowing openly gay men and women to serve in the military. “I always made sure never to get out ahead of him.”

For the time being, General Ham will oversee the American side of the Libya operations, briefing President Obama and his top security aides from Stuttgart, as he did on Sunday, and providing broad guidance and direction to the mission’s tactical commander, Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III, who is in the Mediterranean aboard a command ship, the Mount Whitney.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said on Sunday that the United States would turn control of the Libya military operation over to a coalition — probably led either by the French and British or by NATO — “in a matter of days.” But the American military would continue to fly missions.

General Ham, in an e-mail message on Sunday, said plans for the change in command were already under way. “It’s fairly complex to do that while simultaneously conducting operations,” he said. “But we’ll figure it out.”

2. Ex-Governor of Minnesota Enters Race for President

WASHINGTON — Former Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota became the first major Republican to enter the 2012 presidential race, announcing an exploratory committee on Monday that formalizes an ambition that has been steadily building for more than a year.

“There is a brighter future for America,” Mr. Pawlenty said in a video posted on his Facebook page. “We know what we need to do: grow jobs, limit government spending, tackle entitlements.”

In a two-minute message that was set to music, Mr. Pawlenty did not specify how he would address entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare, but he introduced himself as a candidate with working-class roots who would focus on lifting the economy, creating jobs and limiting government intervention in business.

Mr. Pawlenty has been visiting early-voting states for months, recruiting contributors and courting activists who are influential in selecting the Republican nominee to challenge President Obama. He has struggled to break away from the party’s crowded field, so his announcement was intended to provide a head start raising money and building a campaign organization.

“We need to encourage the dreamers and innovators,” Mr. Pawlenty said, “the small-business owners, the hard workers, the brave men and women throughout this country’s history that have asked for nothing more than the freedom to work hard and get ahead without government getting in the way.”

The development on Monday was the latest step in what has become a multilayered process of running for president. Even though Mr. Pawlenty had signed his paperwork on Friday, it was not delivered to the Federal Election Commission until Monday afternoon, when his advisers had decided to time the announcement for greater exposure.

He is the first of nearly a half-dozen Republicans who are expected to take steps to open exploratory committees, which allows candidates to raise money and hire staff members to test a presidential run. He is opening his campaign headquarters in downtown Minneapolis.

At this point four years ago, nearly 20 Democrats and Republicans had established exploratory committees or disclosed their intentions to run for president. Newt Gingrich, a former House speaker, is already raising money but has stopped short of filing an exploratory committee. Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi and former Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts also are moving closer toward making their intentions known.

Mr. Pawlenty, 50, disclosed his intentions on Monday morning in a conference call to contributors, whom he has been quietly courting in a series of events across the country that he calls “friend-raisers.”

His name recognition has grown since 2008, when he was a finalist to be Senator John McCain’s vice-presidential running mate, a job that ultimately went to Sarah Palin.

3. Target in Libya Is Clear; Intent Is Not

WASHINGTON — All the deliberations over what military action to take against Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya have failed to answer the most fundamental question: Is it merely to protect the Libyan population from the government, or is it intended to fulfill President Obama’s objective declared two weeks ago that Colonel Qaddafi “must leave”?

“We are not going after Qaddafi,” Vice Adm. William E. Gortney said at the Pentagon on Sunday afternoon, even as reports from Tripoli described a loud explosion and billowing smoke at the Qaddafi compound, suggesting that military units or a command post there might have been a target.

That was a vivid sign that whatever their declared intentions, the military strikes by Britain, France and the United States that began on Saturday may threaten the government itself.

But there is also the risk that Colonel Qaddafi may not be dislodged by air power alone. That leaves the question of whether the United States and its allies are committing enough resources to win the fight. The delay in starting the onslaught complicated the path toward its end. It took 22 days from the time that Colonel Qaddafi’s forces first opened fire on protesters in Libya for the United Nations-backed military assault to

begin. By the time American cruise missiles reached Libyan targets on Saturday, Colonel Qaddafi's troops, reinforced by mercenaries, had pushed Libyan rebels from the edge of Tripoli in western Libya all the way back to Benghazi in the east, and were on the verge of overtaking that last rebel stronghold.

But the strike, when it came, landed hard, turning the government force outside Benghazi into wreckage and encouraging the rebels to regroup.

"I hope it's not too late," Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, said on the CNN program "State of the Union" Sunday. "Obviously, if we had taken this step a couple of weeks ago, a no-fly zone would probably have been enough," he said. "Now a no-fly zone is not enough. There needs to be other efforts made."

Experts on the region, and even a few administration officials, acknowledge that the job of getting Colonel Qaddafi to step down might have been easier if the international assault had begun when rebels seemed to have held the upper hand, rather than when the anti-Qaddafi rebellion was compressed into Benghazi and its environs.

For Mr. Obama, who has explicitly said that Colonel Qaddafi has lost any right to govern, the conundrum is that the United Nations mandate does not authorize his removal. So Mr. Obama now says the goal is limited: to use force to protect the Libyan people and allow humanitarian aid to get through.

On Sunday, Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on "Meet the Press" on NBC that regime change was not the point of the military assault. "Certainly the goals of this campaign right now, again, are limited, and it isn't about seeing him go," Admiral Mullen said, referring to Colonel Qaddafi. "It's about supporting the United Nations resolution, which talked to limiting or eliminating his ability to kill his own people as well as support the humanitarian effort."

Asked if the military mission could be accomplished and Colonel Qaddafi still remain in power, Admiral Mullen replied: "That's certainly potentially one outcome."

At the same time, he said, the allies would like the government forces to return to their garrisons, but he said nothing about what the rebels should do under the alliance's protective umbrella.

House Republican leaders were quick to point out on Sunday that the objective of the operation was being left unclear.

"The president is the commander in chief, but the administration has a responsibility to define for the American people, the Congress, and our troops what the mission in Libya is, better explain what America's role is in achieving that mission, and make clear how it will be accomplished," Speaker John A. Boehner said in a statement.

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Representative Howard P. McKeon of California, asked: "Are our goals aimed at protecting civilians in Libya, or the removal of Muammar Qaddafi from power? In either case, to what extent and for how long will military resources be utilized?"

Even some allies, including members of the Arab League, appeared to be wondering that.

Whatever the overt objectives, the damage to Colonel Qaddafi's grip on power is already significant. The backbone of his air defense network is in ruins, his air force is effectively grounded, his ground forces in the east were pummeled, and Admiral Mullen said his logistical supply lines were about to be cut.

And while Colonel Qaddafi was not a target, Admiral Gortney said, "If he happens to be in a place, if he's inspecting a surface-to-air missile site, and we don't have any idea if he's there or not, then. ..." He did not complete the sentence.

If Colonel Qaddafi manages to remain in power, that will leave the United States and the United Nations-backed mission looking like a failure, foreign policy experts from all sides of the political spectrum said. "Barack Obama told Qaddafi to go; if Qaddafi doesn't go, America will look diminished in the eyes of the world." said Steven Clemons, senior fellow at the New American Foundation.

Stephen J. Hadley, a former national security adviser to President George W. Bush and an architect of the 2003 Iraq invasion, said at a forum in San Francisco on Saturday that he feared the limited approach “could set us up for failure.”

“I don’t quite see what is behind the strategy in Libya,” Mr. Hadley said, speaking while a small clutch of protesters — mostly yelling chants about Iraq — were on the streets below. “We are now in a situation where we have a mismatch of what the president said we want to do as a nation, what the U.N. Security Council authorizes, and what we are actually ready to commit in resources.”

Mr. Obama, he said, “wants Qaddafi to go, but the U.N. Security Council resolution says we want to prevent a humanitarian disaster and attacks on civilians, and in terms of resources, the U.S. has been very reluctant to get involved militarily.”

4. Hopes for a Qaddafi Exit, and Worries of What Comes Next.

TRIPOLI — The question has hovered over the Libyan uprising from the moment the first tank commander defected to join his cousins protesting in the streets of Benghazi: Is the battle for Libya the clash of a brutal dictator against a democratic opposition, or is it fundamentally a tribal civil war?

The answer could determine the course of both the Libyan uprising and the results of the Western intervention. In the West’s preferred chain of events, airstrikes enable the rebels to unite with the currently passive residents of the western region around Tripoli, under the banner of an essentially democratic revolution that topples Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi.

He, however, has predicted the opposite: that the revolt is a tribal war of eastern Libya against the west that ends in either his triumph or a prolonged period of chaos.

“It is a very important question that is terribly near impossible to answer,” said Paul Sullivan, a political scientist at Georgetown University who has studied Libya. “It could be a very big surprise when Qaddafi leaves and we find out who we are really dealing with.”

The behavior of the fledgling rebel government in Benghazi so far offers few clues to the rebels’ true nature. Their governing council is composed of secular-minded professionals — lawyers, academics, businesspeople — who talk about democracy, transparency, human rights and the rule of law. But their commitment to those principles is just now being tested as they confront the specter of potential Qaddafi spies in their midst, either with rough tribal justice or a more measured legal process.

Like the Qaddafi government, the operation around the rebel council is rife with family ties. And like the chiefs of the Libyan state news media, the rebels feel no loyalty to the truth in shaping their propaganda, claiming nonexistent battlefield victories, asserting they were still fighting in a key city days after it fell to Qaddafi forces, and making vastly inflated claims of his barbaric behavior.

Skeptics of the rebels’ commitment to democracy point to Libya’s short and brutal history. Until Colonel Qaddafi’s revolution in 1969, Libya could scarcely be considered a country, divided as it was under its former king into three separate provinces, each with myriad tribes of rural, semi-nomadic herders. Retaliatory tribal killings and violence were the main source of justice.

Although Colonel Qaddafi worked hard to forge the provinces into a single state, he did little to calm the culture of violence, among other things ordering his revolutionary committees to shoot the “stray dogs” of the revolution and staging public hangings of his political opponents in neighborhood squares or even school gymnasiums.

And, historians say, Colonel Qaddafi has often sought to capitalize on the bellicose culture of many tribes, including supplying arms to Sahara tribes to fight others across the border in Chad or, more recently, arming the tribes of the central coast to fight against the eastern rebels.

In the neighborhoods of the capital that have staged major peaceful protests against Colonel Qaddafi, many have volunteered — speaking on the condition of anonymity — that their demonstrations were nonviolent mainly because they could not obtain weapons fast enough.

Even one religious leader associated with Sufism — a traditionally pacifist sect something like the Islamic equivalent of the Quakers — lamented his own tribe's lack of guns for the fight.

That stands in sharp contrast to Libya's neighbors, Tunisia and Egypt. In Egypt, in particular, the young leaders of the revolution were so seized with an ethic of nonviolence that in the middle of winning a battle of thrown stones against a loyalist mob, two young protesters said they believed they had lost, simply because they had resorted to violence.

Nor did Colonel Qaddafi's Libya ever do much more than place a veneer over the long-simmering tribal animosities.

The eastern region around Benghazi had always been a hotbed of opposition to the colonel, in part because tribes there had enjoyed the favoritism of the former king, Idriss I, whom the colonel overthrew, while he in turn favored the tribes of the central and western coast.

When the uprising came, many of the most significant defectors — including Gen. Abdul Fattah Younes, the rebel army head and a former interior minister — were members of the eastern tribes.

But the legacy of such tribal rivalries in Libya may in fact be fading, thanks in part to the enormous changes that Colonel Qaddafi — a modernizer, in his idiosyncratic way — helped bring about. Coming to power just before the oil boom, he tapped Libya's new wealth to provide schools, hospitals and other benefits for Libya's desperately poor, semi-nomadic population.

Gradually, Libya became overwhelmingly urban, with about 85 percent of its populations clustered around its two main urban centers — Tripoli and Benghazi.

Though many of the people who flocked to the growing cities continued to identify closely by tribe, they now live mixed together. Many from eastern tribes now live in western Tripoli, and tens of thousands of members of the predominantly western tribes, Warfalla and Tarhuna, which form the core of Colonel Qaddafi's support, now live in Benghazi and last weekend staged a major public demonstration there calling on their western cousins to join the revolt.

What's more, after trying for a time to block out any outside influence — for a while he banned the teaching of English, and he still insists that curriculums center on his eccentric Green Book — Colonel Qaddafi realized that prosperity depended in part on lessons from abroad.

The result might be called the Seif generation — a rising cohort of affluent, English-speaking young Libyans educated abroad like his Anglophile son Seif al-Islam el-Qaddafi, who became the public champion of a more open and democratic system. (During the revolt, though, he has sounded as determined as his father to crush the rebels.)

5. Muscovite Lives, Entangled In History

MOSCOW -- The Meyersons of Moscow are not oligarchs or ex-K.G.B. agents, gangsters or alcoholics. They are a pair of public school teachers who have little in common with the stock characters often depicted in tales of this land. They disdain Communism, but warmly recall childhoods in the 1970s. They bristle at what they believe Vladimir V. Putin has done to Russia, but don't deny that things are far better now.

Their ambivalence about their country's standing, nearly two decades after Communism's fall, is at the heart of "My Perestroika," a new documentary that burrows into the lives of five Muscovites who came of age in the twilight of the Soviet Union.

Russian history has long been dominated by big personalities -- Mr. Putin, the prime minister and former president, is just the latest -- but this film largely shuns them, choosing instead to examine how ordinary people have endured the turmoil of recent decades. "My Perestroika," which opens Wednesday at the IFC Center in New York before a national release, offers a chance to eavesdrop on kitchen table conversations as Russians ponder what has become of their world.

Interviews with the five subjects are twinned with images from home movies, newsreels and party propaganda, an arresting visual scrapbook of the Soviet period.

The filmmaker, Robin Hessman, 38, is an American who lived for long periods in Russia after college, and now splits her time between Brooklyn and Boston. She worked on "My Perestroika" for six years, shooting much of it herself and spending countless hours tracking down vintage footage and music. She said production costs were a bit more than \$750,000.

Ms. Hessman said she had become fascinated by the generation of Russians now in their 40s, because they straddled two eras. "I wanted to show how complicated it is for a society, and how complicated it is for an individual, to make this transition," she said. "The moments where we are in our lives, on these huge, sweeping waves of politics and history, affect us in ways that we can't even begin to understand at the time that they are happening."

Ms. Hessman's timing may be fortunate, given how the uprisings in the Middle East seem to echo those that brought down Communism in the Soviet Union and its satellites. "My Perestroika" provides hints at what may await Egyptians who believe that with the old order toppled, they can expect radically positive changes.

Boris Meyerson, known by his nickname, Borya, and his wife, Lyubov, took to the ramparts in 1991 to defend Mikhail S. Gorbachev's reforms against Soviet hardliners who sent tanks into the streets in an attempted coup. Now, Mr. Meyerson is so disgusted by the tightly controlled political system under Mr. Putin that he does not vote.

"You know, the ideas that burned in a person's heart in the early 1990s, they were profaned," Mr. Meyerson says in the film. "And there was nothing left to fight for."

Besides the Meyersons and their precocious son, Ms. Hessman trains her camera on three of their childhood neighbors: Olga Durikova, a saleswoman for a company that rents billiard tables; Ruslan Stupin, who used to play guitar in a well-known punk-rock band and now sometimes strums for money on the sidewalks; and Andrei Yevgrafov, a businessman.

Mr. Yevgrafov expresses some of the most strident criticism of Russia's tilt toward autocracy, though he has benefited most from the new hurly-burly capitalism, opening a chain of stores selling French dress shirts and moving into a luxury development.

"Four hundred years of serfdom -- it's just the mentality here," Mr. Yevgrafov says. "Tomorrow they'll make Putin the national idol, or whatever you call him, our shining sun, our messenger from God. I don't get it. It's some kind of psychosis."

The home movies are one of the more striking facets of "My Perestroika," particularly those that come from Mr. Meyerson, whose father was obsessed with recording every event.

"It was one of those gifts for filmmakers that you can't even dream of -- beyond your wildest dreams," Ms. Hessman said of Mr. Meyerson's trove of eight-millimeter reels. "Because not only did his father film Borya. He went into the school, so he filmed the others as well." (Four of the five went to school together.)

"This is the closest thing that you get to a true depiction of reality, because there is no agenda behind filming it, beyond preserving memories of family," she said.

"My Perestroika" is intended to be a window onto public opinion, though in truth, its subjects are not altogether average Russians. Muscovites, like New Yorkers, are considered a breed apart by their compatriots. While the Meyersons are history teachers, they work at School No. 57 in Moscow, one of the country's elite public schools. Mr. Meyerson has a beard and ponytail, not to mention some Jewish roots.

Still, much of what is said in the film can be heard in urban centers across Russia. The Kremlin may have an iron grip in the post-Soviet era, but the old privations are long gone. "My Perestroika" itself is evidence of today's freedoms. It would be hard to imagine the Soviets allowing an American filmmaker to shadow five comrades for many months. Or those comrades feeling comfortable enough to express such judgments.

"What we had before -- that was beyond the pale, beyond good and evil," Mr. Meyerson says in the film. "It needed to be destroyed, and thank God it was. Of course what Putin says is disgusting, but I understand why he is saying it. It does make me sick, but it's not like it used to be. Back then, you not only felt sick, you wanted to die. So when you compare it to that, everything now is just fine.'

6. Egyptian Voters Approve Constitutional Changes

CAIRO — Egyptian voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum on constitutional changes on Sunday that will usher in rapid elections, with the results underscoring the strength of established political organizations, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, and the weakness of emerging liberal groups.

More than 14.1 million voters, or 77.2 percent, approved the constitutional amendments; 4 million, or 22.8 percent, voted against them. The turnout of 41 percent among the 45 million eligible voters broke all records for recent elections, according to the Egyptian government.

“This is the first real referendum in Egypt’s history,” said Mohamed Ahmed Attia, the chairman of the supreme judicial committee that supervised the elections, in announcing the results. “We had an unprecedented turnout because after Jan. 25 people started to feel that their vote would matter.”

President Hosni Mubarak was forced from power last month, 18 days after demonstrations against his three decades in power began Jan. 25. The referendum result paved the way for early legislative elections as early as June and a presidential race possibly in August. The ruling military council had sought the rapid timetable to ensure its own speedy exit from running the country.

The military council has been somewhat vague about the next steps. But Maj. Gen. Mamdouh Shaheen told the newspaper Al Shorouk in an interview published Sunday that the generals would issue a constitutional declaration to cover the changes and then set dates for the vote once the results were announced.

The Muslim Brotherhood and remnant elements of the National Democratic Party, which dominated Egyptian politics for decades, were the main supporters of the referendum. They argued that the election timetable would ensure a swift return to civilian rule.

Members of the liberal wing of Egyptian politics mostly opposed the measure, saying that they lacked time to form effective political organizations. They said early elections would benefit the Brotherhood and the old governing party, which they warned would seek to write a constitution that centralizes power, much like the old one.

Voters were asked to either accept or reject eight constitutional amendments as a whole — all of them designed to establish the foundations for coming elections. Most addressed some of the worst excesses of previous years — limiting the president to two four-year terms, for example, to avoid another president staying in office as long as Mr. Mubarak. The amendments were announced Feb. 25 after virtually no public discussion by an 11-member committee of experts chosen by the military.

“It is very, very disappointing,” said Hani Shukrallah, who is active in a new liberal political party and is the editor of Ahram Online, a news Web site.

He and many other opponents of the referendum said religious organizations had spread false rumors, suggesting that voting against the referendum would threaten Article 2 of the Constitution, which cites Islamic law as the main basis for Egyptian law.

“I saw one sign that said, ‘If you vote no you are a follower of America and Baradei, and if you vote yes you are a follower of God,’ ” he said. “The idea is that Muslims will vote yes and Copts and atheists will vote no.”

Mohamed ElBaradei, a former top United Nations nuclear official and a Nobel Prize winner planning to run for president, opposed the amendments, as did Amr Moussa, the secretary general of the Arab League, another potential presidential candidate.

In a vote remarkably free of problems, Mr. Baradei was attacked by a mob when he went to cast his ballot, fleeing a shower of rocks and bottles. His supporters said the mob was paid.

The results called into question how much the expected front-runners were really in tune with Egyptian voters.

Most “no” votes emerged from Cairo and Alexandria, Mr. Shukrallah noted, whereas support flowed in heavily from the provinces.

“The revolution was a revolution of the big cities,” he said. “The provinces are just not there. The secular values that drove the revolution have not reached them.”

Essam el-Erian, the spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, hailed the results, saying that most Egyptians wanted to move forward toward rapid change, though he noted that the 23 percent opposed should not go unnoticed.

“This is an historic day and the start of a new era for Egypt,” he said in an interview. “We are moving away from a bad, autocratic and dictatorial system towards a democratic system. This is the first brick in building our democracy.”

It was the first time the Muslim Brotherhood had campaigned openly since the party was banned in 1954, and the group flexed its full organizational muscle — printing up countless fliers and posters, sending workers out to convince the undecided and driving voters to the polls.

In Cairo and around the country, Egyptians stood patiently in long lines on Saturday to vote, with waiting in the capital well over three hours. Many said they were voting for the first time, participating in the process alone bringing a sense of euphoria.

- **Economic**

1. Inflation and public borrowing add to budget 2011 headaches

George Osborne was handed a double dose of unwelcome pre-budget news on Tuesday when official figures showed inflation leaping to 4.4% and public borrowing hit its highest February level since modern records began in 1993.

With the chancellor putting the finishing touches to his second package of fiscal measures, the rise in inflation put additional pressure on the Bank of England to raise interest rates while the deterioration in the public finances put paid to City hopes that borrowing in 2010-11 would significantly undershoot the government's £148bn target.

The disappointing economic news increases the chances of a cautious package from Osborne on Wednesday. The setback to the public finances gives the chancellor even less scope for budget giveaways and he will see a tough fiscal stance as necessary to prevent the Bank from raising interest rates.

Higher heating costs, the soaring price of oil and mark-ups from clothing and footwear retailers were mainly responsible for the increase in the consumer prices index measure of inflation from 4% to a 28-month high of 4.4%, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Inflation has been rising steadily for the past year, consistently exceeding the government's 2% target and prompting a series of explanatory letters from Bank governor Mervyn King to the chancellor. Three members of the Bank's nine-strong monetary policy committee voted last month for higher interest rates to choke off price pressures in the economy.

An alternative measure of the cost of living – the retail prices index – rose from 5.1% to 5.5% last month. The RPI is used by most wage bargainers as the benchmark for annual pay negotiations.

Hetal Mehta, UK economist at Daiwa, said: "Inflation has jumped to its highest since October 2008, putting the Bank of England under even greater pressure to demonstrate its commitment to hitting its inflation target by hiking interest rates. And this pressure will no doubt intensify as higher commodity prices feed through in the coming months, taking inflation to around 5%."

February's borrowing figures came as a shock to the City, which had been optimistic that overall borrowing for 2010-11 could come in at between £138bn and £140bn following strong tax receipts in January.

But the ONS disclosed that public sector net borrowing last month stood at £10.3bn, more than £2bn higher than in February 2010 and well above the £8bn expected by the City.

The government's preferred measure, PSNB excluding financial sector interventions, rose to £11.8bn. Both measures were the highest for the month of February since 1993. The ONS said the turnaround was explained by the unwinding of exceptional receipts for self-assessed income tax in January, the key month in the financial year for the payment of personal tax.

For the financial year to date, the PSNB excluding financial interventions stood at £123.5bn compared to £136.6bn at the same point in the 2009/10 fiscal year.

2. Ofgem tells energy firms: 'one last chance'

²¹ Available online in <http://www.guardian.co.uk/> (20/03/2011)

Energy regulator's ultimatum gives 'big six' firms two months to reform or face a full-scale competition commission inquiry

Energy companies have been given "one last chance" to stop customers from being ripped off or face a full-scale Competition Commission inquiry.

Ofgem, the energy regulator, said it had found evidence that the 'big six' suppliers – EDF, British Gas, E.ON, RWE npower, Scottish and Southern and Scottish Power – increase customers' bills more quickly when wholesale energy costs go up than they cut them when costs fall.

Alistair Buchanan, chief executive of Ofgem, has also ordered the power companies to simplify the bewildering array of 350 different tariffs available. He said there was still not enough competition in the market. He was speaking as Ofgem announced the results of a four-month investigation into the energy market.

Buchanan said he was giving the industry just two months to fall into line before deciding whether to recommend a full-scale two-year competition investigation. He said the companies would be "on the canvas" after Ofgem had delivered a "left hook" with its new set of demands.

But industry executives said they thought the likelihood of a full investigation was now remote and dismissed his comments as rhetoric.

The main new demand is for energy companies to auction on the open market about 15% of the power they generate, to make it easier for small independent suppliers to compete. The big six enjoy a virtual monopoly as they are all vertically integrated – they have their own power stations to supply their customers. Small suppliers struggle to purchase electricity on the open market.

However, at least two of the big six have already proposed making these changes. Energy experts said the changes would not radically boost competition because only companies with large balance sheets can take the risk of energy prices slumping.

Ofgem also said it would require companies to reduce the complexity of tariffs on offer which make it hard for customers to compare prices and switch supplier. The number of tariffs for customers to choose from has increased by more than 70% since 2008 to almost 350. More deals are likely in the future under the government's Green Deal energy efficiency programme.

Under Ofgem's proposals, companies will only be able to offer a single tariff for each payment method for customers who are not bound by fixed contracts.

Ofgem has also proposed making clearer the requirements it introduced after its last market investigation in 2008 to increase transparency. Since then, companies have had to publish a breakdown of their energy costs and their retail margins every year – but they use different accounting methods. They also have to provide annual energy statements to customers showing how much electricity and gas they use, although many consumers find them confusing.

The regulator also launched an investigation into Scottish Power and why dual fuel customers paying by cheque are charged much more than those on direct debit.

Ofgem's investigation is the 18th inquiry into the energy market by politicians and regulators. With energy companies increasing bills last winter to near-record highs, Ofgem came under pressure again to investigate whether companies were making excessive profits. The industry has been lobbying politicians and the media, warning that if there were a Competition Commission referral, they would delay spending billions of pounds on nuclear power and wind farms until the outcome was clear.

Energy minister Charles Hendry appeared to back the industry last month when he said the big six could be scared off from investing in the UK.

The government is also considering whether to withdraw the regulator's consumer powers. It will announce its decision within weeks of the conclusion of the two-month deadline.

Buchanan denied he had come under political pressure but admitted there was "creative tension" between the government and the regulator: "The government will have its views on certain things. But we will have our own view and will express it."

Dieter Helm, an economist specialising in energy regulation and a former government adviser, criticised the Ofgem demands as little more than a "sticking plaster".

He said: "I would have thought there was a prima facie case for investigation. They should say 'fair enough let's bring in a third party'. A more substantial investigation would be sensible and clear the air. This continuous set of interventions is hardly helpful from a company point of view."

He claimed Ofgem wanted to avoid a Competition Commission referral because it would examine the regulator's role in setting up the current system. "It looks like they were desperate to avoid going to the Competition Commission. It's more sticking plaster. It would call into question Ofgem's past judgment."

The type of fiendishly complex tariff that Ofgem wants to outlaw can be found advertised on the website of British Gas.

The UK's largest energy supplier offers a discount of up to £67 to customers on dual electricity and gas tariffs who are paying by direct debit, but this only applies to their 'tier 2' consumption, the cheaper rate everyone pays after they have used a certain amount of energy.

Gas customers get a discount of 0.196p/kWh, up to a maximum of £16.25 (inc VAT) per quarter (or £5.42 per month for monthly billing customers). Electricity customers receive a discount of 1.873p/kWh up to a maximum of £10 (inc VAT) per quarter (or £3.33 per month for monthly billing customers).

According to British Gas, the discount is "based on average annual consumption of 16,500kWh for gas and 3,300kWh for single rate electricity as at 28th February 2011, is rounded and includes VAT at 5%. Discount received varies according to seasonal consumption." Simple then.

Mike O'Connor, chief executive of Consumer Focus, said: "Consumers have less confidence in energy companies than in any other sector – they feel that prices aren't fair, that tariffs are too complex and that the market doesn't treat them well."

3. Falklands oil bonanza hopes revived while price climbs again

Hopes of an oil bonanza in the Falkland Islands have been revived after a positive update from Rockhopper Exploration, one of the many UK companies drilling in the area. The news came as the price of crude continued to rise thanks to the military action in Libya and strong demand for hydrocarbons from Japan.

Results from the Falklands – whose ownership is still disputed by Argentina – have been mixed, the most notable recent setback being Desire Petroleum's decision in January to abandon a key well after failing to find oil.

But on Monday Rockhopper said an appraisal well at its Sea Lion discovery area had discovered enough evidence of oil to suggest it was commercially viable. The rig involved in the testing, the Ocean Guardian, will now move to drill Desire's Ninky prospect, where Rockhopper has a 7.5% interest, before coming back to Sea Lion for more appraisal wells. The news sent Rockhopper's shares soaring 70.75p to 287.75p, a 33% increase, while other explorers in the area also benefited. Desire climbed 3.25p to 40p, Argos Resources added 1.75p to 34.75p and Falkland Oil & Gas rose 0.5p to 80p.

Charlie Sharp, an analyst at Matrix, said: "This was a crunch well for Rockhopper; failure would have raised enormous questions about the viability of the Sea Lion discovery. But the result appears to have matched or beaten expectations, raising the likelihood of a commercial development. There are still significant obstacles

related to the scale of project, the need for a partner (greater reserves and preferably another field would be helpful), infrastructure and political issues. However, [now] the story looks back on track."

Meanwhile Brent crude climbed nearly \$1.50 to \$115.50 a barrel by the time London's equity market closed, following the Operation Odyssey Dawn attacks in Libya. Analysts predicted that the strikes against Colonel Gaddafi could push oil above its recent highs, with Brent tipped to break through \$120 a barrel.

"The sell-off in the oil price on Friday afternoon proved to be short-lived with the events in the Middle East over the weekend lifting oil back to its recent highs," said Jane Foley, senior strategist at Rabobank.

The oil price has been unsettled in recent weeks. Brent broke through \$100 a barrel in early February as the Egyptian uprising took hold. The Libyan conflict has added to the pressure, with the International Energy Agency predicting that the country's oil output will be severely curtailed for some time.

Libya is one of the largest oil producers in the region, but production had already almost stopped. Military operations in the region could also hamper supplies from other countries. But some analysts are confident that Saudi Arabia can increase production to compensate.

Mike Wittner, head of commodities research at Société Générale, said oil traders were trying to calculate how long Libyan production could be offline. "We could end up by having two countries or a protracted civil war," he said.

With Japan's nuclear power industry disrupted by the earthquake and tsunami, the country is now buying more oil to cover its energy gap. Reuters reported that Japan has bought all the available stock of some types of crude oil in the Asian markets, which is expected to push prices higher.

In the UK, the high oil price has led to record petrol prices. Chancellor George Osborne is expected to scrap scheduled increases in fuel duties in the budget, and also freeze air passenger duty.

4. Ofcom cues up 4G mobile phone auction for 2012

Regulator aims to enable high-speed internet connectivity around UK while also guaranteeing competition

The communications regulator Ofcom is planning its largest-ever auction of mobile phone spectrum in 2012 with the aim of enabling high-speed internet connectivity around the UK while also guaranteeing competition.

The rights to "fourth generation" (4G), also known as "Long-Term Evolution" (LTE), radio spectrum – which enables connections at speeds of up to 100Mbps, about 25 times faster than the average broadband connection now in use at home – will be auctioned off in five chunks. Ofcom says that to guarantee competition in the future market it will limit both the minimum and maximum amounts of spectrum that any bidder can win.

That, it says, should ensure that a balance of competition is maintained between the existing four mobile networks – Vodafone, Everything Everywhere (Orange and T-Mobile), O2 and 3.

The spectrum to be auctioned is being freed up by the "digital switchover" from analogue to digital TV which is being rolled out across the UK now.

The UK was one of the first countries to auction off 3G spectrum in 2000, which raised £22bn. However it has since fallen behind other countries, where 4G LTE systems have been installed and used: in the US the Verizon network has this year introduced LTE connectivity, and Germany has had a successful auction of frequencies that can be used for it. In the UK the auction was delayed by mobile phone companies which objected to Ofcom proposals for the auction.

Despite offering a larger amount of bandwidth – about 180MHz of spectrum split between the 800MHz, 1.8GHz and 2.6GHz frequencies – the 4G auction is not expected to raise anything close to the amount raised

by the 3G auction of 100MHz of bandwidth. Mobile networks are more cautious now about spending projections, although 4G connections could enable high-speed connections almost all over the country.

A key factor will be which companies gain access to low-frequency bandwidth around the 800MHz mark, which is more effective for connections over long distances such as in rural areas. The higher-frequency bandwidth will be more effective for higher-speed connections over short ranges, such as cities.

Two of the mobile operators, 3 and Everything Everywhere (the combined Orange and T-Mobile) protested in January, after Ofcom allowed the two oldest networks, Vodafone and O2, to "re-farm" low-frequency spectrum that they had been allocated when the mobile networks were first set up in the 1980s for 3G connections. The other two networks, and especially 3, which gained its bandwidth at the 3G auction in 2000, say that gives the two older networks an unfair advantage in the race to offer 4G.

However Ofcom does not seem to have allowed for this in its rules for the auction.

"Our role as the independent regulator is to award this spectrum in a way that secures the best use of the spectrum for the benefit of citizens and consumers in the UK," the Ofcom chief executive, Ed Richards, said.

"That is why we are proposing to design the auction in a way that not only encourages investment but also promotes competition and delivers wide coverage of services."

The auctions will have "floors" that will mean that auctions in which at least four companies do not win enough spectrum to provide higher-quality data services will be re-run. There will also be "caps" on the amount of low-frequency spectrum that any bidder can win, and on the total amount of spectrum any bidder can win.

5. Image of France as a generous welfare state marred by grim reality

Hervé Boulhol, the OECD's France expert, says the French finances have deteriorated for the last 35 years.

Thousands will pour into the Galeries Lafayette this week to enjoy the last few days of the spring sales and beat the recession. Tourists and Parisians will find huge discounts on designer clothes on every floor of the ornately domed department store that dominates Boulevard Haussman, Paris's main shopping street.

As a measure of confidence, the sales present a gloomy picture of France's middle classes and their appetite for shopping. Marc Jacobs, Chloé and Lacoste offer 30% discounts. Givenchy dresses are knocked down by 40% and the Galleries' own ranges can be bought for 50% less than the list price. Only Prada, Dior and a handful of international brands hold their value .

Like their British counterparts, French shoppers can only be enticed with massive bargains. Technically, France like Britain, has escaped recession. But to ordinary French workers, blue and white collar, the pain of the last two years lingers. Shopping is expensive even in the sales, especially when a mix of high taxes and punishing national insurance leaves you with one of the lowest rates of take home pay of any western country. Only Belgium and Hungary exceed its average 45% tax on pay.

France appears to have a natural order still in place with food and wine at its heart and a generous welfare state to support the sick, the elderly and those out of work. Yet this picture disguises a slow decline, made worse by the financial crisis, that leaves the average French family struggling to make ends meet.

Loïc Sadoulet, a professor of economics at the Paris-based business school Insead, says the word that sums up France is disconnect. By which he means the rosy image and the dour reality are miles apart.

A trip on the Paris Metro makes the point. It was always dowdy, if not a little shabby, which most residents and visitors accepted as part of its charm. Now there are major stations closed for refurbishment and some passageways are reminiscent of ancient caves with green slime and blown plaster adding to the effect. The construction at one station of glass screens to prevent passengers falling on the tracks can only be described as makeshift, with bits of wood screwed to the platform floor to hold the metal posts in place.

Paris train workers joined the protests against pension reforms last October and closed the city for several days after similar shutdowns in 2007, 2005 and 2003, over government plans to cut pensions and welfare.

An apocryphal story about France's slide from greatness goes back to the decision in 2005 on where to hold the 2012 Olympics. It is said the top brass from the IOC arrived for a fact-finding mission just as the Metro workers began another strike. A quick look through the records showed that the frequency of strike action meant there was a strong likelihood an Olympic year would be no exception. With little else to separate the bids, London was declared the winner.

True or not, the French establishment vowed revenge and last year president Nicolas Sarkozy pushed through a law forcing vital public services to provide a minimum service during industrial action. Railway workers will be among the state employees caught by the law.

Recent polls have revealed the confusion many French workers feel about the colourful and sometimes violent protests against Sarkozy's welfare cuts and plans to end decades old employment protections. A majority say the reforms are necessary while telling pollsters they support the protests.

This perplexing need to adopt both sides of the argument has paralysed debate, especially on pensions and the totemic 35 hour week. Unlike Germany, which has spent 10 years discussing and implementing reforms with a view to becoming more competitive, the French have reached a position of stasis. Apart from the new strike law and bill freeing universities from state control, pensions reform is almost all Sarkozy has to show for his four years in power.

Next month the Paris-based think tank, the OECD, will publish its biannual report on the French economy. It is expected to argue the Elysée palace must move more quickly to tackle a low growth, high unemployment economy that could spark widespread social unrest .

Antonio Gurría, the OECD boss, will stand next to finance minister Christine Lagarde and politely urge her to free small and medium sized businesses from the straitjacket that has stifled growth and innovation for decades.

Innovation has tended to come from France's industrial behemoths – France Telecom, Renault, engineering firm Alstom and Compagnie Générale des Eaux, the water company that spawned media giant Vivendi and Veolia, a waste management firm that empties many of the UK's dustbins. Others such as Pernod Ricard and the luxury goods maker LVMH dominate their industries. However, the government's support and reliance on their tax revenues has been at the expense of smaller firms.

The strategy is also undermined by the vulnerability of these large businesses to innovative rivals with access to cheap skilled labour. Renault and Peugeot have seen Mercedes, BMW and Audi sweep them aside in the race for Asian customers. Air France remains loss making and the oil business Total, with its close links to France's former colonies, is vulnerable to the changing political weather in many of the world's hotspots. Last week it was forced to suspend production in Libya and is embroiled in bribery allegations over deals in Iraq.

Hervé Boulhol, the OECD's France expert, says the country's finances have deteriorated for the last 35 years. Since the financial crash the situation has worsened. "The public finances must be fixed because while France has been largely immune to the worst of financial crisis, at least so far, it needs to address deep-seated problems," he says.

Boulhol reels off a list of measures that Sarkozy could implement to bring the country more firmly into the 21st century. First it must get more women into work by reforming a tax system that encourages them to stay at home to reduce the household's taxable income. The result is the lowest employment rate among the 30 rich nations assessed by the OECD.

Second, its benefits system, which accounted for 3.5% of GDP in 2005, first in the OECD rankings, must be reformed. It is a source of Gallic pride but the system is largely universal, and boosts the incomes of the richest, as much as the poorest. Boulhol describes it as "regressive spending" that would be better channelled to the poorest. It may be the main reason middle income couples have continued to have children, unlike

Italian and German families, but offering the same benefit to the wealthy is "just about writing cheques to people who are not going to change their behaviour," he says.

A third problem is that France has the largest number of people in retirement as a proportion of the overall population.

The battle last year, which saw school cooks join teachers, factory workers and students on the streets of Paris, Marseille and Lyon, was eventually won by Sarkozy. A law pushing up the minimum retirement age to 62 was passed along with measures that mean younger workers must wait till they are 67 to pick up their full entitlement.

Bruno Tardieu, a full time official at one of the country's most active anti poverty groups, ATD Quart Monde, is concerned that a growing number of working class people are being shut out of the benefits enjoyed by a decreasing number of white collar workers. He says every town is blighted by high unemployment, while 26% of young people are out of work compared with 20% in the UK.

A volunteering scheme designed to put 200,000 young people back into the workplace is directed largely at college educated under 25s and not those with poor qualifications. Tardieu will meet government officials this week to focus on ways to include low skilled people in the scheme.

"It is elitist. Poor groups don't know it exists. It offers very low pay. And it presumes the young person will be housed and subsidised by their parents, which is often not possible for people from poorer families," he says.

Back at Insead, Sadoulet argues that the French fear of Anglo-Saxon capitalism has paralysed the debate and left poor workers to bear the brunt of globalisation.

The number of "year in, year out" workers are growing he says, as companies resist giving full benefits to new employees. After six months, staff accrue full employment rights. A short term, six-month contract can be rolled over for another term, but then the workers must be laid off. Studies show that after a year of work, usually on the minimum wage, these workers spend a year on the dole, hence the "year in year out" tag that dogs them.

"France has spent two decades ignoring the problem and the longer it is left the bigger it will become. The debate about what to do, who should shoulder the cost, and how best to encourage innovation, is in its infancy compared with the UK and Germany." he says.

"There is still a knee jerk reaction that says simply tax the rich some more. But increasingly ambitious people are leaving, they are going to London, to Silicon Valley, and anyway, there simply aren't enough rich people to pay for the current level of welfare bills", Sadoulet says

Union leaders point to the success of the country's banks and risk averse property market as reasons to be cheerful. Here was good reason to avoid the risk taking of the Anglo Saxons.

They have a point. Compare Sarkozy, who pledged €40bn (£35bn) to boost bank finances and a further €320bn to guarantee interbank lending, with Gordon Brown, who had to pledge about £850bn to prop up the British banking system, of which £117bn was pumped straight into the worst hit banks.

But while Britain suffers wild property crashes, prices in many areas of France keep rising and finished higher in 2010 on the year before despite predictions of a slump. The steady rise has taken prices beyond the UK and shut middle income families out of the market, or prevented them moving. The long-term effect is the same as in the UK, where the financial crisis has left the incomes and assets of the wealthiest largely untouched, while hitting the growing number of – young people, immigrants and unskilled workers – who stand on the outside of protected, unionised industries. Much of the French establishment, like the wider population, supports the unions' conservative, old world view that globalisation is to be feared, feeding the sense of paralysis.

6. World Water Day: A global inundation of funds is not enough

One billion people lack basic water supplies and 2.6 billion lack access to sanitation. But we must invest wisely and locally

Tuesday is World Water Day, an occasion to celebrate water and its crucial contribution to human life in all its forms. To mark the occasion, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has released a report that gathers available evidence on the benefits of investing in water and sanitation services.

The emphasis of the report is on presenting the facts and figures in a way that can grab the attention of policy-makers and investors.

So let's start with the facts: almost 1 billion people lack access to safe water supplies, and 2.6 billion are without access to basic sanitation. Approximately 10% of the global burden of disease worldwide could be prevented with improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene and better water resource management.

Wastewater often reaches the environment untreated or insufficiently treated, resulting in major impacts on surface waters and associated ecosystems as well as economic activity that uses these resources.

Providing access to clean drinking water and sanitation can reduce health risks and can free up time for education and other productive activities, as well as increasing the productivity of the labour force.

In times of budget austerity, sanitation and hygiene promotion can be an extremely efficient allocation of public resources. An earlier study, produced by the Disease Control Priorities Project, a World Bank-funded NGO examining health priorities in the developing countries, found that hygiene and sanitation promotion cost respectively \$3 and \$11 per DALY averted (disability adjusted life year – a measure of overall disease burden), compared to \$922 per DALY for the provision of antiretroviral therapy against Aids for example.

The cost-effectiveness and multiple benefits of investing in sanitation are now being investigated in further detail by SHARE, a DFID-funded research consortium with a £10m budget over five years, which aims to accelerate progress on sanitation and hygiene in developing countries by generating research, and ensuring new and existing solutions are adopted at scale.

Depending on when and how such investments are carried out, some "disbenefits" may emerge along the way, however. Lessons can be learned from history there. The Great Stink of London in 1858, which prompted MPs to support the construction of what became the first major sewerage system in the western world, was partly the result of the introduction of the advanced pour-flush toilet, seen at the time as more modern and technologically advanced. This resulted in a massive influx of water, causing cesspits to overflow into the Thames and its affluents.

Investment must be holistic and intelligent. Today's developing world is laden with examples of projects that created more harm than good when not combined with sanitation investments and hygiene education, as more water going through taps and toilets can cause more dirty water pools on the streets, attracting flies and spreading diseases.

Despite the fact that investing in water and sanitation generates clear benefits (with benefit-to-cost ratios as high as 7-to-1 for basic services in developing countries), the sector remains woefully underfunded. Sanitation, in particular, is the poor parent and one of the most off-track UN millennium development goals.

Governments are commonly unaware of the costs of inaction. The Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), a multi-donor partnership administered by the World Bank to support poor people in obtaining affordable, safe and sustainable access to water and sanitation services, estimated that Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam lose an aggregated \$9bn a year due to poor sanitation, equivalent to 2% of their combined GDP. This is comparable to the impact from climate change in the region estimated by the Stern Review – however, economic losses from sanitation are acutely felt in the present, as opposed to far away in the future.

In Indonesia, WSP found that the results of this study contributed to raising awareness and facilitated a major realignment of government priorities onto improving sanitation as a way to underpin economic growth.

So, does the water and sanitation sector need its own Stern review, to highlight the urgency and the magnitude of the needs at global level? The OECD report shows that this would be extremely challenging and of comparatively more limited use than for climate change.

The magnitude of the benefits from water and sanitation can vary significantly depending on local factors, such as the prevalence of diarrheal diseases, population density or the quality of receiving waters.

The full magnitude of the benefits often cannot be measured, as they would include non-economic benefits that are difficult to quantify, such as improvements in dignity, social status, cleanliness and overall well-being.

Most importantly, remedial actions are to be taken at the local level. A global, coordinated policy response (assuming it were feasible) would be of less use for water and sanitation than for climate change. Instead, the report calls for developing a coherent methodology to estimate the impact of inadequate water and sanitation and conveying these critical messages to local decision-makers.

Reliable benefit information could be used to encourage users to invest in their own services (particularly when demand is weak, as for sanitation), to support critical public investment decisions, to optimise investment strategies and to allocate costs to those who are most willing to bear them.

7. George Osborne plans budget boost for homebuyers and drivers

Despite rise in inflation and borrowing, chancellor to court medium earners in 'steady-as-she-goes' financial package

George Osborne will seek to appeal to Britain's "squeezed middle" when he announces help for first-time buyers, motorists and 25 million income tax payers in a budget designed to tighten the Treasury's grip over public spending.

Despite disappointing news for the public finances, the chancellor is expected to say that he has scope to raise the income tax personal allowance by £600 next year, fund a £250m shared equity scheme for new homes and defer the above-inflation increase in petrol duty due next month.

But Osborne will balance tax giveaways with fresh tax-raising measures, a crackdown on tax avoidance and "special measures" for overspending Whitehall departments in what sources insisted would be a "steady-as-she-goes" package.

The chancellor will outline a range of measures – including a shake-up of planning laws, deregulation of employment laws affecting small businesses, and the long-awaited plans for a green investment bank as the coalition government seeks to shift the focus of the economy from deficit reduction to boosting growth.

Osborne will admit that the UK's growth prospects for 2011 have worsened since last autumn, with the independent Office for Budget Responsibility likely to pencil in an increase of around 1.8% in gross domestic product this year against the 2.1% it forecast last November.

But the chancellor will signal his determination not to let the government's deficit reduction plans slip, with fresh controls designed to intensify pressure on ministers to rein in spending.

Departments that fail to manage their budgets properly will be placed in special measures – akin to the Ofsted rating given to a failing school – with tough penalties. These could include fines for overspending or being forced to seek Treasury authorisation for larger spending decisions.

City hopes that public borrowing for 2010-11 would come in £10bn below the £148bn forecast received a dent with news that the deficit in February topped £10bn – the highest for the month since modern records

began in 1993. Meanwhile, inflation according to the consumer price index rose from 4% to a 28-month high of 4.4% last month, pushing up government spending on state benefits.

Dearer food, fuel and clothing were the main factors behind last month's jump in inflation, which is now more than double the government's 2% target. The increase in the CPI measure of inflation was matched by a rise in the alternative yardstick of the cost of living, the retail prices index, which rose from 5.1% to 5.5% last month, its highest for 20 years.

In a move that will please the Liberal Democrat wing of the coalition, Osborne will say that the income tax personal allowance, due to go up to £7,475 next month, will be raised by more than inflation from next year.

The increase of around £600 – which comes on top of the £1,000 rise next month – will be worth an average of £45 a year for taxpayers earning up to £115,000 a year. The 550,000 taxpayers who earn more than £115,000 will lose £45 a year because they no longer have a personal allowance.

Osborne will announce a joint scheme with the construction industry to help some of the potential first-time buyers currently frozen out of the housing market. First-time buyers with a household income of less than £60,000 a year who can put down a 5% deposit on a new home will be eligible for an equity loan worth up to 20% of the value of the property jointly funded by the government and housebuilders. The loan will be interest-free for five years and only be repayable when the house is sold.

With most first-time buyers only able to secure mortgages worth 75% of a property's value, Osborne is expected to say his scheme will give some young people the chance to meet the exacting loan standards demanded by lenders in the wake of the financial crisis, lead to the building of 10,000 new homes and protect 40,000 jobs in the construction industry.

The year long cabinet battle over Britain's ability to invest in the next generation of green infrastructure will be resolved when a green investment bank is established with access to up to £3bn of funds, and an ability to borrow from April 2015. Green groups will be disappointed about the deferral of borrowing powers, but pleased at the higher than expected interim funding.

The battle over the bank was resolved on Sunday and the outcome reflects a wider political struggle to ensure plans in the budget to ease pressure on the squeezed middle, including freezing planned fuel duty rises, does not strip the coalition of its green credentials.

Ministers admit the deferral of the bank's borrowing powers to 2015-16 reflects Treasury determination to ensure net debt as a percentage of GDP is falling by 2015-16. But they also argue that decisions on the next big wave of green investment projects, including offshore wind farms, do not need to be made until after 2015.

In a negotiating success for Chris Huhne, the energy secretary, the bank will be given access to £1bn of funds from 2012-13, as opposed to the earlier plan to wait until 2013-4. The bank will also be given access from 2012-13 to £775m from the asset sales from HS1, the superfast rail track between London and the Channel tunnel. In addition the bank will have access to £1bn from the sales from 2013-14 from Urenco, the company that makes enriched uranium from nuclear power. The government owns a third of Urenco jointly with the Dutch government and German energy companies RWE and E.ON. The Treasury has given a guarantee that if the income from the sale of Urenco is not forthcoming, the green bank will have access to other funds.

- **Socio-cultural**

1. 'Red Bull are just a drinks company,' says revved-up Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton believes McLaren's tradition as a 'pure-bred racing team' gives them an advantage over Red Bull in the F1 title race. Photograph: Alejandro Garcia/EPA

Lewis Hamilton has dismissed last year's double world championship winning Red Bull team as just a "drinks company" and is confident McLaren can win back the Formula One crown.

With his team promising some "dramatic changes" for Sunday's opening race in Australia, Hamilton expressed his determination that Red Bull – who would be favourites to sign the former world champion if he quit McLaren – would not continue to dominate the sport.

"I am 100 per cent certain that neither McLaren nor Ferrari will ever let that happen," he said. "They [Red Bull] have not been there as long as our teams. Our teams have got status they would like to keep.

"For many, many years it has been McLaren and Ferrari at the front and now we have got a new team that has come and knocked us off the top. But I am really certain that either team will do absolutely everything in their power to make sure they can remain at the top.

"Red Bull are not a manufacturer, they are a drinks company. It's a drinks company versus McLaren/Ferrari history. I don't know what their plan is. Our team is building to become a bigger manufacturer, like Ferrari, and I can only see our team being there for a ridiculous amount of time. It is a pure-bred racing team."

Despite his team principal, Martin Whitmarsh, promising upgrades he claims will be worth up to a second a lap, Hamilton is aware that McLaren will struggle to match the early-season pace of Red Bull, who are led by their brilliant designer, Adrian Newey.

"Red Bull will have improved their reliability from last year," he said. "They will have the pace and the reliability this year, as will Ferrari. Those two are definitely the hardest to beat.

"Sebastian's [Vettel] confidence, as champion, has probably gone up but I would say more so because for the second year in a row he has probably got the fastest car. He has got a ridiculously fast car but so has Fernando [Alonso], it seems.

"I am sure Mark [Webber] will be competitive as he was last year. I am sure he will want to bounce back from last year. He had a difficult year with lots of ups and downs and this year he will want to be strong and more consistent."

Hamilton, like his team-mate Jenson Button, has been frustrated by McLaren's poor downforce levels in pre-season testing. But he added: "As an athlete, as a competitor, optimism is something you have to hold. You always have to have that.

"I'm never one to give up. I'm not going to sit here and say 'the championship is over, blah, blah, blah'.

"I'm ready and when the car is ready I will be at the front and I will win races. Just because we don't have a winning car right now, that doesn't mean it won't become a world championship-winning car. We'll see."

Whitmarsh believes the changes to the car are a risk worth taking. "I'm not satisfied with where the car was on reliability or performance in the tests," he said. "We have made some fairly dramatic changes and those changes we'll see in Australia.

"There's some risk in that but I think it was the right thing to do and we're hoping that risk comes off and the car is a lot more competitive," he said. "I think it will still be a challenging weekend but I'm hopeful that we'll put on more than a second in performance."

Hamilton, who has a waspish sense of humour, might be tempted to wear the convict cuffs and leg fetters associated with Australia's earliest visitors from Britain when he appears in Melbourne.

Last year he had his road car impounded by police after performing burn-outs outside the paddock and he was charged with driving offences in what has become one of the most officious of countries.

The year before that, at the same venue, he was found guilty of deliberately misleading stewards in what became labelled "Liegate" and McLaren were handed a suspended three-match ban.

But it has not been all bad. On his Formula One debut here, in 2007, he drove to a thrilling third. And in 2008 he won the first race of the season, which helped propel him to the world title.

So it was somewhat surprising when he said: "I don't have any mixed emotions. I don't go back there having any regrets. I have had a couple of interesting experiences that will hopefully help me steer clear of any other incidents in the future.

"I go back with a plan not to be in the stewards' office and not to be met by any of the police.

"But I feel really positive. I love going there, it is a great trip. It is a fantastic place and when the weather is great the circuit is fantastic too.

"I've generally had good races. I won in 2008, 2007 was my first race, which was pretty awesome, and 2009 was still a good race. I came from really far back with a car that wasn't so good.

"Last year I did a lot of overtaking but just didn't get what I should have resultwise."

2. A short history of French cinema

From the pioneers of the silver screen to today's new realism, French directors have shaped film-making around the world

France can, with some justification, claim to have invented the whole concept of cinema. Film historians call The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station, the 50-second film by the Lumière brothers first screened in 1895, the birth of the medium.

But the best-known early pioneer, who made films with some kind of cherishable narrative value, was Georges Méliès, whose 1902 short A Trip to the Moon is generally heralded as the first science-fiction film, and a landmark in cinematic special effects. Meanwhile, Alice Guy-Blaché, Léon Gaumont's one-time secretary, is largely forgotten now, but with films such as L'enfant de la barricade trails the status of being the first female film-maker.Napoleon

The towering achievement of French cinema in the silent era was undoubtedly Abel Gance's six-hour biopic of Napoleon (1927), which like many large-scale productions of the time, has had a choppy subsequent history. Thanks largely to the efforts of film historian Kevin Brownlow, a 330-minute restored version – complete with the original's three-projector finale – can be occasionally seen; but since Gance originally planned a six-film cycle, of which only number one was ever completed, we will only ever have a fraction of what was intended. But Belgian-born Jacques Feyder was not to be outdone, with the extraordinary L'Atlantide (1921), and Faces of Children (1925). And the artistic ferment of pre- and post-first world war France made itself felt cinematically, with an amazing outpouring of avant-garde short films. Key titles include Jean Vigo's Soviet-influenced A Propos de Nice (1929), Fernand Léger's Dada-ist Ballet Mecanique (1924), and two surrealist masterworks: Germaine Dulac's The Seashell and the Clergyman (1928), with an Antonin Artaud screenplay, and the Buñuel/Dali collaboration Un Chien Andalou (1929).

The early sound years saw an explosion of talent. Playwright Marcel Pagnol put adaptations of his celebrated Marseilles plays into production – first Marius (1931), then Fanny (1932), and finally César (1936), which he directed himself. René Clair made the musical, Under the Roofs of Paris (1930). But the period really belonged to the pioneers of "poetic realism" – Vigo, Jean Renoir, Julien Duvivier and Marcel Carné. Masterpieces abounded in the interwar period: Vigo's scabrous satire Zero de Conduite (1933) was followed by the lyrical L'Atalante (1934). Tragically, it was his last film, as he succumbed to tuberculosis the same year, aged just 29. Renoir's career took off with Boudu Saved from Drowning (1932), and thereafter produced a string of brilliant films up to the outbreak of the second world war: A Day in the Country (1936), The Crime of Monsieur Lange (1936), La Grande Illusion (1937), La Bête Humaine (1938), and arguably the greatest of all: La Règle du Jeu (1939). Duvivier weighed in with the Algeria-set gangster yarn Pépé le Moko (1937), while Carné also anticipated American-style noir with Quai des Brumes (1938) and Le Jour se Lève (1939). But Carné, arguably, outdid them all with Les Enfants du Paradis (1945); filmed during the Nazi occupation, the romantic melodrama set in the 19th-century theatre world became a symbol of national cultural identity when it was finally released.

The disruption caused by the war saw the avant garde regain the upper hand, with Robert Bresson's minimalist *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951) and Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) and *Orphée* (1950). (Fans of *The Matrix* might notice where they borrowed their liquid-mirror idea from.) Cocteau's work also gave a chance to a new generation in the shape of Jean-Pierre Melville, who was hired to direct an adaptation of *Les Enfants Terribles* (1950). Perhaps not coincidentally, a new generation of politically radical film critics were growing up, mentored by André Bazin at *Cahiers du Cinema*. Their work fed directly into the explosive success of the French New Wave in the late 1950s: critics such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Claude Chabrol transferred their ideas directly to the screen. Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959) and Godard's *Breathless* (1960) were the vanguard, but the New Wave triggered a decade and a half of brilliance, with a profusion of brilliant film-makers associated with the movement – Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda, Jacques Demy, Louis Malle, Eric Rohmer. Meanwhile Melville, who had prospered in the New Wave era, completed a trilogy of masterworks at the end of the decade: *Le Samourai* (1968), *Army in the Shadows* (1969), and *Le Cercle Rouge* (1970).

After leaving its mark on a myriad of European national cinemas, and finally Hollywood by the end of 1960s, the French New Wave began to finally peter out; but coming up behind were a group of surface-obsessed style merchants who established the glossy 1980s "cinema du look". Jean-Jacques Bénéix, with *Diva* (1981) and *Betty Blue* (1986), Luc Besson with *Subway* (1985), and Leos Carax with *Mauvais Sang* (1986) were the key figures here, much given to the speeding motorbike, the studied gesture and the highly coloured set-piece. Realism made a comeback in the 1990s, primarily through the Mathieu Kassovitz-directed *La Haine*, but the leading influence of the subsequent generation has undoubtedly been Jean-Pierre Jeunet who, with *Delicatessen* (1991) and *Amélie* (2001) perfected a Gallic answer to the comic-book-influenced style of Sam Raimi, Terry Gilliam and Barry Sonnenfeld. In recent years, Jacques Audiard has, arguably, become France's most respected auteur, with *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* (2005) and *A Prophet* (2010).

3. Regional theatre should take more risks

A couple of years back, in a passionate post on this blog about regional theatre, the Royal and Derngate's artistic director Laurie Sansom observed that "Regional artistic directors used to behave as if they were on Countdown: 'I'll have a Coward, please, a Shakespeare, a new play in the studio, and another Coward, please, Carol.'" These days, I can only imagine producing Noël Coward if an artist has a personal connection to the material and a burning desire to give it fresh theatrical life."

Two years is a long time in theatre. Since Sansom's post on the vibrancy of programming in regional theatres, we've had an election, the formation of a coalition government that has no understanding of the crucial role theatre can play in its community both economically and socially, and the prospect of funding cuts. But it is clear that, long before the axes have fallen, many theatre programmes have taken on the look of a nervy Countdown selection.

Perhaps it's hardly surprising: just as hemlines go down in a recession, maybe artistic directors are inclined to look backwards rather than forwards. Perhaps even more importantly, it is a reminder how much confidence and psychology plays a part in creating the conditions necessary for a theatre to take risks, then reap the rewards. Back in 2001, the fact that there was money on the way (in the form of the £25 million that was injected into theatre after the Boyden report) created a sea-change in British regional theatre that was apparent long before theatres saw a penny of the cash.

In the circumstances, then, perhaps it is no surprise that the seasons currently gracing our stages – in many cases programmed more than a year ago – reflect a certain nervousness about audience attendance, and suggest a headlong retreat into pre-Look Back in Anger drama. That impression may be somewhat skewed by the Rattigan centenary, not that I begrudge him his moment in the sun: Thea Sharrock's timely (and award-winning) *After the Dance* at the National made as good a case for Rattigan's rehabilitation as the Almeida's revival of *The Deep Blue Sea* in 1993.

But, even if you take Rattigan out of the equation, we're still seeing a rash of Cowards and Priestleys, even the odd Du Maurier and W Somerset Maugham. Or how about Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton*? Restoration comedy seems to be making a come-back too. I can't recall so much interest in *The Rivals* since the 1980s.

Of course there's wrong with directors rummaging around in the theatrical attic and finding plays that glimmer in the dark. There are also horses for courses: Salisbury Playhouse, which recently saw a fine revival of *The Constant Wife*, may actually be the only theatre in the country where you could still do Somerset Maugham, and there is no one more qualified to do it well than Philip Wilson – who knows how to mine beneath a brittle surface and who, incidentally, has previously has proved himself a superb director of Coward.

Sansom was right two years ago and he is still right now, in suggesting that it is a burning desire to give a play new theatrical life that makes it worth doing. The results can be transforming, as we saw in the 1990s with Stephen Daldry with *An Inspector Calls*, or have seen recently at the Finborough with a rare revival of Emlyn Williams's *Accolade*. And David Grindley's touring revival of *Journey's End* demonstrates that even an old war horse can have real vigour and relevance. So I certainly don't want to write off the plays of the past, but do want to point out that if regional theatre wants to safeguard its future it can't play things too safe. It's risk-taking that keeps theatre alive.

4. Real artists never retire – or do they?

Director Steven Soderbergh's announcement that he will quit film-making flouts the rule Is retirement an option for creative artists? The film director Steven Soderbergh recently announced that he plans to retire from movie-making once his next two films are finished. A folly? A whim? A PR stunt? Who knows, but he sounded sincerely tired of it all in the interview I read.

This startled me, because Soderbergh, while working in Hollywood, has gained a reputation as a serious film artist. And retirement rarely seems to interest serious artists – least of all visual ones.

Lucian Freud and Cy Twombly are still painting, and still doing powerful work, in old age. Nor is the career longevity (and physical longevity) of artists just a product of modern healthcare. In the 16th century, both Michelangelo and Titian lived very long lives and both worked brilliantly into their last years. Titian's late works are his greatest of all and several scintillating masterpieces were left unfinished when he died. Michelangelo also left an incredible unfinished masterpiece – when death obliged him to lay down tools, he was the architect of St Peter's.

If great artists work well beyond retirement age, it is surely because, especially for a painter, writer or similarly skilled worker, it can take a lifetime to learn all the skills. Only then can you work with total freedom: hence the striking phenomenon of "late" styles.

Today, the novelist Philip Roth consciously practices a "late style", describing his recent novels as Late Roth. He shows no actual sign of retiring, although he has spoken as if he might.

Soderbergh is a post-modernist whose artful film-making has never been that intense or personal – he is rather a master of style – so his claim to be outta here might be read as a cool rejection of the romantic idea of the consummate, self-sacrificing artist. And yet film directors have been just as addicted to work as any painter – Soderbergh himself made the film *Eros* with the veteran Antonioni, and Claude Chabrol made one darkly comic thriller after another up to the end. By the time he died last year at the age of 80, he had made more than 80 films. And he was a master.

There is at least one startling exception to the rule that real artists never retire: Shakespeare. He made his money in London then retired to his native Stratford, like Prospero relinquishing his magic in *The Tempest*. But then Shakespeare is an exception to every rule and the ultimate biographical enigma.

Anyway – a happy retirement to Mr Soderbergh. If he really does get round to it, he will strike a blow against the myth of the artist as someone driven by passion and necessity to do what she or he does. How sophisticatedly modern is that?

5. How C4's *One Born Every Minute* made childbirth a reality TV hit

Amid the screams, Channel 4's Bafta-winning series One Born Every Minute gives an educated and balanced view of childbirth

One Born Every Minute begins with a long howl, which usually sets the tone for the rest of the episode. There is blood, bodily fluids, and a lot of screaming – so how to explain its popularity? Filmed on the maternity ward of Southampton's Princess Anne hospital, the show (its second series ends next week) has regularly drawn more than 3 million viewers, attracts masses of comments on its Facebook page, and last year won a Bafta for best factual series.

After the artifice of most reality television, it feels thrillingly natural: there is no voiceover, and the sensationally precarious births are balanced by the tedium of mothers waiting for their waters to break. For the stars – the parents and the staff – the aim is always to deliver each baby safely, not to be on television.

There are women who have gone through years of IVF, multiple miscarriages and stillbirth, and dazed, pregnant teenagers, barely out of childhood themselves. But it's not just a programme for breeders or the broody; I am more inclined to swoon over puppies than babies, yet every week, something in it – usually the sight of a tiny, slimy human becoming aware it has just entered the world– will bring sudden tears.

Sue Macdonald, education manager of the Royal College of Midwives, says she has noticed more enquiries from people wanting to train in midwifery. "You get a picture of what births are like," she says. "There have been some nice experiences and others where there has been more intervention. For the majority of women, birth is very normal and the programme makers need to continue to make sure they show that." It's also useful for helping pregnant women. A practising midwife I talked to says she has seen many expectant mothers who watch the programme. "It does help women think about what it's going to be like and help them plan what they want for their birth so I think it is useful," she tells me.

I've always imagined the programme would be terrifying if you were pregnant, but Alison Crickmore, who had her first baby last week, was such a fan she forced her husband to watch it, though she didn't necessarily find it that helpful. "The screaming did worry me, and it makes it appear that all women go through that. During the birth I never felt the urge to scream and shout – I was in and out of the maternity ward for four days in labour and only heard two women screaming. And often it was hard to get an insight into how long the women's stages of labour were. I enjoy the programme but it didn't really prepare me for childbirth."

The focus, unsurprisingly, is on the women, "but for me, each of the best episodes have been about the moment a man has to grow up", says Simon Dickson, the Channel 4 executive who commissioned the series. A few of the men are hilariously witless – like the one who blows up a rubber glove and uses it to tap his partner annoyingly, or fail to make it into the operating theatre because they're worried about the sight of blood – but others are so lovingly careful with their pregnant partner and growing family that it does more to show what is expected of men in the 21st century than any other programme.

Every week I wonder how they manage to get women to agree to be filmed at their most vulnerable, often nearly naked and usually in extreme pain. Caroline Pike, 30, from Bridport, and her husband Chris, who feature in the final episode next week, had conceived triplets through IVF. "We were apprehensive, because it is a very private thing," she says. "But we thought it would be a good memento for the babies. We also wanted to promote neonatal care."

Caroline had to have an emergency caesarean at short notice. Her husband was at work 75 miles away, "so it was brilliant for him that it was filmed," she says. "Everyone on the programme was so supportive, so it never felt intrusive. It's emotional for both of us looking back and seeing those intimate moments. At the time you're so wrapped up in it that it's nice to be able to replay it later." The only thing they asked not to be filmed was when the news was broken that one of their sons, William, would have to have bowel operations.

Will it not feel unsettling to share such an intense and private experience with millions? "Yes and no. Because we had tried for a long time to get pregnant, I think it was important to show people that through all the heartache good things can happen," says Caroline.

Julia Rayner, 31, from Southampton had similar reasons for taking part. She was born with a heart defect and told she should never have children. "I wanted to make other people in my position aware of what they could

do." All mothers are shown the edited programme before it goes out. "There was nothing I could fault," says Julia. Was there anything she asked not to be filmed. She laughs and says "Anything from the waist down."

6. Cuba accuses award-winning blogger of cyberwar against her country

Havana says Yoani Sánchez's Generacion Y blog demonises government and is the tool of neocolonial propaganda

A dissident Cuban blogger who was hailed last year as a hero of press freedom has again been attacked by the island's government for waging a "cyberwar" against the communist regime.

Yoani Sánchez – whose Generacion Y blog has won numerous prizes and attracted an international readership for its blunt reflections on Cuban life – was the subject of a TV programme on Monday.

The latest in a series of programmes called Cuba's Reasons claimed Sánchez was part of a media campaign intent on "demonising" socialism.

It included grainy videos in which the blogger enters European embassies and the US interests section in Havana, and said she has collected \$500,000 (£306,000) in international prizes for her work.

"Cyberwar is not a war of bombs and bullets, but of information, communication, algorithms and bytes. It is the new form of invasion that has originated in the developed world," said the narrator.

The Cuba's Reasons series has tried to show that the US is using new technologies to try to subvert the Havana government.

It has coincided with the trial and conviction of US aid contractor Alan Gross, who has been jailed since December 2009 for allegedly trying to bring the internet to government opponents. Earlier this month, Gross was sentenced to 15 years in prison by a panel of judges in a case that has strained US-Cuba relations.

Sánchez herself has shrugged off the latest attack, taking to Twitter to announce: "I am so happy. Finally the alternative blogosphere on official television, although it's to insult us."

She added: "They don't know what they've done! Pandora's Box has been smashed open!"

Sánchez also thanked all those who had texted her. "I can't keep tweeting all the texts of support," she wrote. "There are too many of them and I have only 10 fingers!"

It is not the first time that Sánchez has drawn the ire of the ruling regime. In November 2009, the blogger said she had been beaten up by a group of thugs hired to silence her as she travelled to a peaceful protest.

And three years ago – shortly after Cuba denied her permission to travel to Spain to collect the prestigious Ortega y Gasset journalism award for her blog – Fidel Castro himself appeared to express his disapproval.

In a book about his relationship with Bolivia, Castro alluded to the fact that Sánchez had told an international news agency that she had been barred from travelling to Europe.

"What is grave isn't so much affirmations of this type that are divulged immediately by imperialism's mass media," the former president wrote, but that there are young Cubans who "assume the job of those who undermine, and of the neocolonial press of the ancient Spanish metropolis that awards them".

In an interview with Spanish newspaper El País in April 2008, Sánchez explained why she blogged: "The official discourse in Cuba is stagnant and that's why blogs offer a fresh perspective. They're like drops of water: each one of them, as it hits the wall, can end up doing a lot of damage – knocking it down. It's the young people who control technology and they often feel moved to express their opinions."

7. There is no hiding with LSD

Beyond the flowers that turn into cats, an acid trip forces users to face whatever comes up, and self-knowledge often follows

Is LSD a great spiritual teacher? Or indeed a teacher at all? My answer is an emphatic "Yes", even though there will always be students who learn nothing from their teachers or misuse what they do learn.

For me LSD is the ultimate psychedelic. It's a tough one – one not to be taken lightly or often. A typical trip lasts eight to 10 hours and there's no respite or way out once you've popped that tiny scrap of blotter in your mouth. I will even admit that on those rare occasions when I take it I feel some deep physiological reaction that makes me involuntarily shaky and afraid just before that fateful moment. So why do it? Because the fear is worth – a million times over it's worth – the experience. That experience, as many writers have explained, depends dramatically on the set and setting – on what you expect of the trip, where you are, whom you are with, and how safe you feel. One of the tragedies of drug prohibition is that we have never developed a culture in which young people can learn how to use powerful drugs properly from older, wiser and more experienced psychonauts. I count myself lucky to have encountered such good teachers to guide me with such drugs as LSD, psilocybin, DMT, MDMA and mescaline.

Of course the psychedelics can be just plain fun – the amazing colours, the shifting and moving scenes, the flowers that turn into cats that turn into rabbits that disappear down holes; the sounds that turn into streams that flow away into the sky. But very few people have eight hours of simple fun. This drug, above all, confronts you with yourself. The flickering flowers can turn into scenes of horror and desperation, the coloured-streaked sky into a theatre of unwelcome memories and shame. For myself I used to face terrible scenes of torture, rape and other kinds of human cruelty. I do not know why, but I found myself imagining them again and again both in meditation and with drugs. Perhaps like most people, I began by fighting them and trying to push them away, but LSD will not let you push anything away. You have to face it. And this is, I think, what makes it the ultimate psychedelic. There is no hiding with LSD. You have to face whatever comes up or be overwhelmed by it.

I faced the fact that I could not blame the drug nor anyone else for my visions, and certainly not for the worst fact of all – that such cruelty has always happened and is happening somewhere even now. Ultimately I confronted the fact that I was not fundamentally different from either the torturers or the tortured, that I had in myself strains of cruelty and hatred that might, under other circumstances, lead me to be the perpetrator as well as the sufferer. This is just one small example, and everyone's stories are different, but again and again people report that through LSD they learned to know, and accept, themselves. This may be why LSD has such powerful therapeutic effects and can be so helpful for people facing terminal illness. Our question mentions "spirituality" and whether anyone becomes "kinder and wiser". Surely knowing oneself underlies all these – knowing and accepting your own mind, taking responsibility for what you have done and what you might do. Even simple kindness grows with self-knowledge. When we see ourselves clearly we can see others more clearly, and then it is so very much easier to be kind.

Finally, our question asked "did anyone learn anything about reality from LSD?", "... was it a glimpse – however inadequate – of something real and standing beyond our everyday lives?". I would say that in one sense selves are not "reality", but are invented stories about non-existent inner beings; that what we learn through LSD is precisely about our everyday lives, not something beyond them. But then I would say the same of spirituality. It is not something to be found beyond our everyday lives at all. It is right here and now, and that is precisely what LSD reveals.

- **Political**

1. Sarkozy opposes Nato taking control of Libya operation

Dissent from Germany, Turkey and Norway leaves question marks over command structure

The French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, has opposed handing over control of the military operation in Libya to Nato, saying the move would send the wrong message to Arab nations.

At a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Nato's decision-making committee on Monday, the French representative reportedly stormed out after being accused of hindering Nato's involvement in the campaign. France had flatly refused to agree to the proposal, which was later agreed by a majority of member countries.

The German representative is also reported to have left the meeting after his country was criticised for not wanting to get involved.

Turkey, angered that the French president had failed to invite it to Saturday's summit in Paris, refused to give carte blanche for a no-fly zone over Libya.

Western diplomats say Sarkozy angered Britain and the US by announcing French planes were already in the air and ready to attack Libya before many of his allies had even left Saturday's meeting to decide on military action, and before informing his partners.

Afterwards, the French president - who will be seeking re-election next year - was congratulating himself for what the French called his "diplomatic blitzkrieg" in pushing through UN resolution 1973 authorising the offensive against Muammar Gaddafi.

However, after Monday's meeting, Norway said it was "suspending" participation of its F-16 fighter jets, which had already arrived in Italy before flying on to Crete, until it had "a clarification of the command [structure]".

Germany and Turkey do not want Nato to carry on the bombing campaign against Gaddafi's forces; Luxembourg, present at Saturday's summit, has said it will only take part if the operation is Nato-led; Italy is "reflecting on the use of its bases" for the operation.

The French foreign minister, Alain Juppé, said Nato was "willing to come to the support of the coalition in a few days", suggesting a role for the organisation that is complementary rather than central.

A French military source told AFP it was a case of "finding a way to get Nato involved without it being seen to head the operation".

While France has been giving the impression it is heading the operation, the military attacks on Libya are, according to Juppé, "an operation co-ordinated by the US in direct collaboration with the French and British authorities". It is being led from US bases in Germany and Italy.

This is apparently the first time London, Paris and Washington have failed to come up with a unified chain of command for the operation.

Laurent Teisseire, spokesman for the French ministry of defence, told journalists: "There is no centralised chain of command at this moment. Everyone is using their own military structures in a co-ordinated fashion."

This unprecedented, three-pronged command is reflected in the different names for the operation: The French are calling it Harmattan (the name of a hot wind that blows over the Sahara); in Britain, it is Operation Ellamy; and in the US, it is Odyssey Dawn.

Le Nouvel Observateur magazine described it as "a boat without a captain".

Meanwhile, the newly appointed French interior minister, Claude Guéant, has been criticised for an ill-advised choice of words after announcing he was happy to see Nicolas Sarkozy at the head of a "crusade" to mobilise the world over Libya.

Guéant told the Talk programme on Le Figaro newspaper's website: "Happily, he was there because the whole world was about to see on the television massacres committed by Colonel Gaddafi. Happily, the

president took the lead in the crusade to mobilise the United Nations security council and then the Arab League and the African Union."

The newspaper Libération said: "Even if Guéant meant the term 'crusade' to refer to the mobilisation in favour of intervention and not the [military] operation itself, the use of this word, with such strong connotations when it refers to a western intervention on Muslim soil, is even more ill-advised, given it was the subject of lively argument the same day."

Guéant used "crusade" on the same day Russia's prime minister Vladimir Putin opposed air strikes on Libya, likening the military operation to "medieval calls for crusades".

The German foreign affairs minister, Guido Westerwelle, had already warned that any military intervention should not be seen as a kind of "crusade against populations of the Muslim faith. It is essential we don't give the impression this is about a clash of the west against the Arab world, or even a Christian crusade against Muslim believing people," he said.

2. Libya: Former security minister calls for clarity over military objectives

Lord West warns against targeting Gaddafi as forces minister says Libyan leader should go but removal not a military objective

Supporters of Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi inside Bab Al-Aziziya, Gaddafi's Tripoli compound
Photograph: Sipa Press/Rex Features

A former security minister has warned that it would "look bad" for Britain if it were perceived to be trying to "hunt down and kill" Muammar Gaddafi.

Lord West, a former naval chief who served in the last Labour government, called for "clarity" as a clash of views surfaced between Britain's political and military leadership on Monday over whether the Libyan leader is a legitimate target for coalition forces.

Sir David Richards, chief of the defence staff, said on Monday that Gaddafi was "absolutely not" a target. But the defence secretary, Liam Fox, and the foreign secretary, William Hague, appeared to contradict him during the course of the day when they indicated that Gaddafi may be a legitimate target, raising concern about the ultimate aims of the hastily assembled international alliance.

The armed forces minister, Nick Harvey, has insisted that individuals would not be targeted though he said it would be "politically desirable" for Gaddafi to go. "But that is not the objective of the military campaign," said the minister.

But Colonel Richard Kemp, a former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, said he believed that ousting Gaddafi was the underlying motive though "not necessarily the stated strategy".

West said that though there was a "tacit understanding" that forces were not going out to kill the Libyan leader, there needed to be greater clarity.

"We need to be extremely careful; we're not into a campaign where part of it is to hunt him down and kill him, which is the image that would be given," West told BBC Radio 4 Today programme: "It would make it very difficult for the coalition if there was any feeling that was part of it."

He said there was "no real difference" between the cabinet and military, insisting that it had been more about the way views were put across on Monday and interpreted. But in a gentle sideswipe at Richards, West added that senior military figures needed to consider the political dimension when making statements.

West said he was impressed by the "latitude" provided in UN resolution 1973 to protect civilians from attacks by Libyan forces, but agreed with Richards, that its stipulations precluded the targeting of Gaddafi.

But he said that it "might happen" if coalition forces were targeting a headquarters where Gaddafi was in charge of an operation to kill his own people.

"I think there has to be a clarity of exactly what we are doing. I think there is a tacit understanding that we are not as I say going out and hunting to kill Gaddafi but that we are taking measures to hit these control centres, get rid of the integrated air defence system. That's where the difficulty is really going to come ... when we find rebels, for want of a better word, heavily armed, because they have taken over weapons, advancing on Gaddafi's troops. Now do we see our jobs to keep on taking out the heavy weaponry of Gaddafi?" said West, adding: "That I think is extremely tricky."

Kemp suggested that the underlying aim was to remove Gaddafi: "It is quite clear to me that the removal of Gaddafi is the strategy that's being pursued here," he told ITV's Daybreak programme.

"It's not necessarily the stated strategy but I think it's the intention of the west at least, not necessarily by directly attacking him or killing him, but by creating a division whereby he can be brought down by his opposition in the country, that would be probably the ideal situation ... He needs to be removed before we can be sure that we are going to succeed in our objective of protecting the civilian population from attack."

Kemp said the operation was "vastly expensive" but added that people needed to ask the question "what price do you put on saving human lives?"

Public support for the action in Libya appears split, with 36% of respondents in a poll by the Sun newspaper opposed to the intervention.

A separate ComRes/ITV poll found that 53% of people think British forces shouldn't risk death to protect Libyans with just 35% agreeing military action is right.

Harvey said that the departure of Gaddafi was "very much the political objective of the British government", and that of the US, but the UN resolution was confined to "degrading the military threat" to the Libyan people.

"The targets will be the military targets which the coalition identifies as presenting a threat to the Libyan population and anyone who is at those targets ... regrettably becomes a target," he told BBC Breakfast News.

Harvey added: "So it will be politically desirable for Gaddafi to be gone but that is not the objective of the military campaign."

When pressed further on the apparent differences between the cabinet and the military, he said: "Our targets are not individuals, our targets are the military capability that runs the risk of presenting a threat to the Libyan population."

Asked what would happen if there were a stalemate and Gaddafi refused to go and the country was effectively divided, Harvey responded: "That is one possible outcome."

"If it is, so be it, that wouldn't be desirable. But a stable outcome where they weren't killing each other would in a sense be one way of achieving the humanitarian objective."

On the possible use of ground forces to protect civilians – if they are used in a more defensive role – and whether he could see UK troops doing this, he said: "I don't think we would at this stage rule anything in or rule anything out but I agree with the distinction that you draw between landing an occupying force and the use of anybody on the ground."

3. Split on Libya averted as Nato given military control

International coalition including Qatar and United Arab Emirates to share oversight of UN-mandated anti-Gaddafi campaign

Bosnia, which came to symbolise Europe's failure to prevent bloodshed on its doorstep , could provide a model for a new era as the world confronts Muammar Gaddafi.

Diplomatic sources say that a structure which has kept the peace in Bosnia could be replicated as the international community enforces the no-fly zone over Libya.

Diplomats in Brussels have become embroiled in bitter exchanges in recent days as they try to establish a command structure for the Libyan operation that would meet Barack Obama's demand to relieve Washington of operational control.

The diplomats are now looking to Bosnia which was famously failed by the European Union in the mid 1990s. The EU finally redeemed itself when it assumed command from Nato of the peace keeping operation in Bosnia in 2004. The EU force, known as Eufor, has been in the lead ever since but is able to draw on Nato assets when needed.

In separate phone calls Tuesday night Barack Obama agreed with David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy that a similar structure would be established to run the no-fly zone over Libya.

Political oversight would be in the hands of members of the international coalition joining the action to enforce the UN security council resolution 1973. Britain, France and the US are in the lead, but the coalition also includes Arab countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. This oversight would be akin to the EU's role in Bosnia.

But the military campaign to enforce the no-fly zone would be run by Nato. This could mean that James Stavridis, an American admiral who is Nato's current Supreme Allied Commander Europe, could be in charge of the military operation.

The agreement by Obama, Sarkozy and Cameron will have to be put to all 28 members of Nato. The alliance operates by consensus which means that a raised eyebrow could scupper the plan.

But there were hopes in London and Paris that agreement will be reached, giving Nato the chance to avoid its worst split in years.

An intense debate opened up after Obama, who wants to avoid a repeat of the US-led "shock and awe" tactics of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, made clear that Washington would command the campaign only in its early stages.

A clear message was sent across the Atlantic: Nato or a combination of its members with the support of Arab nations would have to take command of the no-fly zone to show the world that the US had no wish to impose its will on a Muslim country.

Sarkozy was keen to establish an Anglo-French command to run the military campaign. Britain was wary of the proposal however, and pushed hard for a clearly defined Nato operation.

"The French want to run this jointly with Britain," a senior Whitehall source said before Tuesday night's agreement. "That is their preference. It is not our preference. We want Nato to deal with this because Nato has the right experience in dealing with multinational teams."

The attempts to broker an agreement on the structure for the first major military action initiated under Obama's presidency started in a scratchy way on Monday when Nato ambassadors in Brussels held what was described as a "truly awful" and "emotional" meeting.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Nato secretary general, prompted a walkout by the French and German ambassadors after suggesting Paris was blocking the alliance and that Berlin was dragging its feet. One observer said: "There were a range of issues related to people's egos."

Tensions were running high even before the meeting opened. Britain and the US were said to be irritated that Sarkozy acted with characteristic impetuosity by launching the first strikes shortly after a summit of decision-makers in Paris on Saturday without properly briefing allies.

Germany, which abstained in the vote at the UN last week, agreed that Nato should have no more than a supporting role. This view was shared by Turkey, Nato's third largest member and a crucial voice in the alliance because of its predominantly Muslim population.

But Ankara and Paris started to give ground over the last 48 hours. Sarkozy accepted that Nato would be in the lead on the military front as Britain and the US accepted that international coalition members and not the alliance would provide political oversight.

Diplomats said that some of the newer members of Nato in eastern Europe put strong pressure on France. The likes of Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Baltic states and Belgium made clear that they could help enforce the UN resolution on the no-fly zone as part under a Nato umbrella.

Ankara also adopted what was described as a more flexible approach after a phone call late on Monday between Obama and Tayyip Recep Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister.

Obama, who was grateful for Ankara's role in helping to release four New York Times journalists in Libya, is understood to have impressed Erdogan in listening to his concerns about a western-dominated campaign.

Signs of movement were shown Tuesday when the Nato envoys met again to try to patch over their differences. Rasmussen announced Nato would take charge of the naval flotilla assembled in the Mediterranean to police a UN arms embargo against Libya.

The ships "will conduct operations to monitor, report and, if needed, interdict vessels suspected of carrying illegal arms or mercenaries. This will be done in close co-ordination with commercial shipping and regional organisations," he said.

The Rasmussen statement said: "Nato has completed plans to help enforce the no-fly zone - to bring our contribution, if needed, in a clearly defined manner, to the broad international effort to protect the people of Libya from the violence of the Gaddafi regime."

Amid the disarray over who should run the air campaign, Norway said it was keeping its aircraft grounded on Crete until it knew who was in charge. Italy, close geographically to Libya, has made seven air bases available for the "coalition of the willing" campaign, but warned that it would put them back under national control if Nato did not take charge.

One observer of Anglo-American military adventures over the last 20 years tried to make light of the impasse. "It's a bit like a barn dance," the source said of the efforts to decide whether and how Nato would run the operation. "Half of the people can't dance, a couple are drunk and then there's always the characters at the back with their hands up various skirts."

4. Navy to axe 'Fukushima type' nuclear reactors from submarines

Reactors sharing similar design to ones at Japanese plant to be dropped because they fail to meet safety standards

Trident submarines based at Faslane, Scotland, and six Trafalgar-class subs have reactors similar to the ones involved in Japan's nuclear crisis. Photograph: Corbis

The Royal Navy is to drop a dangerous type of reactor used in its existing nuclear submarines because it fails to meet modern safety standards, defence ministers have disclosed.

A safer type of reactor is expected to be used in the submarines that will replace the Trident fleet, as the existing design shares very similar features to the nuclear reactors involved in the Fukushima Daiichi disaster in Japan.

Liam Fox, the defence secretary, told MPs there was a "very clear-cut" case to use the new type of reactor because it has "improved nuclear safety" and would give "a better safety outlook".

A heavily censored Ministry of Defence report disclosed earlier this month by the Guardian and Channel 4 News said the current reactors are "potentially vulnerable" to fatal accidents, which could cause "multiple fatalities" among submarine crews.

The report, written by a senior MoD nuclear safety expert, Commodore Andrew McFarlane, said the existing type compared "poorly" with those in the most modern nuclear power stations because it relied on a vulnerable type of cooling system, falling "significantly short" of modern best practice for nuclear reactors.

McFarlane warned that the naval reactors are "potentially vulnerable to a structural failure of the primary circuit". An accident could release "highly radioactive fission products", posing "a significant risk to life to those in close proximity and a public safety hazard out to 1.5km [1 mile] from the submarine".

Known as the PWR2, this type is used in the four Trident submarines based at Faslane, near Glasgow, and six Trafalgar-class ones now being taken out of service. Like the Fukushima power station north of Tokyo, the PWR2 relies entirely on back-up power supplies to provide emergency cooling in the event of an accident.

Despite the anxieties about its safety, PWR2s are also being fitted in the seven Astute-class submarines being built. These vessels will also be based at Faslane.

There have been debates within the MoD and the navy about whether the PWR2 should be used if a replacement to Trident is finally approved – or if a safer type, PWR3, should replace it. The PWR3 uses "passive" cooling, which makes it far less reliant on back-up power, and has additional methods of injecting coolant into a reactor.

The PWR3 is widely used in modern US nuclear submarines. The debate has delayed a decision on what type of reactor to install by 18 months, McFarlane's report disclosed, and has cost a further £261m.

Fox was questioned in the Commons on the reactor's safety by Angus Robertson, the Scottish National party's defence spokesman, after the disclosure of the report. Fox said: "The government's view is that that is the preferred option, because those reactors give us a better safety outlook. That is a debate on both sides of the Atlantic, but we believe that in terms of safety, the case is very clear-cut."

Robertson said: "This still raises concerns about the currently operational and incoming nuclear submarines, which don't satisfy acceptable safety standards. The UK should give up its nuclear obsession."

John Ainslie, from the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, who uncovered the original McFarlane report, said the new reactor would push up costs for the Trident replacement fleet by billions of pounds, since it would need designing and testing.

"There is another option: they should completely abandon their plan to squander billions on new nuclear submarines," he said.

5. Nick Clegg set to rein in NHS reforms

Liberal Democrat leader to push for changes to health and social care bill

The deputy prime minister's party is expecting him to ensure modifications were made to the health bill. Photograph: Stefan Wermuth/Reuters

Nick Clegg told a meeting of his MPs in Westminster on Tuesday that he would now be "taking the lead" within government to rein in its programme of reform for the NHS.

The Liberal Democrat leader said he was determined to ensure changes were made to the health and social care bill, the clearest sign that he will personally negotiate with the health secretary, Andrew Lansley. A senior party source said that the Lib Dem leader had decided to "front up" the issue with the Conservatives.

Lansley's reforms to the NHS – handing over a majority of the healthcare budget to GPs for commissioning, and scrapping primary care trusts – have been opposed by some Conservative MPs and the British Medical

Association, and 10 days ago Lib Dems voted at their spring party conference to ensure modifications were made to the bill. Then it was suggested that even though the Lib Dems had registered their discontent, there was little their leader would be able to do within government.

Now Clegg's aides say he will push for alterations to the bill, including beefing up the governance and accountability while minimising the financial risk of the new GP consortiums, and having some limits on the types of new private providers that can come into the system.

Clegg's closest colleagues – his parliamentary adviser Norman Lamb and the chief secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander – have been newly charged with liaising with their backbench MPs and the wider party, to secure policy modifications. There is speculation that Clegg's opposition to the bill would delay it until beyond the Easter recess as officials work behind the scenes to reformulate a bill to the tastes of the Lib Dems.

However a source said Tuesday that it might not be necessary to delay the bill with changes being tabled in the House of Lords stage instead.

Clegg addressed his MPs hours after Lansley went before the commons health select committee to explain the progress of the bill.

He surprised some MPs when he admitted they were "still thinking through" what would happen should one of the newly empowered GP consortia go bust. Lansley said: "The responsibility lies with the NHS commissioning board. To identify and then intervene – they will have powers to take over responsibility or ask another hospital to take over." But he said there was still a debate about what would be the "trigger" for the NHS commissioning board to step in.

In an overture to those concerned about the reforms, and in a nod to the parliamentary push back from Clegg's team, Lansley said there would be "opportunities to clarify, if not improve, the bill as it goes through parliament."

Lansley insisted that the bill was compatible with EU law and that he was supported by legal advice. But when pressed five times by Labour MP Valerie Vaz to publish the exact legal advice, he appeared to refuse.

The level of confusion was such that the committee's chair Stephen Dorrell asked for a note of clarification on the issues of competition.

He also admitted that the government had not yet worked out the role of Monitor, the regulatory body that ensures fair play between GP consortia.

The Tory MP for Totnes, and a GP, Sarah Wollaston suggested that without clear legislated restrictions the "public interest" of Monitor was "clearly open to interpretation". Lansley committed to sending a written explanation on the regulatory body.

Lansley said the current debate was turning on an incorrect sum and that the size of the budget being handed to GPs was not £80bn as has been accepted but £60bn, owing to elements within the budget being redirected to areas like public health and regional specialised services which will not be channelled through GP consortia.

6. Portugal edges towards 'inevitable' bailout from EU partners

Ireland's borrowing costs rose dramatically today in rumour-driven markets as speculation mounted that Portugal was also edging towards a bailout from its European partners.

Troubled Allied Irish Banks was forced to officially denounce widespread rumours that it was set to miss a crucial repayment on one of its bonds, due on Wednesday, after the difference between Ireland's and Germany's borrowing costs exploded to record levels on talk that a default was imminent.

While investors were concerned about the plight of Ireland, Portugal was also being battered ahead of a key vote on an austerity budget on Wednesday, which the prime minister José Sócrates is expected to lose. Sócrates is expected to call a snap general election if the main opposition Social Democrats carry through their threat to oppose the budget.

The move could force the country further down the route of a bailout – first trodden by Greece last spring and then by Ireland at the end of last year.

Portugal has been resisting asking for a rescue but economists and market experts believe its battle could be ending – even as the country raises taxes and embarks on the biggest spending cuts for three decades.

Emilie Gay, economist at Capital Economics, said: "With bond yields stubbornly high and heavy debt redemptions due over the next few months, it appears all but inevitable that Portugal will be forced to follow Greece and Ireland in accepting financial support from the EU and IMF."

She said it now seemed a "matter of when rather than if" Portugal would accept a bailout as the yields – interest rates – on 10-year bonds have hovered around 7% for more than a month; Greece and Ireland asked for help within four weeks of being pushed to such levels.

Portugal has just €4bn (£3.4bn) in cash reserves and €9bn of debt to mature in April and June, she said. Portugal's benchmark 10-year bond yield rose to 7.69% today – not quite the record levels of 7.81% – pushing the premium investors demand to hold Portuguese bonds over German bonds, regarded as the safest in the eurozone, to 4.43 percentage points.

The differential – or yield spread – between two-year Irish and German bonds reached 8.42 percentage points as the rumours of a default by AIB swirled. The gap later narrowed to 7.81 percentage points after AIB issued a statement in which it said the coupon due on Wednesday "will be made".

The fresh turmoil came just hours before an EU summit that will discuss the mechanics of a €440bn fund for troubled European economies. Ireland's new prime minister, Enda Kenny, is expected to ask for more flexibility on dealing with banks such as AIB, which have been largely nationalised since the €85bn bailout by the EU and IMF in November. Around €35bn was earmarked to recapitalise the banks – crippled by lax lending on property before the credit bubble burst – but even more might be needed once new stress tests are conducted across Europe's banking sector in the coming weeks.

Ireland's banks had already been injected with €50bn before the November bailout. Jane Foley, senior currency strategist at Rabobank, said that while there was "a real risk the Portuguese minority government could fall apart this week", fears that the crisis would spread to neighbouring Spain had abated. "The general consensus is that, irrespective of who is leading the Portuguese government, and whether or not the country bows to an EU bailout, this is an isolated crisis which will not bring EMU to its knees," she said.