



# THE NIEDŹWIECKI CASE

THE RISE  
AND FALL OF  
A POLISH AGENT  
OF THE KREMLIN  
INFLUENCE

ANTON SHEKHOVTSOV

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A POLISH AGENT OF THE  
KREMLIN INFLUENCE:  
THE CASE  
OF JANUSZ  
NIEDŹWIECKI



## Abbreviations

|         |                                                                |                |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| ABW     | Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (Internal Security Agency) | Poland         |
| AfD     | Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)          | Germany        |
| CIS     | Commonwealth of Independent States                             | International  |
| ECDHR   | European Council on Democracy and Human Rights                 | Poland         |
| ECGA    | European Centre for Geopolitical Analysis                      | Poland         |
| EFDD    | Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy                         | International  |
| ENEMO   | European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations          | International  |
| EU      | European Union                                                 | International  |
| FDG     | Foundation for Democracy and Governance                        | Belgium        |
| ICES    | International Expert Centre for Electoral Systems              | Israel         |
| IFBG    | International Foundation for Better Governance                 | Belgium        |
| MEP     | Member of the European Parliament                              |                |
| MP      | Member of Parliament                                           |                |
| NATO    | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation                             | International  |
| ODIHR   | Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights            | International  |
| OSCE    | Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe            | International  |
| OSCE PA | Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE                             | International  |
| OWP     | Obóz Wielkiej Polski (Camp of Great Poland)                    | Poland         |
| PACE    | Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe                | International  |
| PBIEO   | Politically biased international election observation          |                |
| PoR     | Partiya rehioniv (Party of Regions)                            | Ukraine        |
| PSL     | Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party)             | Poland         |
| RPF     | Russian Peace Foundation                                       | Russia         |
| SD      | Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats)                         | Sweden         |
| UKIP    | United Kingdom Independence Party                              | United Kingdom |

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# PREFACE

The European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) and our experts have been monitoring instances of politically biased international election observation since 2014. We define this type of “election observation” as a form of political activity performed by international actors and aimed at advancing interests of politicians and political forces by imitating credible election monitoring during electoral processes. In short, we refer to this phenomenon as “fake observation” because this practice ignores common standards of international election observation as defined in basic documents such as the “Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers” adopted in 2005 by a number of institutions including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, European Commission, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and United Nations Secretariat.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, we refer to the practice of “fake observation” as *political* activity, because of its politicised nature. Actors engaged in this activity seek to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- to whitewash electoral fraud for domestic and international audiences;
- to legitimise electoral processes considered illegitimate by the international community;
- to delegitimise and weaken the institution of free and fair elections;

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1 “Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers”, *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 27 October (2005), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/215556>.

- to subvert and/or relativise findings of credible election observation;
- to weaken political rivals;
- to build networks of influence.

The last point is especially important. Evidence collected by the EPDE through the years demonstrates that invitations to participate in politically biased international election observation missions are used by authoritarian regimes or illiberal actors as an entry door to recruit allies in key institutions of European democracies – parliaments, media, think-tanks, universities, civil society organisations, etc. While not all participants of such missions continue collaborating with authoritarian regimes, many do and eventually become engaged in networks of malign influence that directly or indirectly subvert and undermine European values and democratic institutions.<sup>2</sup>

This report discusses one particular case, that of a Polish political individual named Janusz Niedźwiecki, to provide a detailed account of how participation in fake election observation leads to engagement in even more malicious activities operated by illiberal actors and/or authoritarian regimes.

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2 Anton Shekhovtsov, “Conceptualising Malign Influence of Putin’s Russia in Europe” (Washington: Free Russia Foundation, 2020), [https://www.4freerussia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/04/Malign-Influence\\_web\\_eng-5.pdf](https://www.4freerussia.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/04/Malign-Influence_web_eng-5.pdf), p. 5.



# INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of June 2021, the Press Department of Poland's National Public Prosecutor's Office published a press release that stated, in particular, the following:

“On 31 May 2021 in Warsaw, on the order of the prosecutor of the Mazowieckie Branch of the Department for Organised Crime and Corruption of the National Public Prosecutor's Office, officers of the Internal Security Agency arrested Janusz N. [...]

The prosecutor [...] charged the detainee with espionage for the secret services of the Russian Federation against the interests of the Republic of Poland, qualified under Article 130, paragraph 1 of the Penal Code.

This act is punishable by up to 10 years of imprisonment.

During the proceedings, the places of residence of Janusz N. and the offices of related entities were searched. In the course of these activities, money in the amount of over PLN 300,000 [approximately €65,485] and a large amount of data carriers were found. [...]

In the course of the investigation, the prosecutor found that the suspect was involved in activities in favour of the Russian Federation – activities that intensified after his associate had previously been arrested on suspicion of espionage. Janusz N., commissioned by people working for Russian intelligence, tried to establish contacts with Polish and foreign politicians, including those working in the European Parliament. The suspect carried out his activities in Poland, the European Union and other countries, and those activities were part of Russian propaganda and disinformation

projects undertaken in order to weaken the position of the Republic of Poland in the EU and in the international arena.”<sup>3</sup>

While the Polish National Public Prosecutor did not disclose the full name of the suspect, all the evidence suggested that it was a Polish national named Janusz Gabriel Niedźwiecki.

The Western regressive Left called Niedźwiecki a “peace activist”;<sup>4</sup> Alexander Lukashenka’s authoritarian regime in Belarus described him as a “journalist” and “civic activist”;<sup>5</sup> and Russian pro-Kremlin media called Niedźwiecki “a renowned human rights advocate”.<sup>6</sup>

Refuting these false portrayals, this report traces Niedźwiecki’s development from a fringe political activist, through a coordinator of fake election observation missions and facilitator of international contacts of Ukrainian pro-Russian politicians, to an agent of malign Russian influence. Simultaneously, by focusing on the figure of Niedźwiecki, the report reveals a part of the vast network of Kremlin and other authoritarian influences operating in Europe and elsewhere.

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- 3 “Areszt za szpiegostwo na rzecz obcego wywiadu”, *Prokuratura Krajowa*, 10 June (2021), <https://pk.gov.pl/aktualnosci/aktualnosci-prokuratury-krajowej/areszt-za-szpiegostwo-na-rzecz-obcego-wywiadu/>.
  - 4 Monika Carbowska, “Political Persecutions in Poland”, *Defend Democracy Press*, 15 June (2021), <https://www.defenddemocracy.press/stalinism-is-back-now-in-western-europe/>.
  - 5 “Naibolee rezonansnye sluchai narusheniya prav cheloveka v otdel’nykh stranakh mira”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus*, <https://www.mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/e424905d68e54d40.html>.
  - 6 Lyudmila Chertkova, “Kontrrazvedka Pol’shi arestovala izvestnogo pravozashchitnika kak ‘russkogo shpiona’”, *Pravda*, 10 June (2021), <https://www.pravda.ru/news/world/1621676-polsha/>.

# SETTING THE SCENE

In late February 2014, at the height of the mass popular protests that became known as the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich fled to Russia. Following his flight, Russia annexed Crimea and started the invasion of eastern Ukraine. Against this background, Yanukovich's Party of Regions (Partiya rehioniv, PoR), which was characterised by predominantly pro-Russian stances, dramatically lost popularity. The PoR won the 2012 parliamentary elections with 30% of the vote, but in summer 2014 it polled so poorly that it hardly had a chance to enter the parliament again.

Ukrainian businessman and one of the PoR's main sponsors Rinat Akhmetov decided to re-brand the party in order to keep his influence over Ukrainian politics. In order to re-brand the party, Akhmetov turned to American political consultant and lobbyist Paul Manafort, who had been advising the PoR and Yanukovich since 2005.<sup>7</sup> Manafort came up with the name of the new party, Opposition Bloc (Opozytsiyny blok), that rallied many of the PoR's former members, and was reported to have personally approved the list of the Opposition Bloc's candidates in the snap 2014 parliamentary elections. In political terms, the new party differed little from the PoR: it was still pro-Russian in foreign policy orientations and was supported and, to a certain degree, run by rich businessmen who had economic interests primarily in eastern and southern Ukraine, as well as Russia. Nevertheless, with Manafort's help, the Opposition Bloc obtained

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7 Steven Lee Myers, Andrew E. Kramer, "How Paul Manafort Wielded Power in Ukraine Before Advising Donald Trump", *The New York Times*, 31 July (2016), <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/01/us/paul-manafort-ukraine-donald-trump.html>.

9.43% of the vote in the snap elections and Ukrainian parliament retained a strong pro-Russian voice despite the Russian-Ukrainian war.<sup>8</sup>

Until 2014, all the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine had been characterised by the significant presence of politically biased international monitoring missions. Politically biased international election observation (PBIEO) is a form of political activity performed by international actors and aimed at advancing interests of politicians and political forces by imitating credible election monitoring during electoral processes. A number of PBIEO organisations have sent representatives to Ukraine, and the following organisations have been especially active in Ukraine at different times: Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member Nations (Russia), British Helsinki Human Rights Group (United Kingdom), CIS-EMO (Russia), European Centre for Geopolitical Analysis (ECGA, Poland), Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections (Belgium), International Expert Centre for Electoral Systems (ICES, Israel), and European Academy for Elections Observation (Belgium). All of them have engaged in advancing political interests of pro-Russian and pro-authoritarian politicians and political forces at Ukrainian elections.

At the snap presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014, however, there was a decline in the presence of PBIEO in Ukraine, especially in comparison to the 2012 parliamentary elections. Only representatives of the ECGA “observed” the presidential election in May 2014, while the mission of the ICES did the same at the parliamentary elections in October 2014. The decline in PBIEO in 2014 can be explained by two major factors. First, pro-Russian forces suffered a political backlash and were apparently too confused to organise any significant fake observation. Second, during 2014, many members of previous PBIEO missions became increasingly involved in “observing” illegitimate plebiscites in Russia-occupied Crimea and particular areas of eastern Ukraine, which resulted in travel bans to the parts of Ukraine controlled by the legitimate Kyiv government.

In 2015, Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko sanctioned dozens of individuals, many of whom participated in “observation” missions on the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia, and the sanctions, which included

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8 Michal Kranz, “Manafort Didn’t Just Consult for Russian-Backed Politicians in Ukraine – He Also Helped Them Form a New Party”, *Business Insider*, 18 November (2017), <https://www.businessinsider.com/manafort-russia-backed-politicians-ukraine-opposition-bloc-yanukovych-trump-2017-11>.

travels bans, further undermined fake observation in Ukraine. However, by the time of the regional elections in autumn 2015, the Opposition Bloc's politicians had recovered from the confusion of 2014 and made attempts to reclaim political power, especially in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine.

One of the cities contested between the representatives of the forces loyal to the post-revolutionary authorities and those who represented the "old guard" of the Yanukovich era was the city of Dnipropetrovsk (renamed into Dnipro in 2016). There, the main mayoral contest was between Borys Filatov, backed by Ukrainian businessman Ihor Kolomoyskyi, and the Opposition Bloc's Oleksandr Vilkul, backed by Akhmetov. Vilkul's party turned to friendly European "election observers" whose job would be to provide information support to his campaign.

# OPERATION DNIPROPETROVSK: ENTER JANUSZ NIEDŹWIECKI

Polish political activist Janusz Gabriel Niedźwiecki arrived in Dnipropetrovsk in autumn 2015 as a coordinator of the observation mission organised by the International Civic Organisation “Political Initiative”. It was apparently Niedźwiecki’s first participation in an international observation mission.

In 2001-2006, Niedźwiecki studied philosophy at the University of Warmia and Mazury in his native city of Olsztyn. Later, he got interested in politics and joined the youth wing of the social-liberal Palikot’s Movement party (Ruch Palikota), founded by Janusz Palikot. In February 2012, at the age of 32, Niedźwiecki became the chairman of the Palikot’s Movement in the Olsztyn district.<sup>9</sup> In 2013, the party was renamed into “Your Movement” (Twoj Ruch); Niedźwiecki remained its member but, at the end of 2013, he lost the party leadership election in the Olsztyn district.<sup>10</sup> Niedźwiecki’s

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9 “Janusz Niedźwiecki szefem Ruchu Palikota w okręgu olsztyńskim”, *Gazeta Współczesna*, 14 February (2012), <https://wspolczesna.pl/janusz-niedzwiecki-szefem-ruchu-palikota-w-okregu-olsztyńskim/ar/5805191>.

10 “Palikot: w gminach pracują działacze partyjni, trzeba reformy samorządu”, *Money.pl*, 8 December (2013), [https://www.money.pl/archiwum/wiadomosci\\_agencyjne/pap/artukul/palikot;w:gminach;pracuja;dzialacze;partyjni;trzeba;reformy;samorządu,182,0,1438134.html](https://www.money.pl/archiwum/wiadomosci_agencyjne/pap/artukul/palikot;w:gminach;pracuja;dzialacze;partyjni;trzeba;reformy;samorządu,182,0,1438134.html)

defeat presumably marked the start of his estrangement from Your Movement. In September 2014, he left the party and submitted a notification to the prosecutor's office accusing the leadership of his former party, including Janusz Palikot himself, of misappropriating a large share of state subsidies.<sup>11</sup>

Niedźwiecki's briefly collaborated with the agrarian Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL), and ran, unsuccessfully, in the local elections in Olsztyn as a representative of the PSL.

In February 2015, Niedźwiecki found himself in another party, Change (Zmiana), the ideology of which was very different from Palikot's political project or PSL. Zmiana was formed (yet never registered) by arguably the most notorious Polish pro-Kremlin activist, Mateusz Piskorski. In the late 1990s, Piskorski was a member of the Polish neo-fascist group "Niklot", but would later join the right-wing populist Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland (Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej). In the beginning of the 2000s, Piskorski started visiting Russia and building networks with like-minded Russian far-right activists. In 2004-2005, Piskorski became engaged in PBIEO advancing the interests of authoritarian regimes in Belarus and Russia-occupied Transnistria. As he developed contacts with – at that time – the major Russian organisation involved in coordinating fake election observation, namely CIS-EMO, Piskorski founded his own organisation in 2007, the European Centre for Geopolitical Analysis (ECGA), which became a Polish "node" in a vast European pro-Kremlin network of PBIEO.<sup>12</sup>

The foundation of the radically anti-American, anti-NATO, anti-EU, and pro-Russian Zmiana party in 2015 was yet another step in Piskorski's pro-Kremlin activities in Poland. The party leadership united left-wing and right-wing activists. Vice-chairmen of the party included left-wing political commentator Jarosław Augustyniak, leader of the neo-fascist "Falanga" group Bartosz Bekier, pro-Assad businessman of Syrian origin Nabil Al

11 "Odchodzi z TR. 'Palikot sprzeniewierzył wielomilionową subwencję'", *Wprost*, 16 September (2014), <https://www.wprost.pl/469028/odchodzi-z-twojego-ruchu-palikota-sprzeniewierzył-wielomilionowa.html>; Malwina Gadawa, "Prokuratura sprawdzi Twój Ruch – także kandydatkę na prezydenta Wrocławia", *Gazeta Wrocławska*, 30 September (2014), <https://gazetawroclawska.pl/prokuratura-sprawdzi-twoj-ruch-takze-kandydatke-na-prezydenta-wroclawia/ar/3592033>.

12 More on Piskorski's activities see Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 113-117.

Malazi, and member of the right-wing populist Self-Defence party Konrad Rękas.

Because of the ECGA's active involvement in PBIEO in Ukraine in previous years, one might have expected that the Opposition Bloc would invite them to observe local elections in Dnipropetrovsk and other cities and regions of interest to the party. However, Piskorski and his ECGA were major coordinators of international fake observation of the illegitimate referendum in Russia-occupied Crimea (16 March 2014) and illegitimate parliamentary elections in parts of eastern Ukraine (November 2014). Consequently, the road to Kyiv-controlled Ukraine was closed for him: if not for legal reasons, Piskorski himself and his ECGA became too toxic even for the Opposition Bloc.

Hence, instead of engaging with Piskorski, representatives of the Opposition Bloc reached out to a Latvian pro-Russian activist, Sergejs Blagoveščenskis. At that time, he positioned himself as the defender of the Russian language in Latvia and was supportive of the now defunct Latvian political party "Harmony Centre" (Saskaņas Centrs), which claimed to represent the interests of Russians in Latvia.<sup>13</sup> Although less infamous than Piskorski, Blagoveščenskis had had experience participating and organising in PBIEO. In 2010, he took part in the observation mission of CIS-EMO at the 2010 Ukrainian regional elections.<sup>14</sup> The same year, he registered his own association in Latvia, "Political Initiative", one of the aims of which was "election monitoring at the local and international level",<sup>15</sup> and, in 2012, he brought an observation mission of "Political Initiative" to monitor Ukrainian parliamentary elections. Earlier that year, Blagoveščenskis had joined Piskorski and other pro-Kremlin activists in observing Russian presidential elections. Ironically, although "Political Initiative" was registered in Latvia, the country's Central Election Commission refused to accredit its

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13 Sergey Blagoveshchenskiy, "Obrashchenie k deputatam XI Seyma ot Tsentra Soglasiya", *blago.lv*, 16 December (2011), <http://blagolv.blogspot.com/2011/12/xi.html>; Sergey Blagoveshchenskiy, "Latviyskaya demokratiya v deystvii", *blago.lv*, 17 February (2012), <http://blagolv.blogspot.com/2012/02/blog-post.html>.

14 In 2010-2011, he contributed at least two pieces for the CIS-EMO website, in which he criticised, from the pro-Russian point of view, Latvian methods of integrating Russian speakers into the larger Latvian society.

15 "Politiskā iniciatīva", *Lursoft*, <https://company.lursoft.lv/en/politiska-iniciativa/40008159599>.





## Mateusz Piskorski.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mateusz\\_Piskorski\\_20150818\\_06.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mateusz_Piskorski_20150818_06.jpg)

observation mission to monitor the 2012 constitutional referendum on the amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.<sup>16</sup>

Blagoveščenskis used the brand of “Political Initiative” to bring an 18-strong observation mission (see Annex 1), apparently put together by Niedźwiecki using Piskorski’s contacts, to Ukraine in 2015. Apart from Niedźwiecki and Blagoveščenskis himself, the mission included, in particular, six members of the German far-right party Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) and three members of the Hungarian party Jobbik, which at that time could also be described, in terms of ideology, as far-right.<sup>17</sup> Other observers from “Political Initiative” either had previous experience participating in PBIEO or represented pro-Russian parties. (Surprisingly, the mission also included Stanislav Berkovec, a member of the Czech parliament, who, in March 2014, joined Piskorski’s “monitoring mission”

<sup>16</sup> Blagoveshchenskiy, “Latviyskaya demokratiya v deystvii”.

<sup>17</sup> Starting in 2016-2017, Jobbik has undergone an ideological transformation, shifting closer to the centre right, so it can no longer be considered a far-right party.

at the “Crimean referendum”.<sup>18</sup> Kyiv should have sanctioned him as it did many other European politicians who had been present at the “referendum” as “observers”, and his unhindered participation in the “Political Initiative” mission in Ukraine in 2015 demonstrated that Ukraine’s abilities to trace hostile elements were, at least at that time, limited.)

The aim of the “Political Initiative” mission in Ukraine was to endorse elections in case of the victory of the Opposition Bloc representatives, and condemn them in case of their defeat or unconvincing electoral performance. The mission split into two major teams. One team, including Niedźwiecki and AfD members, went to Dnipropetrovsk to observe the two rounds of the mayoral elections held on 25 October and 15 November 2015 respectively. The other team, including Jobbik members, went to Mariupol to monitor the city council elections held on 29 November 2015.

The Opposition Bloc’s Oleksandr Vilkul won the first round of the elections in Dnipropetrovsk by securing 37.94% of the vote, while Borys Filatov obtained 35.77% of the vote. The following day, the AfD’s Rainer van Raemdonck declared that the elections had been held “in compliance with the European standards” and that “Political Initiative” observers had not detected any serious or grave violations of the electoral process.<sup>19</sup>

The reactions to the second round of the elections on the part of the “Political Initiative” mission were different. On the voting day, in the morning, the Ukrainian media published a statement signed by several members of the mission (Niedźwiecki, Berkovec, Andrzej Dariusz Dofecki, Thomas Rudy, and Ludwig Flocken), warning of alleged provocations against the candidate who had won the first round of the elections, i.e. the Opposition Bloc’s Oleksandr Vilkul.<sup>20</sup> In particular, the statement said:

*Unfortunately, we are compelled to say that we have been informed by a credible source about mass provocations in the making aimed*

18 “Evropejskie nablyudateli v Sudake: Zdes’vsyo ne tak, kak nam pokazyvayut”, *Sudak*, 16 March (2014), <https://web.archive.org/web/20140319105617/http://sudak.me/articles/politic/evropejskie-nablyudateli-v-sudake-zdes-vse-ne-tak-kak-nam-pokazyvayut.html>.

19 “Mestnye vybory v Dnepropetrovske proshli v sootvetstvi s evropejskimi normami, – mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli”, *Most Dnepr*, 26 October (2015), [https://most-dnepr.info/news/politics/127114\\_mestnie\\_vibori\\_dnepropetrovske.htm](https://most-dnepr.info/news/politics/127114_mestnie_vibori_dnepropetrovske.htm).

20 “V Dnepropetrovske v den’ vyborov ozhidayutsya provokatsii protiv lidera izbiratel’noy gonki – mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli”, *Golos UA*, 15 November (2015), <https://golos.ua/news/v-dnepropetrovske-v-den-vyborov-ozhidayutsya-provokatsii-protiv-lidera-izbiratelnoj-gonki-mezhdunarodnye-nablyudateli>.



**Janusz Niedźwiecki (centre), Corinna Herold (left) and Thomas Rudy (right) at a press conference of the “Political Initiative” mission in Dnipropetrovsk.**

Source: <https://vesti.dp.ua/vybory-v-dnepropetrovske-nelzya-priz/>

*at the disruption of the electoral process. We know that some people were specifically hired – many of them having a criminal past – and were instructed to attack members of electoral commissions, burst into polling stations, damage the ballots and use other illegal means to disrupt the elections. [...] They were paid a large honorarium to turn themselves voluntarily in to the police and claim that they were working on behalf of one of the mayoral candidates. We also know that these claims are manipulative and aimed at precluding the front-runner in the elections to win in a lawful manner.<sup>21</sup>*

The “credible source” mentioned in the statement was most likely political activist Ivan Krasikov, who at that time supported Vilkul.<sup>22</sup> In a comment

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Lyudi khotyat videt’ merom Dnepropetrovska opytного menedzhera, – ekspert”, *Dnepr Glavnoe*, 6 November (2015), <https://glavnoe.dp.ua/articles/ljudi-hotjat-videt-merom-dnepropetrovska-opytного-menedzhera-jekspert-2/>.

publicised by the *Segodnya* newspaper, owned by Akhmetov's Media Group Ukraine, two days before the statement of "Political Initiative", Krasikov said that "the elections [would] be disrupted at the polling stations where, potentially, Oleksandr Vilkul [would] be winning. These people may claim that they represent Vilkul".<sup>23</sup> No other source ever suggested that the elections would be disrupted by a false-flag operation aiming at discrediting Vilkul; hence it is viable to suggest that the statement was either inspired by Krasikov's commentary or even coordinated with the Opposition Bloc's consultants. Eventually, none of the actions that Krasikov and "Political Initiative" warned of took place.

The Opposition Bloc's Oleksandr Vilkul lost the second round of the elections: his rival, Borys Filatov, obtained 52.31% of the vote, while Vilkul secured 44.92%. The day after the elections, at a press conference of the "Political Initiative" mission, Niedźwiecki declared that the second round of the elections could not be considered democratic or conforming to the European standards, in particular because he believed that 80 thousand votes had been allegedly bought by the team of one of the candidates (i.e. Filatov).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Niedźwiecki said that "Political Initiative" observers would appeal to the Council of Europe and European Parliament in order to re-run the elections in Dnipropetrovsk,<sup>25</sup> as if those institutions had authority to set elections in Ukraine.

There is no evidence that the Council of Europe gave credence to Niedźwiecki's criticism of the elections in Dnipropetrovsk, or that he ever voiced it to the Council of Europe. However, on 14 December 2015, during a plenary debate in the European Parliament, the AfD's MEP Marcus Pretzell used his 1-minute intervention to read out a statement on the elections in Dnipropetrovsk, in which he – with a reference to unnamed

23 "Aktivisty ozhidayut provokatsiy na vyborakh mera Dnepropetrovska", *Segodnya*, 13 November (2015), <https://www.segodnya.ua/regions/dnepr/aktivisty-ozhidayut-provokatsiy-na-vyborah-mera-dnepropetrovska-667037.html>. It should be stressed here that it is impossible to say whether any candidate is winning at any polling station before the votes are counted.

24 "Vybory v Dnepropetrovske nel'zya priznat' demokratichnymi i sootvetstvuyushchimi evropeyskim standartam, – mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli", *Dnepr vecherniy*, 16 November (2015), <https://dv-gazeta.info/dneprnews/vyboryi-v-dnepropetrovske-nelzya-priznat-demokratichnymi-i-sootvetstvuyushchimi-evropeyskim-standartam-mezhdunarodnyie-nablyudateli.html>.

25 "Vybory v Dnepropetrovske proshli v sootvetstvii s afrikanskimi, a ne demokraticheskimi standartami, – Yanush Nedzvetskiy", *Gorod.dp.ua*, 16 November (2015), <https://gorod.dp.ua/news/110851>.

“election observers” – briefly repeated all Niedźwiecki’s points on the second round of the elections in Dnipropetrovsk.<sup>26</sup> However, instead of calling for a re-run of the elections, Pretzell raised questions about the use of the EU’s funds in Ukraine, thus implicitly disputing rapprochement between Ukraine and the EU – fully in line with the narrative pushed both by the Opposition Bloc and the Kremlin to undermine the post-revolutionary authorities in Ukraine.

However, it was not surprising that, in his criticism of Ukraine, Pretzell did not mention the city council elections in Mariupol, also observed by the “Political Initiative” mission coordinated by Niedźwiecki. At their press conference, members of the “Political Initiative” mission declared that they had not noticed any gross violations of the electoral process in Mariupol.<sup>27</sup> Their conclusion was predictable: following the elections, the Opposition Bloc, to which the “Political Initiative” mission provided information support, secured more than 80% of the seats in the city council. Because of this outcome, the conduct of the elections did not require any criticism.

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26 “Ausführungen von einer Minute (Artikel 163 GO)”, *European Parliament*, 14 December (2015), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-12-14-INT-1-260-0000\\_DE.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-12-14-INT-1-260-0000_DE.html).

27 “Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli ne uvideli narusheniy na vyborakh v Mariupole (VIDEO)”, *0629.com.ua*, 29 November (2015), <http://www.0629.com.ua/news/1045017>; [https://mariupol.tv/news/elections/mariupol/7551/urny\\_dlya\\_golosovaniya\\_ne\\_dolzhny\\_byt\\_prozrachnymi\\_vengerskij\\_nablyudatel\\_video.html](https://mariupol.tv/news/elections/mariupol/7551/urny_dlya_golosovaniya_ne_dolzhny_byt_prozrachnymi_vengerskij_nablyudatel_video.html)

# OPERATION DNIPROPETROVSK 2: THE BRUSSELS CONNECTION

The “Political Initiative” mission was not the only organisation that called on the international community not to recognise the results of the mayoral elections in Dnipropetrovsk – so did the election observation mission of the Brussels-based Foundation for Democracy and Governance (FDG). For a better understanding of the subject of this report, it is important to discuss this mission too.

The FDG was officially registered in April 2015 by former Belgian diplomat Grégory Mathieu with the aim “to promote, protect and defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law wherever they are violated, and particularly in African states”.<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that it was officially registered only in 2015, the FDG had been active as early as 2013, which is permitted under Belgian law.

In the beginning of October 2015, just a few weeks before the regional elections in Ukraine, Mathieu expanded the scope of the activities of the FDG to include, among other activities, “participation and organisation of

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28 “Fondation pour la Démocratie et la Gouvernance”, *Moniteur Belge*, 23 April (2015), [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv\\_pdf/2015/05/06/15064393.pdf](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2015/05/06/15064393.pdf).

electoral observation missions”.<sup>29</sup> The same month, Mathieu registered yet another Brussels-based organisation, called “International Foundation for Better Governance” (IFBG), that featured, among its founders, a Ukrainian individual Nadia Borodi.<sup>30</sup> Borodi was, at that time, a girlfriend of Oleh Voloshyn, a former spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine during Yanukovich’s rule and a member of the Opposition Bloc; they would get married in 2016.

It was Borodi and Voloshyn who coordinated the trip of the FDG’s mission to Ukraine to observe the regional elections. The mission was headed by Mathieu and consisted of 20 monitors,<sup>31</sup> eight of whom went to observe the elections in Dnipropetrovsk.<sup>32</sup> Like the observers from the “Political Initiative” mission, the FDG’s monitors saw no grave violations during the first round of mayoral elections won by the Opposition Bloc’s Vilkul.<sup>33</sup> However, when Vilkul lost the second round, the rhetoric of the FDG’s mission drastically changed. Speaking at an FDG press conference, its representative Richard Andrew Balfe (Lord Balfe of Dulwich) declared that Filatov’s team had bought up to 80 thousand votes – the same number mentioned by Niedźwiecki – and called on the international community not to recognise Filatov’s victory in the mayoral elections in Dnipropetrovsk.<sup>34</sup>

At the same press conference, Balfe also said that, during his visit to Dnipropetrovsk, he had been attacked by “Filatov’s fighters”,<sup>35</sup> while Mathieu added that “the incident [could] have [negative] consequences for Ukraine’s

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29 “Fondation pour la Democratie et la Gouvernance”, *Moniteur Belge*, 7 October (2015), [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv\\_pdf/2015/10/16/15146510.pdf](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2015/10/16/15146510.pdf).

30 “International Foundation for Better Governance”, *Moniteur Belge*, 21 October (2015), [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv\\_pdf/2015/10/30/15153076.pdf](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2015/10/30/15153076.pdf).

31 “Fundatsiya za demokratiyu ta upravlinnya”, *Tsentral’na vyborcha komisija*, 25 October (2015), <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vm2015/pvm065pt001f01=100pt162f01=175.html>.

32 “Ot demokratichnosti provedeniya vyborov v Dnepropetrovske budet zaviset’ vozmozhnost’ privilecheniya investitsiy v gorod, – evropeyskie nablyudateli”, *Gorod.dp.ua*, 24 October (2015), <https://gorod.dp.ua/news/110031>.

33 “Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli o tom, kak proshli mestnye vybory v Dnepropetrovskoy oblasti (FOTO)”, *Most Dnepr*, 26 October (2015), [https://most-dnepr.info/news/press/127125\\_mezhdunarodnie\\_nablyudateli\\_tom.htm](https://most-dnepr.info/news/press/127125_mezhdunarodnie_nablyudateli_tom.htm).

34 “Nablyudateli iz Zapadnoy Evropy razoblachili skhemu skupki golosov v pol’zu Filatova na vyborakh mera Dnepropetrovska”, *Golos.ua*, 21 November (2015), [https://web.archive.org/web/20151122173552/http://ru.golos.ua/politika/nablyudateli\\_iz\\_zapadnoy\\_evropyi\\_razoblachili\\_shemu\\_skupki\\_golosov\\_v\\_polzu\\_filatova\\_](https://web.archive.org/web/20151122173552/http://ru.golos.ua/politika/nablyudateli_iz_zapadnoy_evropyi_razoblachili_shemu_skupki_golosov_v_polzu_filatova_).

35 Ibid.

international image”.<sup>36</sup> A witness of the incident told the author of this report that it indeed took place: three masked thugs confronted Balfe and his companions, including Borodi, when they went out for dinner in Dnipropetrovsk. The thugs menacingly declared that they were Filatov’s supporters and demanded that the observers leave Dnipropetrovsk. Neither Balfe nor his companions could be visually identified as Vilkul’s supporters or even people having anything to do with the elections. Moreover, during the incident Borodi started filming the thugs, but they did not raise any objections. The entire situation looked like a ruse orchestrated by Voloshyn to instil an impression of lawlessness and intimidation surrounding the electoral failure of the pro-Russian the Opposition Bloc’s Vilkul candidate. It is unclear whether Voloshyn’s apparent stunt influenced Balfe in terms of his attitude towards Russia or Ukraine, but speaking to the Russian state-controlled media in 2018, he would deny the Russian invasion of Crimea and try to whitewash the Russian occupation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>37</sup>

The similarities between the statements of the observers of the “Political Initiative” and FDG, as well as the direct link between the FDG’s coordinator Nadia Borodi and the leadership of the pro-Kremlin Opposition Bloc, suggest that both international, supposedly independent missions were in fact controlled by the political consultants of the Opposition Bloc. After their candidate’s defeat in the elections in Dnipropetrovsk, the Opposition Bloc’s objective was to discredit Ukraine in the eyes of the international community to the benefit of the Kremlin. It was hardly a coincidence that the official newspaper of the Russian government, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, when covering the second round of the mayoral elections in Dnipropetrovsk, cited only the representatives of the “Political Initiative” and FDG,<sup>38</sup> despite the fact that there were other missions monitoring regional elections in Ukraine, including much more numerous and significantly more established observation missions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in

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36 Pyotr Likhomanov, “Ugrozhayut lordu. Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli ne priznali vybory v Dnepropetrovske”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 17 November (2015), <https://rg.ru/2015/11/17/dnepr-site-anons.html>.

37 “Chlen Palaty lordov: vossoedinenie Kryma s RF bylo logichnym”, TASS, 1 February (2018), <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/4921054>.

38 Likhomanov, “Ugrozhayut lordu”.



## Europe (OSCE ODIHR) and the European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations (ENEMO).<sup>39</sup>

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39 As mentioned above, the “Political Initiative” mission consisted of 18 observers, while the FDG’s mission had 20 monitors. At the same time, the OSCE ODIHR mission had 727 observers, while the mission of ENEMO consisted of 398 monitors. See “Ofitsiyini sposterigachi vid vseukrayins’kykh gromadskikh organizatsiy, inozemnykh derzhav ta mizhnarodnykh organizatsiy”, *Tsentral’na vyborcha komisiya*, 25 October (2015), <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vm2015/pvm063pt001f01=100.html>.

# NIEDŹWIECKI AND THE ZMIANA EXPERIENCE

On 24 November 2015, during Russia's military operation in defence of the dictator Bashar al-Assad's regime in the course of the Syrian civil war, a Russian attack aircraft violated Turkish airspace near the Syria-Turkey border and was shot down by a Turkish fighter jet.<sup>40</sup> Russia denied the downed aircraft had violated Turkish airspace and condemned the incident, while Russian President Vladimir Putin went so far as to say that it was "a stab in the back carried out by the accomplices of terrorists", implying that Turkey was somehow cooperating with the terrorists from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS).<sup>41</sup>

The shootdown of the Russian aircraft led to a significant deterioration of relations between Moscow and Ankara. Russia introduced a range of economic sanctions against Turkey, and initiated a campaign to discredit Turkey along Putin's statement, linking Ankara to Islamist terrorists. In Poland, Piskorski's Zmiana became one of the pro-Kremlin organisations that supported Moscow's line in its conflict with Ankara. On 28 November

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40 Tulay Karadeniz, Maria Kiselyova, "Turkey Downs Russian Warplane near Syria Border, Putin Warns of 'Serious Consequences'", *Reuters*, 24 November (2015), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUSKBN0TD0IR20151124>.

41 "Turkey Downing of Russia Jet 'Stab in the Back, - Putin", *BBC*, 24 November (2015), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34913173>.



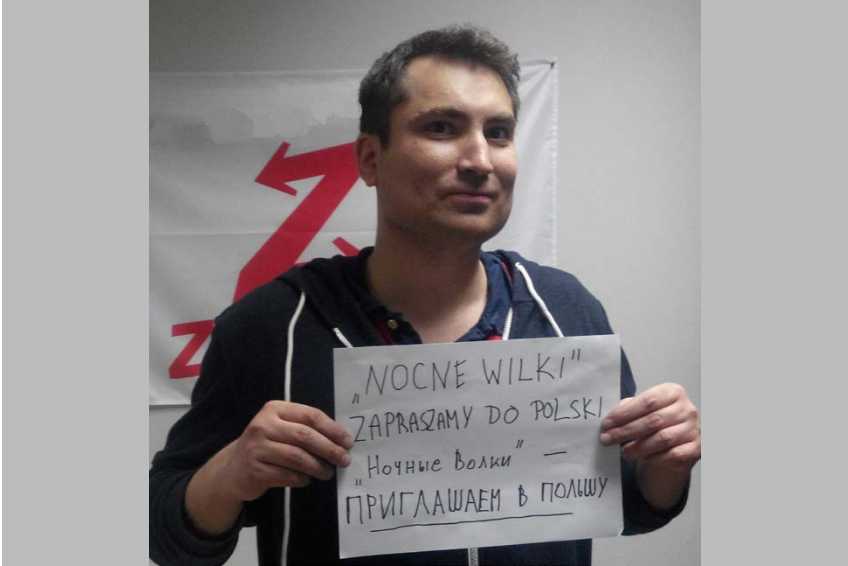
### Zmiana at the anti-Turkey protest in Warsaw.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/350858821772625/photos/a.351694158355758/444415949083578/>

2015, Niedźwiecki, as a member or sympathiser of Zmiana, joined a small protest co-organised by his party and another Polish far-right organisation, Camp of Great Poland (Obóz Wielkiej Polski, OWP), in front of the Turkish Embassy in Warsaw.<sup>42</sup> Following the official Russian narrative, the Zmiana and OWP declared that Turkey was cooperating with ISIL, and Zmiana called on the Polish government to condemn Turkey's "act of aggression" and – since both Poland and Turkey are NATO members – distance itself from Turkey's "actions in support of the de-facto terrorist groups operating in Syria".<sup>43</sup>

42 "Protest pod ambasadą Turcji", *Zmiana*, 8 December (2015), <https://web.archive.org/web/20160524204519/http://partia-zmiana.pl/2015/12/08/protest-pod-ambasada-turcji/>; "Warszawa: pikiet pod ambasadą Turcji", *Obóz Wielkiej Polski*, 28 November (2015), <https://www.owp.org.pl/index.php/dzialalnosc/2015/439-warszawa-pikiet-pod-ambasada-turcji>.

43 "Protest pod ambasadą Turcji".



### Janusz Niedźwiecki welcoming the pro-Putin “Night Wolves” biker gang to Poland.

Source: [https://www.facebook.com/events/1443504159281536/?post\\_id=1444010605897558](https://www.facebook.com/events/1443504159281536/?post_id=1444010605897558)

This anti-Turkish protest was not the only Zmiana activity that Niedźwiecki joined.

On 8 March 2015, he participated in the party’s anti-NATO protest in Warsaw.<sup>44</sup>

On 27 April 2015, Niedźwiecki, together with other Zmiana activists and neo-fascists from “Falanga”, took part in a demonstration welcoming a group of ten motorcyclists from the pro-Putin “Night Wolves” biker gang that planned to travel to Poland (but were blocked from entering the country by the Polish authorities).<sup>45</sup>

44 “Partia ZMIANA. 8 Marca 2015, Warszawa”, *YouTube*, 18 March (2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yurh1eDfxpk>.

45 Janusz Gabriel Niedźwiecki: “Nocne Wilki’ dostały ‘misia””, *Olsztyn.com.pl*, 28 April (2015), <https://www.olsztyn.com.pl/artykul,janusz-gabriel-niedzwiecki-nocne-wilki-dostaly-misia,18544.html>.



### Janusz Niedźwiecki at Zmiana's anti-US protest in Warsaw.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-lpncQZwNc>

On 2 May 2015, Niedźwiecki made a speech at an event aimed at discrediting post-revolutionary Ukraine by exploiting the tragic events in Odessa on 2 May 2014, when dozens of people died as a result of deadly clashes between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian activists (see below).<sup>46</sup>

And on 15 February 2016, Niedźwiecki participated in an anti-American costumed demonstration of Zmiana held by the Ronald Reagan Monument in Warsaw on the US Presidents' Day.<sup>47</sup>

As would be stated by the Polish Internal Security Agency (Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego, ABW) later, Piskorski, as the leader of Zmiana, organised many such events in direct cooperation with the Russian intelligence services:

*Since an unspecified date no later than 2013, [Piskorski] had been participating, in Warsaw, other Polish cities, and in Russia, in the*

46 "02 05 2015 rocznica zbrodni w Odessie", *YouTube*, 3 February (2016), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_3dZpvq0eBo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3dZpvq0eBo).

47 "Dzień antyprezydencki w Warszawie 15 02 2016", *YouTube*, 16 February (2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-lpncQZwNc>.

*activities of the Russian civilian secret intelligence. In particular, the applicant had had multiple operational meetings in Russia with identified agents of the Foreign Intelligence Service (“FSB”) and Federal Security Service (“SVR”) who worked under the cover of official representatives of Russian non-governmental organisations. [Piskorski], aware of the real status of those persons, had accepted operational assignments in the context of Russian “information warfare” in order to disseminate theories in Russia’s interests and manipulate social attitudes in Poland. [He] had accepted funds for the realisation of those operations as well as remuneration. [...] [Piskorski] had led to the creation of a political party, “Change”, and its associations “Ukrainian Committee” and “Kresy Trusteeship” (Powiernictwo Kresowe), all of which organisations were controlled and funded by Russian secret services. The applicant had used these organisations to carry out his operational activities (demonstrations and pickets) aimed at antagonising Polish-Ukrainian relations.<sup>48</sup>*

The ABW arrested Piskorski on 18 May 2016 and charged him with the offence of taking part in the operations of Russia’s intelligence against Poland. (It is to him, to Niedźwiecki’s “associate”, that the Press Department of Poland’s National Public Prosecutor’s Office referred to when publishing a notice on Niedźwiecki’s arrest by the ABW.) Piskorski’s associates from Zmiana started an active campaign calling for his release; Niedźwiecki, however – instead of joining them – distanced himself from Zmiana and did not participate in any protests in support of the arrested party leader.

48 “Decision. Application no. 80959/17. Mateusz Andrzej PISKORSKI against Poland”, *European Court of Human Rights*, 22 October (2019), <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/docx/pdf?filename=PISKORSKI+v.+POLAND.pdf&id=001-198662&library=ECHR&logEvent=False>. Italics in original. Note, however, the mistake in providing incorrect Russian abbreviations for the Foreign Intelligence Service (should be SVR) and Federal Security Service (should be FSB).

# OPERATION ODESSA

In spring 2014, following the annexation of Crimea, the Kremlin dramatically stepped up its support for pro-Russian separatist movements in southern and eastern parts of Ukraine. One of the Ukrainian places that Moscow targeted via a wide network of agents of influence was Odessa.

In response to the separatist activities, pro-Ukrainian activists held a unity march in Odessa on 2 May 2014. Pro-Russian separatists attacked the march with stones, cold weapons and firearms, but pro-Ukrainian activists retaliated. Amid the fierce clashes, two pro-Ukrainian activists and four pro-Russian separatists were killed or mortally wounded.<sup>49</sup> But the major incident on that day took place at the Odessa House of Trade Unions, where 42 people,<sup>50</sup> including both pro-Russian separatists and accidental non-combatants, died in a fire that most likely erupted as a result of an exchange of Molotov cocktails between pro-Ukrainian activists and pro-Russian separatists who had holed up in the House. While both sides

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49 “Accountability for Killings in Ukraine from January 2014 to May 2016”, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/OHCHRThematicReportUkraineJan2014-May2016\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/OHCHRThematicReportUkraineJan2014-May2016_EN.pdf).

50 Ibid.

of the conflict seem to be responsible for the deadly fire,<sup>51</sup> Russia blamed the incident exclusively on the post-revolutionary Ukrainian authorities and compared the fire to the Nazi crimes during the Second World War.<sup>52</sup>

Since that day, Moscow and its allies kept on exploiting the deadly fire in Odessa in attempt to discredit Ukraine and post-revolutionary Ukrainian authorities domestically and internationally. To achieve this objective, Moscow and pro-Kremlin Ukrainian forces engaged with foreign journalists, academics, activists and politicians to bring them to Odessa around the commemorative date, or organised propaganda events outside of Ukraine – in key countries of the EU, as well as at international institutions. The aim of these activities – often hosted by pro-Kremlin agents of influence or front organisations – was to convince European political elites to stop supporting Ukraine in its struggle against the Russian aggression.

In 2016, pro-Kremlin activists organised several Odessa-related events to disseminate anti-Ukrainian propaganda on the international level. In several contexts, the central figure in these events was a Ukrainian citizen, Viktoriya Machulko. She is the president of the so-called “Council of Mothers of May 2”, an organisation that – at least at that time – was supported by the Opposition Bloc.

On 12 March that year, Machulko took part in a panel discussion that took

51 According to the report of the International Advisory Panel, constituted by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the fire was predominantly started by the people inside, rather than outside of, the House of Trade Unions: “At about 7.45 p.m. a fire broke out in the Trade Union Building. Forensic examinations subsequently indicated that the fire had started in five places, namely the lobby, on the staircases to the left and right of the building between the ground and first floors, in a room on the first floor and on the landing between the second and third floors. Other than the fire in the lobby, the fires could only have been started by the acts of those inside the building. The forensic reports did not find any evidence to suggest that the fire had been pre-planned. The closed doors and the chimney effect caused by the stairwell resulted in the fire’s rapid spread to the upper floors and a fast and extreme rise in the temperature inside the building”. See “IAP Report on Odesa Events”, *Council of Europe*, 4 November (2015), <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168048851b>. See also the results of the independent journalistic investigation of the developments in Odessa on 2 May 2014: Vladislav Balinsky, Tatyana Gerasimova, Sergey Dibrov, Vladimir Sarkisyan (eds), *Odessa. 2 maya 2014-go: Kak eto bylo: Materialy i dokumenty nezavisimogo zhurnalistkogo rassledovaniya “Gruppy 2 maya”* (Odessa: 2016), <https://2maygroup.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>.

52 “Churkin: te, kto szhigal lyudey v Odesse, ne ukraintsy, eto fashisty”, *RIA Novosti*, 4 May (2014), <https://ria.ru/20140504/1006493342.html>.



place in Wrocław and was moderated by Jacek Cezary Kamiński.<sup>53</sup> The latter is the chairman of the Ukrainian Committee mentioned in the ABW's charges against Piskorski upon his arrest. Kamiński is also a co-founder of the International Institute of the Newly Established States, a Russian front organisation in Poland that Kamiński co-founded with one of Piskorski's Russian handlers, Aleksey Martynov.<sup>54</sup>

On 21 March, Machulko took part in a conference titled "Ukraine: Maidan, Odessa – Two Years Later", held at the Palace of Nations of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The conference was organised by a fake NGO named "Human Rights Agency",<sup>55</sup> and – apart from Machulko and Kamiński – featured several European activists, including Xavier Moreau.<sup>56</sup> Moreau is a dual French-Russian citizen who owns the Moscow-based consultancy Sokol Holding and was instrumental in establishing relations between Russian actors and the French far-right National Front (Front National) renamed National Rally (Rassemblement National) in 2018 of Marine Le Pen.

On 2 May, several foreign journalists and activists, including Bruce Gagnon, Phil Wilayto and Regis Tremblay from the US-based United National Antiwar Coalition, took part in commemorative events in Odessa at the invitation of Machulko's "Council of Mothers of May 2".<sup>57</sup> Wilayto also accompanied Machulko to the European Parliament in Brussels,<sup>58</sup> where she presented a pro-Kremlin interpretation of the events in Odessa at a roundtable organised by three MEPs, namely Tatjana Ždanoka and Andrejs

53 "Social Forum of Eastern Europe Discussed Topical Issues of the Region's Life", *FACT International*, 13 March (2016), <https://web.archive.org/web/20180826073650/http://fact.international/2016/03/social-forum-of-eastern-europe-discussed-topical-issues-of-the-region-s-life/>.

54 Anton Shekhovtsov, "More Evidence the Polish Center for Geopolitical Analysis Was a Russian Front", *Tango Noir*, 15 November (2020), <https://www.tango-noir.com/2020/11/15/more-evidence-the-polish-center-for-geopolitical-analysis-was-a-russian-front/>.

55 Tatyana Gerasimova, "Pod imenem OON v Zheneve proveli ukrainophobskeyu konferentsiyu. Znayut li ob etom v OON", *Dumskaya*, 25 March (2016), <https://dumskaya.net/post/pod-imenem-oon-v-zheneve-proveli-ukrainof/author/>.

56 "Sovet materiy Odessy predstavil OON materialy o tragedii 2 maya v Dome profsoyuzov", *RT*, 22 March (2016), <https://russian.rt.com/article/154824>.

57 "Reports from the UNAC Delegation to Odessa for the May 2nd Memorial to Those Killed at the House of Trade Unions on May 2, 2014", *United National Antiwar Coalition*, <https://www.unacpeace.org/odessarpt.html>.

58 Ibid.



**Members of the European Parliament Yana Toom (left), Tatjana Ždanoka (second from the right) and Javier Couso Permuy (right) meeting with Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad (second from the left) in Damascus in**

2016. Source: <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/politics/politics/foreign-ministry-condemns-meps-trip-to-syria.a191814/>

Mamikins from Latvia, and Yana Toom from Estonia.<sup>59</sup> All three MEPs are known for their support of authoritarian regimes. Ždanoka was a member of Piskorski’s “monitoring mission” at the “Crimean referendum”, while Mamikins “urged Latvia to forget the Russian occupation of Crimea [...] with the aim of improving the economic situation of Latvia and the Baltic

59 Lauri Laugen, “Valjaanne EU Today kirjutab Kremli mõjust europarlamentidele Yana Toomi näitel”, *Delfi*, 5 May (2016), <https://www.delfi.ee/artikkel/74435473/valjaanne-eu-today-kirjutab-kremli-mojust-europarlamentidele-yana-toomi-naitel>.

region”.<sup>60</sup> Ždanoka and Toom would travel to Damascus to express support for Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.<sup>61</sup> And all three MEPs would regularly vote against resolutions of the European Parliament criticising Russia’s aggressive behaviour and violation of human rights.

The Opposition Bloc’s Oleh Voloshyn was also actively involved in organising commemorative events in Odessa in 2016. With these events, Voloshyn followed the same pattern as in Dnipropetrovsk in 2015: he engaged with Grégory Mathieu and Janusz Niedźwiecki to arrange visits of foreign politicians to Odessa.

First, with the help of Mathieu, Voloshyn brought Denis Ducarme, a member of the Belgian Reformist Movement (Mouvement réformateur), to Odessa. On 2 May 2016, Ducarme paid a visit to the Orthodox mass for the victims of the Odessa fire,<sup>62</sup> but when Voloshyn suggested Ducarme lay floral tributes to the victims at the location of the deadly incident, the Belgian politician, according to a witness familiar with the situation, declined to follow the suggestion, possibly realising the extremely politicised nature of the action. Ducarme reportedly also became angry at Voloshyn’s plans to use him in the Ukrainian political games, and that downgraded the IFBG’s relations with Voloshyn and contributed to the decision of the organisation’s leadership to remove Borodi from the IFBG team.

Niedźwiecki appeared in Odessa in July accompanying two Polish senators, Jan Rulewski and Jerzy Wcisła, representatives of the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska), the main opposition party in Poland at that time. Officially, Rulewski and Wcisła were invited to Odessa by Machulko’s “Council of Mothers of May 2”, but a closer look into their visit reveals a different picture.

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60 “MEP Mamikins: Forgetting Crimea Occupation Would Improve Our Economic Situation”, *The Baltic Times*, 18 March (2017), [https://www.baltictimes.com/mep\\_mamikins\\_\\_forgetting\\_crimea\\_occupation\\_would\\_improve\\_our\\_economic\\_situation/](https://www.baltictimes.com/mep_mamikins__forgetting_crimea_occupation_would_improve_our_economic_situation/).

61 Maïa de La Baume, “Push to Crack Down on Rogue European Parliament Missions”, *Politico*, 4 July (2017), <https://www.politico.eu/article/push-to-crack-down-on-rogue-european-parliament-missions/>.

62 “V pamyat’ o tragedii v Odesse mitropolit Agafangel sovershil panikhidu v Svyato-Uespenskom muzhskom monastyre”, *Soyuz pravoslavnykh zhurnalistov*, 4 May (2016), <https://spzh.news/ru/news/29884-v-pamyat-o-tragedii-v-odesse-mitropolit-agafangel-sovershil-panikhidu-v-svyato-uspenskom-odesskom-mu>.

Their trip was initiated by the Opposition Bloc,<sup>63</sup> which – following the Kremlin’s line – exploited the tragic events in Odessa to attack the Ukrainian pro-Western government. Voloshyn turned to Niedźwiecki and asked him to coordinate the visit of the two Polish senators to Odessa. The “Council of Mothers of May 2” (and its official invitation for Rulewski and Wcisła) was used only as a smokescreen to conceal the political agenda of the Odessa visit – perhaps not so much for the Ukrainian observers but rather for the Polish senators who might otherwise have been put off by the idea of being used by the pro-Kremlin propaganda machine. To confuse Rulewski and Wcisła, representatives of Machulko’s “Council” even claimed they cooperated with the Brussels-registered IFBG.<sup>64</sup> That sounded respectful and revealed no immediate connection to Ukraine – the Polish senators hardly knew that it had been co-founded by Nadia Borodi, a girlfriend of a member of the Opposition Bloc’s Oleh Voloshyn. However, the reference to the IFBG by the representatives of Machulko’s “Council” – was not only manipulative but also illegitimate: by that time, Borodi had been removed from the IFBG, while the organisation itself had nothing to do with the Polish senators’ visit to Odessa.

Although Niedźwiecki denied that it was the Opposition Bloc that organised the Polish senators’ trip to Ukraine, Niedźwiecki communicated exclusively with representatives of this party during his visit to Odessa. Ukrainian activists who revealed the political agenda behind Rulewski’s and Wcisła’s trip published videos featuring Niedźwiecki and the two Polish senators in the company of Igor Shavrov (deputy head of the Opposition Bloc in Chornomorsk) and Irina Kovalish (the Opposition Bloc’s then press secretary in the Odessa region), as well as Borodi and Voloshyn.<sup>65</sup>

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- 63 “V Odesse Avtomaydan blokiroval v otele dvukh pol’skikh senatorov”, *Evropeyskaya pravda*, 13 July (2016), <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2016/07/13/7052054/>.
- 64 “Pol’ski senatory i separatizm v Odesi”, *PolUkr*, July (2016), <http://www.polukr.net/uk/blog/2016/07/polski-senatory-i-separatyzm/>. When answering a question as to who organised their trip, Rulewski could only say that it was a foundation registered in Brussels. See “Sryv press-konferentsii odesskikh separatistov i pol’skikh politikov”, *YouTube*, 14 July (2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Dfj9bGPP6I>. On his Facebook page, however, he indirectly confirmed that he had been told of the IFBG’s alleged involvement, see Jan Rulewski, “Odessa. Wpuszczono do nas media”, *Facebook*, 13 July (2016), [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1065900940165083&id=889618367793342](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1065900940165083&id=889618367793342).
- 65 “Rabota po vyyavleniyu podgotovki Oppoblokom separatistskoy konferentsii”, *YouTube*, 13 July (2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfOojWFzvwU>; “Sryv press-konferentsii odesskikh separatistov i pol’skikh politikov”.



### **Nadia Borodi and Oleh Voloshyn in 2017.**

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1407724479300011&set=a.442053772533758>

One Ukrainian organisation also claimed that Rulewski and Wcisła were going to participate in a joint press conference with the representatives of the Opposition Bloc, but this claim cannot be verified by independent sources and seems false: the Opposition Bloc aimed at concealing, rather than highlighting, its involvement in organising the Odessa visit of the two Polish senators, hence the use of Machulko’s “Council of Mothers of May 2” and IFBG as smokescreens. Nevertheless, some Ukrainian nationalists believed the claims about the press conference, and blocked the entrance to the hotel where the two Polish senators were staying in order to prevent them from participating in the presumed event.<sup>66</sup> Commenting on the blockade, the Opposition Bloc’s MP Mykola Skoryk warned that it

66 “Odesskiy ‘Avtomaydan’ zablokiroval inostrantsev v otele, chtoby sorvat’ aktsiyu na Kulikovom pole”, *Dumskaya*, 13 July (2016), <https://dumskaya.net/news/odesskiy-avtomaydan-zablokiroval-inostrantcev-v-060351/>.



### Polish senators Jan Rulewski (right) and Jerzy Wcisła (left) blocked at a hotel in Odessa in 2016.

Source: <https://www.radiopik.pl/2,45602,senator-jan-rulewski-zablokowany-w-hotelu-w-odes>

would lead to “an international scandal”<sup>67</sup> – which perhaps was the aim of the Opposition Bloc – but it never broke out, despite the attempts of the Polish edition of the Russian state-controlled Sputnik website to cause a stir.<sup>68</sup> Rulewski and Wcisła did manage to meet with a few people whose relatives had been killed in Odessa in 2014,<sup>69</sup> but those meetings were not widely publicised.

67 “Nardep Skorik: Blokirowanie radikalami senatorow pol’skiego Senata v Odesse grozit mezhdunarodnym skandalom”, *Slovo*, 13 July (2016), <http://www.slovo.odessa.ua/news/13067-nardep-skorik-blokirowanie-radikalami-senatorow-polskogo-senata-v-odesse-grozit-mezhdunarodnym-skandalom-foto.html>.

68 Leonid Sigan, “Prawa człowieka po ukraińsku”, *Sputnik*, 1 September (2016), <https://pl.sputniknews.com/20160901/prawa-czlowiek-po-ukrainsku-3803693.html>.

69 Jerzy Wcisła, “Jestem w Warszawie”, *Facebook*, 14 July (2016), <https://www.facebook.com/jurek.wcisla/posts/10204957517936364>.

# THE SUBSTITUTE

As mentioned above, Niedźwiecki distanced himself from Zmiana and did not participate in its campaign calling for the release of Piskorski. It is fair to assume that Niedźwiecki's decisions in this regard were underpinned by two major considerations. On the one hand, his previous political experience and further activities suggest that he was never a staunch political activist and was engaged in various political projects as long as they served his personal objectives; in this sense, links to arrested Piskorski felt toxic and damaging to his reputation. On the other hand, in comparison to the domestic developments, his cooperation with the Opposition Bloc, bankrolled by Ukrainian oligarchs, apparently seemed to him more beneficial and lucrative.

Nevertheless, Niedźwiecki would keep some ties to members of Zmiana when expected benefits outweighed potential risks. One example of this calculated approach was Niedźwiecki's trip to Russia in August 2016 in the company of Zmiana's vice president Jarosław Augustyniak and the party secretary Tomasz Jankowski. All three of them, together with a few other Polish activists,<sup>70</sup> in fact, were simply accompanying a more prominent Polish politician, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, on his visit to Moscow and Chechnya's capital Grozny. The delegation also featured a now late far-right German journalist Manuel Ochsreiter and an Italian pro-Kremlin media activist Eliseo Bertolasi.

At that time, eccentric far-right politician Korwin-Mikke was a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), and, by the time of his trip in August 2016, had already participated in several events that can be seen as advancing the interests of the Kremlin and other authoritarian regimes. On 30 November – 1 December 2014, Korwin-Mikke took part in the

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70 Those were Marcin Skalski, Jan Wsól and Bartosz Bieszczad.

International Conference on Combating Terrorism and Religious Extremism held in Damascus, Syria.<sup>71</sup> The conference, greeted by Syrian Prime Minister Wael Nader al-Halqi, was characteristically illiberal, and featured, among many other guests, Piskorski, Zmiana's future vice president Nabil Al Malazi, British neo-fascist Nick Griffin, and a delegation of the American pro-Kremlin and anti-Semitic magazine *Veterans Today*.<sup>72</sup> In December 2015, Korwin-Mikke illegally visited Russia-annexed Crimea and met with the Russian occupation authorities.<sup>73</sup> In March and May 2016, he visited Moscow to take part in programmes of the Russian state-controlled TV channels Russia-1 and NTV.<sup>74</sup>

Korwin-Mikke's trip to Russia in August 2016 was officially organised by the Centre for Russian-Polish Dialogue and Reconciliation, headed at that time by Yuriy Bondarenko. According to Łukasz Wenerski and Michał Kaciewicz, Bondarenko was in close contact with Piskorski and the two had been in regular communication since 2015.<sup>75</sup> It seems viable to assume that had Piskorski not been arrested in May 2016, he would have likely accompanied Korwin-Mikke to Russia in August that year. In this respect, Niedźwiecki, who – like Zmiana's leader – spoke relatively good Russian, acted as

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- 71 [Janusz Ryszard Korwin-Mikke], "Oświadczenie o udziale posłów w wydarzeniach organizowanych przez strony trzecie i na zaproszenie stron trzecich", *European Parliament*, 10 December (2014), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879\\_28-11-2014.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879_28-11-2014.pdf).
- 72 Lamiat Sabin, "What on Earth is Nick Griffin Doing in Syria?", *Independent*, 1 December (2014), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/what-earth-nick-griffin-doing-syria-9895196.html>; "Syrian Counterterrorism Conference Attracts U.S. Anti-Semites", *Anti-Defamation League*, 4 December (2014), <https://www.adl.org/blog/syrian-counterterrorism-conference-attracts-us-anti-semites>.
- 73 [Janusz Ryszard Korwin-Mikke], "Oświadczenie o udziale posłów w wydarzeniach organizowanych przez strony trzecie i na zaproszenie stron trzecich", *European Parliament*, 14 March (2017), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879\\_09-12-2015.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879_09-12-2015.pdf); "Deputat EP: vinit' v energoblokade Kryma vsekh ukraintsev nel'z'ya", *RIA Novosti*, 11 December (2015), <https://ria.ru/20151211/1340346788.html>.
- 74 [Janusz Ryszard Korwin-Mikke], "Oświadczenie o udziale posłów w wydarzeniach organizowanych przez strony trzecie i na zaproszenie stron trzecich", *European Parliament*, 21 March (2016), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879\\_05-03-2016.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879_05-03-2016.pdf); [Janusz Ryszard Korwin-Mikke], "Oświadczenie o udziale posłów w wydarzeniach organizowanych przez strony trzecie i na zaproszenie stron trzecich", *European Parliament*, 31 March (2016), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879\\_17-05-2016.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dat/124879_17-05-2016.pdf).
- 75 Łukasz Wenerski, Michał Kaciewicz, *Russian Soft Power in Poland: The Kremlin and Pro-Russian Organizations*, ed. by Lóránt Györi (Budapest: Political Capital, 2017), [https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_PL\\_20170428.pdf](https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_PL_20170428.pdf), p. 29.





**(Left to right) Manuel Ochsenreiter, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Eliseo Bertolasi and Yuriy Bondarenko at a press conference in Moscow in 2016.**

Source: <https://www.imago-images.de/st/0072955577>

Piskorski’s substitute during Korwin-Mikke’s trip to Moscow and Grozny. The participation of Ochsenreiter, a close ally of Piskorski, in that trip further supports this assumption.

Niedźwiecki’s visit to Russia in August 2016 apparently became the beginning of his “Russian career” as a substitute for Piskorski, who would be released on bail only in May 2019.

In March 2017, Niedźwiecki launched the website of the European Council on Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR).<sup>76</sup> The ECDHR presented itself as “a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization [...] supporting democratic institutions and practices around the world” and engaged in “promotion of the values of European Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the European

<sup>76</sup> “ecdhr.eu”, *EURid*, <https://whois.eurid.eu/en/search/?domain=ecdhr.eu>.

Convention of Human Rights".<sup>77</sup> As in the case of Piskorski's ECGA,<sup>78</sup> election monitoring was declared one of the main activities of the organisation.<sup>79</sup>

At first, however, the ECDHR re-published elections-related articles from a wide variety of sources, ranging from the reputable *The Economist* to the Russian state-controlled RT. But later in 2017, the ECDHR started its first election observation project, recruiting people to monitor elections in Russia on the so-called "single voting day".<sup>80</sup>

Niedźwiecki sent out invitations to an unidentified number of politicians, journalists and activists, inviting them to join a monitoring mission to observe the 2017 Russian elections. In inviting potential observers, Niedźwiecki mentioned that the expenses related to the trip to Russia would be covered by the Russian Peace Foundation.<sup>81</sup>

In recent years, the Russian Peace Foundation (RPF) has been instrumental in organising PBIEO. The organisation is headed by Leonid Slutsky, the chair of the Committee on International Affairs of the Russian State Duma. In March 2014, the day after the "Crimean referendum", Slutsky became one of the first seven Russian nationals sanctioned by the US for their involvement in the annexation of Crimea.<sup>82</sup> Although Slutsky had been involved in Russian malign activities in Europe well before 2014, particularly in his capacity as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, he became especially active since the start of the Russian war against Ukraine. Over the years, Slutsky engaged with Western politicians

77 "About Us", *European Council on Democracy and Human Rights*, <http://ecdhr.eu/about-us/>.

78 "Statut stowarzyszenia", *Europejskie Centrum Analiz Geopolitycznych*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101129124600/http://geopolityka.org/pl/informacje/71-statut-stowarzyszenia>.

79 "About Us", *European Council on Democracy and Human Rights*.

80 A single voting day is a day (the second Sunday in September every year) when Russian authorities hold municipal, regional and, when relevant, parliamentary elections. President Vladimir Putin signed the law introducing a single voting day in 2012. See Natalya Krainova, "Putin Signs Law Creating Single Voting Day in September", *The Moscow Times*, 3 October (2012), <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/10/03/putin-signs-law-creating-single-voting-day-in-september-a18260>.

81 Kenan Habul, "SD-topp kritiseras för bjudresa till Ryssland", *Aftonbladet*, 14 September (2017), <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/samhalle/a/RLAIO/sd-topp-kritiseras-for-bjudresa-till-ryssland>.

82 Executive Order 13661 – Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine", *Federal Register*, Vol. 79, No. 53, 19 March (2014), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2014-03-19/pdf/2014-06141.pdf>.



**(Left to right) Leonid Slutsky, now late pro-Russian separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko, and Mateusz Piskorski in Russia-occupied Donetsk in 2014.**

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=726164590771236&set=a.501245176596513>

and activists to inform them of Kremlin narratives on international affairs, arranged trips of Moscow-friendly politicians to Russia and Russia-annexed Crimea, and organised events advancing the Kremlin agenda. Much of the expenses related to these activities were covered by the RPF.<sup>83</sup>

As the RPF coordinated fake election observation missions involving foreign individuals, it cooperated with Piskorski's ECGA – Slutsky and Piskorski had known each other since at least November 2014, when they brought “an observation mission” to the Russia-occupied territories in

83 “‘Natsiki’, granty v SShA i tayny vizit Enrike Iglesiasa: Kak fond deputata Slutskogo ishchet ‘druzey Kremlya’ po vsemu miru”, *Dossier Center*, 5 April (2021), <https://dossier.center/slutsky/>.

eastern Ukraine.<sup>84</sup> However, since Piskorski was arrested in May 2016, Slutsky needed another European partner who would substitute him as a recruiter and coordinator of fake election monitors, and Niedźwiecki became such a partner.

It is reasonable to suggest that Slutsky established operational contact with Niedźwiecki, at the latest, in the period between the latter's visit to Russia, in August 2016, together with Korwin-Mikke<sup>85</sup>, and summer 2017, when Niedźwiecki started sending out invitations to potential election monitors. Furthermore, while at the moment it seems impossible to verify the assumption, there are grounds for assuming that operational contact between Slutsky and Niedźwiecki was established before March 2017 (i.e., the time of the ECDHR's launch), and that the very idea of launching the ECDHR came from Slutsky. For the latter, Niedźwiecki substituting for Piskorski was not sufficient: without Piskorski, the ECGA – as an EU-registered institutional framework functioning as a front of Russian malign influence – became disabled and had to be substituted too; hence the need for the ECDHR.

In September 2017, Russian media reported that 27 “international experts” from 12 countries would monitor the Russian elections during the single voting day on 10 September that year.<sup>86</sup> There is no evidence that Niedźwiecki invited all 27 observers (see Annex 2), but it was confirmed that Pavel Gamov, a Russia-born MP from the Swedish far-right Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD) party, went to Russia to monitor the elections at Niedźwiecki's invitation. Gamov also told the Swedish media that the same invitation was sent to all members of the European

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84 Halya Coynash, “An ‘Election’ amid Kalashnikovs, Cabbages and Moscow’s Fascist Fans”, *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group*, 3 November (2014), <https://khp.org/en/1414979120>.

85 Slutsky's RPF paid for several trips of French politicians to Russia and Russia-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol. Commenting on the words of Korwin-Mikke, who in August 2015 said that he was thinking of visiting Crimea, Slutsky welcomed the idea. See “Deputat o vozmozhnom vizite pol'skogo deputata v Krym: ES khotet pravdu”, *RIA Novosti*, 14 August (2015), <https://ria.ru/20150814/1183591706.html>. At the moment, it remains unclear whether it was Slutsky who eventually arranged the Polish MEP's visit to Crimea in December 2015. Slutsky could have contacted Korwin-Mikke through Piskorski. But if he did, it clearly facilitated establishing contact between Slutsky and Niedźwiecki when the latter travelled to Moscow together with Korwin-Mikke in August 2016.

86 “Za vyborami v Rossii budut nablyudat' 27 mezhdunarodnykh ekspertov”, *RIA Novosti*, 8 September (2017), <https://ria.ru/20170908/1502089440.html>.

parliamentary group “Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy” (EFDD), of which the SD was a member then.<sup>87</sup>

Gamov’s visit to Russia was marked by a series of scandals. According to a rather entertaining report in the right-wing populist *Nyheter Idag*, the Swedish MP was drinking hard during his trip to Russia and was constantly fighting with Russian organisers, demanding from them to pay his bar bills and provide him with a separate hotel room for the girls that he met, threatening otherwise to tell the media about the irregularities at the elections – an observation he could not have possibly made, as he tried to blackmail the organisers the night before the actual voting day.<sup>88</sup> Also during the trip, Gamov repeatedly harassed his female assistant (and party member), and that became one of the major reasons – along with the fact that the SD had not authorised his participation in the observation of the Russian elections – he was asked to leave the party following revelations of his behaviour in Russia.<sup>89</sup>

Niedźwiecki himself was observing the elections in Russia’s Udmurt Republic, together with Slovak MP and future Health Minister Marek Krajčí; as expected, both praised the conduct of the elections.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the blunder with Gamov, Niedźwiecki’s work as a coordinator of PBIEO was presumably evaluated well by Slutsky, and Niedźwiecki was again tasked with recruiting potential observers for the presidential election that would take place in Russia and Russia-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol on 18 March 2018.

On 1 January 2018, Niedźwiecki published a post on the ECDHR website saying that, “following an invitation from the Russian Peace Foundation”, his organisation would deploy an election observation mission to monitor

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87 Patrik Dahlin, “Pavel Gamov (SD): Jag är inte Putinist”, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, 13 September (2017), <https://unt.se/nyheter/uppsala/pavel-gamov-sd-jag-ar-inte-putinist-4754655.aspx>.

88 Chang Frick, “Den svenska diplomaten”, *Nyheter Idag*, 8 November (2017), <https://nyheteridag.se/den-svenska-diplomaten/>.

89 “Sweden Democrat Quits Party after Unauthorized Russia Trip”, *The Local*, 10 November (2017), [thelocal.se/20171110/sweden-democrat-asked-to-leave-party-over-unauthorized-russia-trip-harassment-allegations/](http://thelocal.se/20171110/sweden-democrat-asked-to-leave-party-over-unauthorized-russia-trip-harassment-allegations/).

90 “Vybory v Udmurtii podveli pod standarty demokratii”, *Lenta*, 10 September (2017), [https://lenta.ru/news/2017/09/10/udmurtia\\_standard/](https://lenta.ru/news/2017/09/10/udmurtia_standard/).



### Janusz Niedźwiecki (left) and Marek Krajčí (right) as “election observers” in Russia in 2017.

Source: <https://izvestiaur.ru/news/view/13965101.html>

the 2018 Russian presidential election.<sup>91</sup> (For some reason, Niedźwiecki would delete the post in 2020.) The same month, he started sending out letters inviting European politicians to observe the presidential election (see Annex 3).<sup>92</sup> As was the case in 2017, Niedźwiecki invited them on behalf of both the ECDHR and Slutsky’s RPF, which he described in his letters as “our Russian partner and official host of this electoral monitoring mission”. He promised that “all travel and accommodation expenses” would be covered by the organisers, and mentioned that they would be inviting “around 150 parliamentarians, politicians and experts from all around the world”. The

91 “Electoral Monitoring Mission in Russia. March 2018”, *European Council on Democracy and Human Rights*, 1 January (2018), <http://ecdhr.eu/project/electoral-monitoring-mission-in-russia-march-2018/> [no longer available].

92 Iida Tikka, Suvi Turtiainen, “Suomalaisia kansanedustajia yritetään naruttaa vaalitarkkailijoiksi Venäjälle – hämärän kutsun taustalla puolalaisjärjestö”, *Yle*, 25 January (2018), <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10039429>.

same number of observers was mentioned in the Russian media, with a reference to sources in the State Duma.<sup>93</sup>

However, the actual number of international observers invited by the Russian parliament was higher: the lower (State Duma) and upper (Federation Council) houses of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation invited a total of 482 monitors,<sup>94</sup> of whom 43 observed the presidential election in Russia-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol.<sup>95</sup> Several Russian organisations not formally affiliated with the Russian authorities, in particular, CIS-EMO, RPF, the Civic Control Association and the National Social Monitoring, actively participated in recruiting and coordinating foreign observers who were officially invited by the Federal Assembly. None of these developments was publicised, and at the moment it is difficult to estimate how many observers invited by the Russian parliament to observe the presidential election were coordinated by Niedźwiecki's ECDHR. One confirmed case is French MEP Joëlle Bergeron, who belonged to the EFDD group in the European Parliament: she observed the Russian presidential election in annexed Sevastopol.<sup>96</sup> Curiously, Bergeron's visit went completely unreported by the Russian media – in stark contrast to that of many other Western politicians and activists who observed the illegitimate election in Crimea and Sevastopol, and whose work garnered extensive coverage by the Russian media with the intention to demonstrate that at least some Westerners recognised the Russian status of the annexed Ukrainian territories.<sup>97</sup>

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93 Dmitriy Laru, Angelina Galanina, Tatyana Baykova, “Bolee 150 inostrannykh deputatov posetyat prezidentskie vybory v Rossii”, *Izvestiya*, 22 January (2018), <https://iz.ru/697617/dmitrii-laru-angelina-galanina-tatiana-baikova/bolee-150-inostrannykh-deputatov-posetiat-prezidentskie-vybory-v-rossii>.

94 “Inostrannye (mezhdunarodnye) nablyudateli na vyborakh Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii 18 marta 2018 goda”, *Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, [http://cikrf.ru/analog/prezidentskiye-vybory-2018/nablyudenie-zavyborami/mezhdunarodnoe-nablyudenie/mejd\\_nablyudateli.php](http://cikrf.ru/analog/prezidentskiye-vybory-2018/nablyudenie-zavyborami/mezhdunarodnoe-nablyudenie/mejd_nablyudateli.php).

95 Valentina Egorova, “Svoimi glazami”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 March (2018), <https://rg.ru/2018/03/18/za-vyborami-v-rf-sledilo-rekordnoe-chislo-mezhdunarodnyh-nablyudatelej.html>.

96 [Joëlle Bergeron], “Déclaration de participation des députés à des manifestations organisées par des tiers”, *European Parliament*, 14 March (2018), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124740\\_TRAV\\_LEG8\\_1001770\\_FR.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124740_TRAV_LEG8_1001770_FR.pdf).

97 Anton Shekhovtsov, “Foreign Observation of the Illegitimate Presidential Election in Crimea in March 2018”, *European Platform for Democratic Elections*, 3 April (2018), <https://www.epde.org/en/news/details/foreign-observation-of-the-illegitimate-presidential-election-in-crimea-in-march-2018-1375.html>.

# BACK IN UKRAINE

Niedźwiecki's collaboration with Russian actors did not hinder his cooperation with the Opposition Bloc. In fact, there was an element of synergy in Niedźwiecki's collaboration with the two parties, as he became a go-to person when it came to organising and coordinating participation of European politicians in authoritarian propaganda events.

One prominent example of Niedźwiecki's crossover activities is a British politician Nathan Gill, who, at the time of his engagement with Niedźwiecki, was MEP from the British Eurosceptic UKIP and a member of the EFDD group.

In spring 2018, Niedźwiecki coordinated Gill's visit to Ukraine (see Annex 4) on behalf of Oleh Voloshyn and Nadia Borodi. The latter both, in their turn, acted on behalf of Oleksandr Vilkul – the same Oleksandr Vilkul who competed and lost against Borys Filatov at the mayoral elections in Dnipropetrovsk in 2015. The idea behind Gill's trip to Ukraine, which was reportedly funded by Vilkul's "Ukrainian Perspective" Fund,<sup>98</sup> was that he would accompany Vilkul and Voloshyn during the "Victory March" that would take place in the Ukrainian cities of Kryvyi Rih and Dnipro on 9 May 2018. Especially after the start of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the "Victory March", being a celebration of the Soviet victory in the so-called "Great Patriotic War" (1941-1945), became increasingly

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98 [Nathan Gill], "Declaration of Members Attendance Pursuant to an Invitation at Events Organised by Third Parties", *European Parliament*, 27 September (2018), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124965\\_TRAV\\_LEG8\\_1002264\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124965_TRAV_LEG8_1002264_EN.pdf).





**Nathan Gill (left) and Oleksandr Vilkul (centre) at the “Victory March” in Dnipro in 2018.**

Source: <https://glavnoe.dp.ua/articles/vilkul-v-dnepre-na-marsh-mira-vyshli-desjatki-tysjach-ljudej/>

associated with the pro-Russian sentiment in Ukraine because of the political use of the war memory by the Kremlin.<sup>99</sup>

Gill was no stranger to pro-Kremlin activities. Since 2016, he had been providing commentary to the Russian state-controlled RT TV channel, criticising the EU’s sanctions imposed on Russia for its war against Ukraine<sup>100</sup> or backing Moscow’s line about alleged contacts between Ankara and ISIL.<sup>101</sup>

99 On the role of the “Great Patriotic War” in the construction of Russian post-Soviet national identity, see Olga Malinova, “Political Uses of the Great Patriotic War in Post-Soviet Russia from Yeltsin to Putin”, in Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, Tatiana Zhurzhenko (eds), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 43-70; Galia Ackerman, *Le régiment immortel: la guerre sacrée de Poutine* (Paris: Premier Parallèle, 2019).

100 “Anti-Russia Sanctions: ‘EU Should Stop Playing Games of Washington’”, *RT*, 24 July (2017), <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/397353-eu-us-russia-sanctions/>.

101 “Turkey’s Alleged ISIS Support: ‘Absolutely Horrendous’”, *RT*, 25 March (2016), <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/337219-turkey-evidence-isis-support/>.

In September 2018, Gill was invited to take part in the Moldo-Russian Economic Forum that would take place in Moldova's capital Chişinău on 20-22 September that year (see Annex 5). The person who invited Gill was Andrey Nazarov, co-chairman of the All-Russian Public Organization "Business Russia", as well as a chairman of the Board of the Yalta International Economic Forum Foundation, an organisation that had been in charge of organising annual business events in Russia-annexed Crimea. According to Gill's official declaration of participation in events organised by third parties,<sup>102</sup> his expenses related to the trip to Moldova (flights and hotel) were paid by the ECDHR, although he intentionally or unintentionally provided incorrect details about the organisation. In his declaration about the trip to Chişinău, he gave a number in the EU Transparency Register that belonged to the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, a Brussels-based lobbying organisation, the acronym of which coincided with Niedźwiecki's ECDHR but which was "seeking to promote human rights and democracy in the Gulf region with a particular focus on Bahrain and Saudi Arabia".<sup>103</sup> Gill's panel at the Moldo-Russian Economic Forum was titled "Moldova: Between East and West". It was moderated by Manuel Ochseneiter and featured – besides Moldovan and Russian speakers – Michael Harms, Executive Director of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations in Berlin; Maria Antoniou, then a member of the Hellenic Parliament from the Greek centre-right "New Democracy" party and participant of the fake monitoring mission at the 2018 Russian presidential election; and Siegbert Droese, then a member of the German Bundestag from the German far-right AfD.<sup>104</sup>

Niedźwiecki's ECDHR also reportedly paid for the Ukrainian trip of Gill and his fellow British EFDD MEPs Jonathan Arnott and David Coburn (though

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102 [Nathan Gill], "Declaration of Members Attendance Pursuant to an Invitation at Events Organised by Third Parties", *European Parliament*, 27 September 2018, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124965\\_TRAV\\_LEG8\\_1002263\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124965_TRAV_LEG8_1002263_EN.pdf).

103 "About Us", *European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights*, [https://www.ecdhr.org/?page\\_id=127](https://www.ecdhr.org/?page_id=127). To clarify the confusion, the author of this report wrote several email messages to the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, but none of them was ever answered.

104 "Program of the Moldo-Russian Economic Forum", [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/attach/124965\\_1242d397-d718-4971-a116-8b04969f7040\\_3.docx](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/attach/124965_1242d397-d718-4971-a116-8b04969f7040_3.docx).

it is unlikely that ECDHR would use its own money for this purpose).<sup>105</sup> Officially, they went to Kyiv at the end of October 2018 on a “fact finding trip” to meet with journalists from the 112 Ukraine and NewsOne TV channels, as well as with representatives of the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine, “in order to see the situation around the vote carried out by the Rada regarding closing TV channels in Ukraine”<sup>106</sup> and “gain information towards a potential European Parliament resolution on freedom of the press in Ukraine”.<sup>107</sup>

The vote mentioned by the three British MEPs was the vote in the Ukrainian parliament on 4 October 2018, when Ukrainian MPs overwhelmingly voted in favour of sanctioning a number of Ukrainian media channels, including 112 Ukraine and NewsOne, as part of the measures of protecting the Ukrainian society and state from “aggressive influence of destructive propaganda”, hampering calls for “violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine”, and countering other malign influence operations.<sup>108</sup>

Until 2014, both channels were considered a media arm of the Party of Regions, and after the PoR’s collapse, they became a media arm of the Opposition Bloc. However, as one expert observed, while 112 Ukraine and NewsOne had been criticised for publicising pro-Russian contents, until 2018 positions of hosts and guests remained relatively balanced. Yet when the two channels were acquired in 2018 by individuals close to the arguably major pro-Kremlin Ukrainian politician and businessman Viktor Medvedchuk (Putin happens to be the godfather of Medvedchuk’s daughter),

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105 [Nathan Gill], “Declaration of Members Attendance Pursuant to an Invitation at Events Organised by Third Parties”, *European Parliament*, 15 January (2019), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124965\\_TRAV\\_LEG8\\_1002474\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124965_TRAV_LEG8_1002474_EN.pdf); [Jonathan Arnott], “Declaration of Members Attendance Pursuant to an Invitation at Events Organised by Third Parties”, *European Parliament*, 15 January (2019), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124958\\_TRAV\\_LEG8\\_1002475\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124958_TRAV_LEG8_1002475_EN.pdf); [David Coburn], “Declaration of Members Attendance Pursuant to an Invitation at Events Organised by Third Parties”, *European Parliament*, 17 January (2019), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124967\\_TRAV\\_LEG8\\_1002479\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdat/124967_TRAV_LEG8_1002479_EN.pdf)

106 [Gill], “Declaration of Members Attendance”, 15 January (2019).

107 [Arnott], “Declaration of Members Attendance”.

108 “Projekt Postanovy pro skvalennya propozitsiy shchodo zastosuvannya personal'nykh spetsial'nykh ekonomichnykh ta inshykh obmezhuval'nykh zakhodiv (sanktsiy)”, *Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy*, 3 October (2018), [http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4\\_1?pf3511=64731](http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=64731).

their congruence with the Kremlin's anti-Ukrainian propaganda became too obvious to ignore.<sup>109</sup>

In fear of losing their main TV channels, representatives of the Opposition Bloc decided to engage with the European community in hope that it would exert pressure on Ukraine's then President Petro Poroshenko, whose signature was needed to enact the sanctions against 112 Ukraine and NewsOne proposed by the Ukrainian parliament. The Ukrainian trip of three British EFDD MEPs was just the beginning of the Opposition Bloc's extensive campaign in support of its TV channels. Niedźwiecki played the role of a coordinator and facilitator in several activities related to this campaign.

Apart from covering the cost of Gill's trip to Kyiv as well as that of the other two British MEPs, where the three took part in a TV programme hosted by Nadia Borodi,<sup>110</sup> Niedźwiecki accompanied senior managers of 112 Ukraine and NewsOne, as well as Voloshyn and Borodi, to Strasbourg to meet with their allies among MEPs in February 2019. The aim of the trip was to create the International Editorial Board of the two channels. The board would consist of six people: Gill, Coburn, German MEP Arne Gericke (European Conservatives and Reformists Group), Voloshyn, and two managers of 112 Ukraine: general producer Artem Marchev's'ky and CEO Egor Benkendorf.<sup>111</sup> The idea behind the creation of the board was that the inclusion of three MEPs would make it harder for the Ukrainian authorities to sanction 112 Ukraine and NewsOne. In his declaration as a MEP, Gill claimed that his position on the editorial boards of the two Ukrainian channels was unremunerated.<sup>112</sup>

In September 2019, Niedźwiecki's ECDHR declared that, together with their Ukrainian partners, namely 112 Ukraine, NewsOne, Zik TV and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, they "prepared a comprehensive report describing the problem of freedom of speech and growing threats to

109 See Georgy Chizhov, "Pro-Kremlin Influence in the Ukrainian Media", *The Kremlin's Influence Quarterly*, No. 1 (2020), pp. 63-71.

110 Borodi worked as a host at NewsOne TV channel from September 2016 until January 2018, then went to work as a host at 112 Ukraine in September 2018, see "Nadezhda Sass", *Zik*, <https://zikua.tv/ru/person/6>.

111 "Telekanaly '112 Ukraina' i NewsOne sozdali mezhdunarodny redaktsionny sovet", *112ua.tv*, 13 February (2019), <https://112ua.tv/glavnye-novosti/telekanaly-112-ukraina-i-newsone-sozdali-mezhdunarodnyy-redakcionnyy-sovet-480480.html>.

112 [Nathan Gill], "Declaration of Members' Financial Interests", *European Parliament*, 2 July (2019), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdif/124965\\_DFI\\_LEG9\\_rev0\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/mepdif/124965_DFI_LEG9_rev0_EN.pdf).



**Members of the International Editorial Board of NewsOne and 112 Ukraine at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 2019: Yehor Benkendorf, David Coburn, Nathan Gill, Taras Kozak (official owner of the channels), Arne Gericke and Artem Marchevsky.**

Source: <https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/112-ukraine-newsone-tv-channels-create-international-editorial-board-36985.html>

the activity of journalist [sic] in Ukraine 2018-2019”.<sup>113</sup> The report, titled “Attack on the Freedom of Speech and Growing Threats to the Activity of Journalists in Ukraine in 2018-2019”,<sup>114</sup> aimed to show to European politicians the “problem” that “Ukrainian journalists [were] dealing with” and “to undertake solidarity actions condemning censorship, violation of the

113 “Support for Freedom of Speech and Media in Ukraine”, *European Council on Democracy and Human Rights*, 30 September (2019), <http://ecdhr.eu/project/support-for-freedom-of-speech-and-media-in-ukraine/>.

114 “Attack on the Freedom of Speech and Growing Threats to the Activity of Journalists in Ukraine in 2018-2019. Report for the Meeting of the European Parliament on September 16, 2019”, *European Council on Democracy and Human Rights*, <http://ecdhr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Attack-on-the-freedom-of-speech-and-media-in-Ukraine-2019.pdf>

freedom of speech, political pressure and violence against journalist [sic] in Ukraine”.<sup>115</sup> As one might expect, the report mentioned neither Russia’s annexation of Crimea, nor its occupation of parts of eastern Ukraine or persistent threats to Ukraine’s sovereignty – developments that had a direct bearing on Ukraine’s national security and its regulation of information space in the face of the ongoing Russian aggression.

The ECDHR claimed that the report had been presented in the European Parliament in September, and that Niedźwiecki’s organisation and its Ukrainian partners had held, on the basis of the report, “over 60 meetings with Members of European Parliament representing all political groups” in the European Parliament, and had “received support for [their] actions from most of them”.<sup>116</sup> Curiously, the presentation, if indeed held, was unreported by the media, including 112 Ukraine and NewsOne. Yet another related “semi-clandestine” event, formally organised by the ECDHR and devoted to “violence against journalists and restrictions to free speech in Ukraine”, was held in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 18 December. Four MEPs took part in the event, namely Gill, Tatjana Ždanoka, James Wells (Brexit Party/non-attached) and Shaffaq Mohammed (UK Liberal Democrats/Renew Europe group); the main participants also included Borodi, Niedźwiecki and Voloshyn.<sup>117</sup>

The fact that the events organised/coordinated by Niedźwiecki’s ECDHR and held in the European Parliament in September and December 2019 were predominantly unreported in the media can be explained by the apparent lack of intention on the part of the Opposition Bloc to reveal any details of its engagement with European politicians as part of the campaign to prevent the introduction of sanctions against 112 Ukraine and NewsOne. While it is always difficult to assess the efficiency of influence operations such as the one conducted by the Opposition Bloc – considering many other intervening factors – it must be noted that President Poroshenko eventually decided not to enact the sanctions; they were introduced only in February 2021 by Ukraine’s next president, Volodymyr Zelensky.<sup>118</sup>

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115 “Support for Freedom of Speech and Media in Ukraine”.

116 Ibid.

117 “Bely’ shum: kak karmannye SMI kuma Putina pytayutsya diskreditirovat’ Ukrainu v Evrope”, *Informatsionnoe soprotyvlenie*, 21 December (2019), <https://sprotyv.info/rassledovaniya/belyj-shum-kak-karmannye-smi-kuma-putina-pytajutsya-diskreditirovat-ukrainu-v-evrope>.

118 “Ukaz Prezidenta Ukrainy No. 43/2021”, *Prezident Ukrainy*, 2 February (2021), <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/432021-36441>.

# IN THE BLEAK SPOTLIGHT

As evidenced above, Niedźwiecki's Ukrainian handlers treated him predominantly as a coordinator and facilitator of contacts between representatives of the Opposition Bloc and European politicians. Probably because of the failed "Operation Odessa" and Niedźwiecki's too obvious association with Polish anti-Ukrainian political activists, even the Opposition Bloc rarely, if ever, engaged with Niedźwiecki as a commentator or opinion maker. After 2016, he became too toxic for them in the Ukrainian information space, but he was still useful as an operations manager working behind the scenes.

The nature of Niedźwiecki's collaboration with Russian actors was slightly different: they regarded him *both* as an organiser/recruiter and commentator/expert.

Already in November 2017, Niedźwiecki took part in the convention of the Russian National-Bolshevik movement "Essence of Time", founded by a Russian left-wing ultranationalist Sergey Kurginyan, who sent volunteers to fight against Ukrainian forces in Russia-occupied parts of eastern Ukraine. Apart from Niedźwiecki, several other foreign guests participated in the convention, in particular: Tatjana Ždanoka; Giulietto Chiesa, a late former Italian MEP and long-time associate of Russian fascist Alexander Dugin; Zakhari Zakhariiev, a member of the Bulgarian Socialist Party; Iñaki Irazabalbeitia, a former MEP from the Basque separatist party "Aralar"; and Dimitris Konstantakopoulos, editor of the Greek anti-globalist and

anti-Western Defend Democracy Press website.<sup>119</sup> Niedźwiecki delivered a short speech at the convention,<sup>120</sup> and later contributed an article on the crisis of the Left to the newspaper “Essence of Time”.<sup>121</sup>

Niedźwiecki would meet Ždanoka and Chiesa again the following month at the Eleventh European Russian Forum, an annual meeting of Russian officials and representatives of Russian diasporas, which took place in the European Parliament in Brussels in December 2017.<sup>122</sup> Ždanoka organised the meeting and also moderated it, together with Anton Ilyin, an advisor to the chair of the Russian World Foundation, one of the major instruments of the Kremlin’s influence operations in countries with significant Russian-speaking communities. The forum hosted more than 20 politicians, journalists, academics and activists, and was addressed by Vladimir Chizhov, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the European Union in Brussels.<sup>123</sup>

In May 2018, against the background of Niedźwiecki’s active collaboration with Slutsky, the former started reaching out to his European contacts and inviting them to participate in the International Forum “Development of Parliamentarism”, which would take place in Moscow on 4-5 June 2018. Niedźwiecki sent out letters of invitation (see Annex 6) on behalf of Chairman of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin, who acted as host and official organiser of the Forum, while the letters were signed by Volodin’s deputy, Pyotr Tolstoy (see Annex 7). Over 500 politicians from across the globe took part in the forum; Niedźwiecki himself participated, together with

119 “Torzhestvenny s’yezd ‘Suti vremeni’ zavershilsya”, *Krasnaya vesna*, 7 November (2017), <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/ce80440c>.

120 Yanush Nidzvetskiy [Janusz Niedźwiecki], “Vystuplenie Yanusha Nidzvetskogo”, *Sut’ vremeni*, No. 253-254, 18 November (2017), <https://rossaprimavera.ru/article/fb989857>; “Zapis’ pryamoy translyatsii Torzestvennogo zasedaniya SV 7.11.2017”, *Sut’ vremeni*, 7 November (2017), <https://eot.su/node/22633>.

121 Yanush Nidzvetskiy [Janusz Niedźwiecki], “Levye v kolossal’nom krizise”, *Sut’ vremeni*, No. 253-254, 18 November (2017), <https://rossaprimavera.ru/article/c7173ae6>.

122 Before his arrest, Piskorski used to attend the European Russian Forum, so here, again, Niedźwiecki substituted Piskorski as a “Russia-friendly Pole” participating in a pro-Kremlin event.

123 “V Bryussele prokhodit XI Evropeyskiy russkiy forum”, *Russkoe pole*, 4 December (2017), <http://russkoepole.de/ru/news-18/4209-v-bryussele-prokhodit-xi-evropejskij-russkij-forum.html>.





**Vyacheslav Volodin (left) and Pyotr Tolstoy at the International Forum “Development of Parliamentarism” in Moscow in 2018.**

Source: <http://duma.gov.ru/en/news/45515/>

another Polish politician, Jacek Wilk, a non-attached far-right member of the Polish Sejm.<sup>124</sup>

While the Russian pro-Kremlin media had occasionally engaged with Niedźwiecki before 2018, publishing his comments on the incident in Odessa in 2016,<sup>125</sup> Russian elections, or joint Russian-Belarusian military manoeuvres,<sup>126</sup> he became a regular commentator for a number of Russian state-controlled media channels starting from the second half of 2018. In particular, his commentary on various socio-political issues was published in the Polish and Latvian editions of Sputnik, as well as the web resources

- 124 Grażyna Garboś, “‘Kiedy walczą ze sobą dwa słonie, to najbardziej cierpi trawa’. A trawa to my”, *Sputnik*, 6 June (2018), <https://pl.sputniknews.com/20180606/rozwoj-parlamentaryzmu-forum-moskwa-polska-wspolpraca-sputnik-8109253.html>.
- 125 Marina Baltacheva, “Politsiya tol’ko smotrela”, *Vzglyad*, 13 July (2016), <https://vz.ru/society/2016/7/13/821289.html>.
- 126 “Pol’skiy publitsist: neponyatno, zachem ‘Zapad-2017’ vydayut za nechto nebyvaloe”, *Radio Sputnik*, 9 September (2017), <https://radiosputnik.ru/20170919/1505098922.html>.

of the Rossiya Segodnya news agency and its subsidiaries. Russian media would usually refer to Niedźwiecki as a “Polish expert”, “Polish politician” or “Polish political scientist”, and turn to him for his ideas on the developments in Ukraine. He would typically provide views benefitting the Opposition Bloc and, starting in 2019, the Opposition Platform – For Life (Opozytsiyna platforma – Za zhyttya), a party that replaced the Opposition Bloc as the major pro-Russian party in Ukraine.

On 21 March 2019, Niedźwiecki took part, via a video-link, in a press conference at the Rossiya Segodnya press centre, discussing forthcoming presidential elections in Ukraine.<sup>127</sup> The press conference was moderated by Iskander Khisamov, the editor of the “Ukraina.ru” website owned by Rossiya Segodnya. On this occasion, the discussants predicted social turmoil would follow the elections, regardless of who won – thus pushing a typical Kremlin message on Ukraine as an unstable and erratic state. Niedźwiecki’s own message was different yet still similar: according to him, no elected Ukrainian president would be able to solve Ukraine’s problems.<sup>128</sup>

Perhaps inspired by his engagement with Russian media, Niedźwiecki decided – or was nudged – to start his own media. On 26 August 2020, he registered the web address InternationalAffairs.eu for what became known as *International Affairs* magazine. The magazine claimed it was based in Brussels; the address it provided,<sup>129</sup> however, allowed for opening a virtual office for a fee starting from €99 per month.<sup>130</sup> The website of this anti-American, anti-Ukrainian and pro-Kremlin magazine was never fully developed, with sections, such as “About Us”, containing the “Lorem ipsum” placeholder text. Nevertheless, it was more or less regularly updated predominantly by users named “Marta Piekarska” and “James Cornwell”, with Niedźwiecki and Polish far-right author Ronald Lasecki being irregular contributors.

The next month, on 3 September 2020, Niedźwiecki registered two more web addresses, BrusselsDaily.eu and EuropaTimes.info, evidently attempting to develop a media network of propaganda resources, but they were never developed before Niedźwiecki was arrested.

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127 “Kampaniya po vyboram Prezidenta Ukrainy – na finishnoy pryamoy”, *Rossiya segodnya*, 21 March (2019), [http://pressmia.ru/special\\_ukrainianfile/20190321/952282077.html](http://pressmia.ru/special_ukrainianfile/20190321/952282077.html).

128 “Pol’skiy politolog: pobeditel’ vyborov na Ukraine ne reshit problemy strany”, *RIA Novosti*, 21 March (2019), <https://ria.ru/20190321/1552000073.html>.

129 “Contact”, *International Affairs Magazine*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201229211157/https://internationalaffairs.eu/contact/>.

130 “Virtual Offices”, *Servcorp*, <https://www.servcorp.be/en/virtual-offices/prices-locations/brussels/bastion-tower/>.

# WORKING ON THE SIDE

In addition to participation in various projects of Russian and pro-Russian Ukrainian politicians, Niedźwiecki ECDHR was also involved in a few side-projects, predominantly in the area of election observation.

For example, in June 2019, the ECDHR website claimed that Niedźwiecki participated in a short-term election observation mission at the early local elections in the Mexican state of Puebla.<sup>131</sup>

But arguably the largest election observation mission that Niedźwiecki organised before his arrest was an 18-strong mission of the ECDHR at the early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, held on 9 February 2020 (see Annex 8). That was a high-profile mission: it featured 12 members of parliament from six European countries and two regional legislators from Germany (see Annex 9).

According to the International Election Observation Mission formed by the OSCE ODIHR, OSCE PA and PACE, “the restrictive legislation and political environment prevented genuine competition in the 9 February 2020 early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, despite a high number of candidates. Some prospective candidates were denied the right to stand, but candidate registration process was otherwise inclusive. Voters were not provided with a meaningful choice due to a lack of real political discussion”.<sup>132</sup> Neverthe-

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131 “Electoral Observation Mission in Mexico. June 2019”, *European Council on Democracy and Human Rights*, 6 July (2019), <http://ecdhr.eu/project/electoral-observation-mission-in-mexico-june-2019/>.

132 “Azerbaijan, Early Parliamentary Elections, 9 February 2020: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions”, *OSCE*, 10 February (2020), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/azerbaijan/445759>.



## Janusz Niedźwiecki at a press conference in Azerbaijan in 2020.

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLV7zSX\\_YPw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLV7zSX_YPw)

less, the overwhelming majority of other international organisations and individual monitors – who had been carefully selected by the authoritarian regime of President Ilham Aliyev – endorsed the parliamentary elections.<sup>133</sup> Niedźwiecki’s ECDHR was one of those organisations.

In fact, members of the ECDHR’s mission started to praise the elections even before the voting process officially ended. For example, Bavarian regional parliamentarian Uli Henkel of the German far-right AfD declared that the Azerbaijani government manifested openness and transparency in the organisation and conduct of the early parliamentary elections.<sup>134</sup> His

133 For more on the international observation of the 2020 Azerbaijani elections, see Anton Shekhovtsov, “Problematic International Observation of the Azerbaijani 2020 Parliamentary Elections”, *European Platform for Democratic Elections*, 6 April (2020), <https://www.epde.org/en/news/details/problematic-international-observation-of-the-azerbaijani-2020-parliamentary-elections-2615.html>.

134 A. Mamedov, B. Rustambekov, “Vlasti Azerbaydzhana organizovali otkrytye dosrochnye parlamentskie vybory – deputat Landtaga”, *Interfax Azerbaijan*, 9 February (2020), <http://interfax.az/view/791827>.

fellow party member Ulrich Singer said that he had heard of no complaints about the elections at the polling stations they visited.<sup>135</sup> Věra Procházková, a Czech MP from the populist ANO 2011 party, and Manol Genov, an MP from the Bulgarian Socialist Party, who, in 2017, was charged with vote-buying,<sup>136</sup> spoke highly of the organisation of the elections, too.<sup>137</sup>

Two days after the elections, the ECDHR published a report concluding that the mission had not registered any violations of the electoral legislation that could affect the results of the elections, and that the elections had been held in compliance with the electoral laws of Azerbaijan and universally recognised democratic norms.<sup>138</sup>

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135 “Nemetskiy deputat: ‘Nikakikh zhalob na vybory k nam ne postupalo’”, *Haqqin*, 9 February (2020), <https://haqqin.az/news/169667>.

136 “Bulgaria: Bulgarian Anti-Corruption Unit Charges MP Manol Genov with Vote-buying”, *Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative*, 13 July (2017), <http://www.rai-see.org/bulgaria-bulgarian-anti-corruption-unit-charges-mp-manol-genov-with-vote-buying/>.

137 Mamedov, Rustambekov, “Vlasti Azerbaydzhana organizovali”; A. Mamedov, B. Rustambekov, “Vybory v Azerbaydzhane prokhodyat spokojno – mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli”, *Interfax Azerbaijan*, 9 February (2020), <http://interfax.az/view/791851>.

138 “Observers: Elections Were Held with No Violations”, Axar, 11 February (2020), <https://en.axar.az/news/politics/444200.html>.



# CONCLUSION

Over the course of five years, Polish national Janusz Gabriel Niedźwiecki had transformed from an activist of a marginal and non-registered far-right party into a coordinator of pro-Kremlin activities and, ultimately, into an agent of Moscow's influence – albeit an unimpressive one, as by the time of his arrest in May 2021 none of his projects had effectively taken off.

This transformation is not unique: a significant number of far-right politicians, especially of anti-American persuasion, engage in pro-Kremlin activities. Moreover, as our previous research shows,<sup>139</sup> the same far-right politicians often take part in fake election observation in support of authoritarian regimes, leaders or political forces, and this participation deepens their ties to Russian politicians, officials and, sometimes, intelligence services. Indeed, it is joining politically biased observation missions that has, for many a European politician, become an entry point into a larger area of Moscow's malign influence operations and other active measures.

To a certain extent, Niedźwiecki followed the path of another Polish national, namely Mateusz Piskorski: the latter also started out as a marginal far-right militant, then embarked on fake observation missions, and eventually became heavily involved in Moscow's disinformation and propaganda efforts – involvement that led to Piskorski's arrest by the Polish security services in 2016.

In fact, the major reason Russian politicians and officials enlisted Niedźwiecki's services in the first place was that they needed a Polish pro-Russian activist to replace Piskorski as “our man in Poland”. Due to his detention, the latter could no longer deliver services to Moscow. Niedźwiecki was Piskorski's forced substitute, but he never reached the operational level of the latter.

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139 Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right*, pp. 101-131.

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1. The election monitoring mission “Political Initiative” organised by Sergejs Blagoveščenskis and Janusz Niedźwiecki to observe the 2015 regional elections in Ukraine.

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Name</b>             | <b>Country</b> |
|------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1          | Stanislav Berkovec      | Czech Republic |
| 2          | Sergejs Blagoveščenskis | Latvia         |
| 3          | Piotr Chmielowski       | Poland         |
| 4          | Anna Čurdová            | Czech Republic |
| 5          | Andrzej Dariusz Dotecki | Poland         |
| 6          | Ludwig Flocken          | Germany        |
| 7          | Jarosław Gromadzki      | Poland         |
| 8          | Corinna Herold          | Germany        |
| 9          | Olaf Kießling           | Germany        |
| 10         | Zoltán Magyar           | Hungary        |
| 11         | Janusz Niedźwiecki      | Poland         |
| 12         | Zdeněk Ondráček         | Czech Republic |
| 13         | Rainer van Raemdonck    | Germany        |
| 14         | Thomas Rudy             | Germany        |
| 15         | Tamás Gergő Samu        | Hungary        |
| 16         | Christina Schade        | Germany        |
| 17         | Balázs Szabó            | Hungary        |
| 18         | Jurij Zajcev            | Latvia         |



**Annex 2. “International experts” observing Russian elections during the single voting day on 10 September 2017. Russian state media mentioned that the number of the “experts” would be 27 but never published their full list. We have identified 24 of them.**

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Name</b>                            | <b>Country</b> |
|------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1          | Aymeri Montesquiou-Fezensac d'Artagnan | France         |
| 2          | Dominique Bilde                        | France         |
| 3          | Aldo Carcaci                           | Belgium        |
| 4          | Nicolas Dhucq                          | France         |
| 5          | André Elissen                          | Netherlands    |
| 6          | Pavel Gamov                            | Sweden         |
| 7          | Rumen Vasilev Gechev                   | Bulgaria       |
| 8          | Seong Bae Kang                         | South Korea    |
| 9          | Tom Kitt                               | Ireland        |
| 10         | Dimitri de Kochko                      | France         |
| 11         | Jaromír Kohlíček                       | Czech Republic |
| 12         | Marek Krajčí                           | Slovakia       |
| 13         | Eun Mi Lee                             | South Korea    |
| 14         | Thierry Mariani                        | France         |
| 15         | Pedro Antonio Martín Marín             | Spain          |
| 16         | Alain Marsaud                          | France         |
| 17         | Alesya Miloradovich                    | France         |
| 18         | Janusz Niedźwiecki                     | Poland         |
| 19         | Bernard Owen                           | France         |
| 20         | G. Kline Preston IV                    | USA            |
| 21         | Maria Rodriguez-McKey                  | France         |
| 22         | Gianluca Savoini                       | Italy          |
| 23         | Stefano Valdegamberi                   | Italy          |
| 24         | Michel Voisin                          | France         |

## Annex 3. Janusz Niedźwiecki's letter of invitation to observe the 2018 Russian presidential election.



EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
ON DEMOCRACY  
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Warsaw, January 15, 2018

Dear Sir,

On March 18th, 2018 presidential elections to the Russian Federation are to be held. As always on this occasion, Russian Duma invites parliamentarians, political experts and influential personalities to take part in observation of the electoral process.

Given your political experience, on behalf of European Council on Democracy and Human Rights and Russian Peace Foundation (our Russian partner and official host of this electoral monitoring mission), we would like to invite you to join the election monitoring mission and observe the voting and counting process in Russia, on March, 2018.

The general timing of mission operation is from **March 16th till 19th, 2018.**

**All travel and accommodation expenses are covered by the organizers.**

All participants of our electoral monitoring mission will get official accreditation from Russian Central Electoral Commission.

If you wish to take part in this event **please, kindly confirm your participation as soon as possible.** We will held, among others, around 150 parliamentarians, politicians and experts from all around the world. **The number of participants is limited.** In the case of large number of applications, the order of submission of the applications will be decisive, so please make a decision as quickly as possible.

The official invitation and detailed program will be send after we will close the list of participants of this electoral monitoring mission (in the mid of February).

If you have any questions, feel free to write us or call us at +48 [REDACTED]

Best regards

**Janusz Niedźwiecki**

president of the European Council  
on Democracy and Human Rights

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
+ 48 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]@ecdhr.eu | www.ECDHR.eu

## **Annex 4. Janusz Niedźwiecki's letter to Nathan Gill coordinating the latter's trip to Ukraine on behalf of Oleh Voloshyn and Nadia Borodi in 2018.**

Dear Nathan Gill,

I'm sending you some details regarding your trip to Ukraine. **Also I will be in Strasbourg from 16-17 of April. If you have time I would love to invite you for a dinner so that we could discuss all the details in person.**

### **1. Flights**

Please write me from which city you would like to fly to Kiev (from Kiev there will be another fly to Dnipropetrovsk). After you send me this information I will send you flight proposals so that you could chose most convenient flight.

### **2. Travel period**

General plan is that you flight to Kiev 8th of May 2018, and fly back 10th of May. But if you have more time and want to stay one more day, we may organize additional day in Kiev. Since this would be your first visit in Ukraine, we could organize you a tour around Kiev so that you could see some interesting places in this city. Please let me know how much time you have.

### **3. Draft program**

- arrival to Dnipropetrovsk on May 8,
- excursion and acquaintance with that biggest centre of Eastern Ukraine,
- participation in commemoration ceremony of the Victory Day,
- communication with WWII veterans and laying of flowers to monument to II World War Victory Monument on 9 of May
- departure on May 10, 2018 (we could organize additional day for a trip in Kiev if you want and if you have more time)

If you have any additional request please let me know.

### **4. Hotel and transfer from airport**

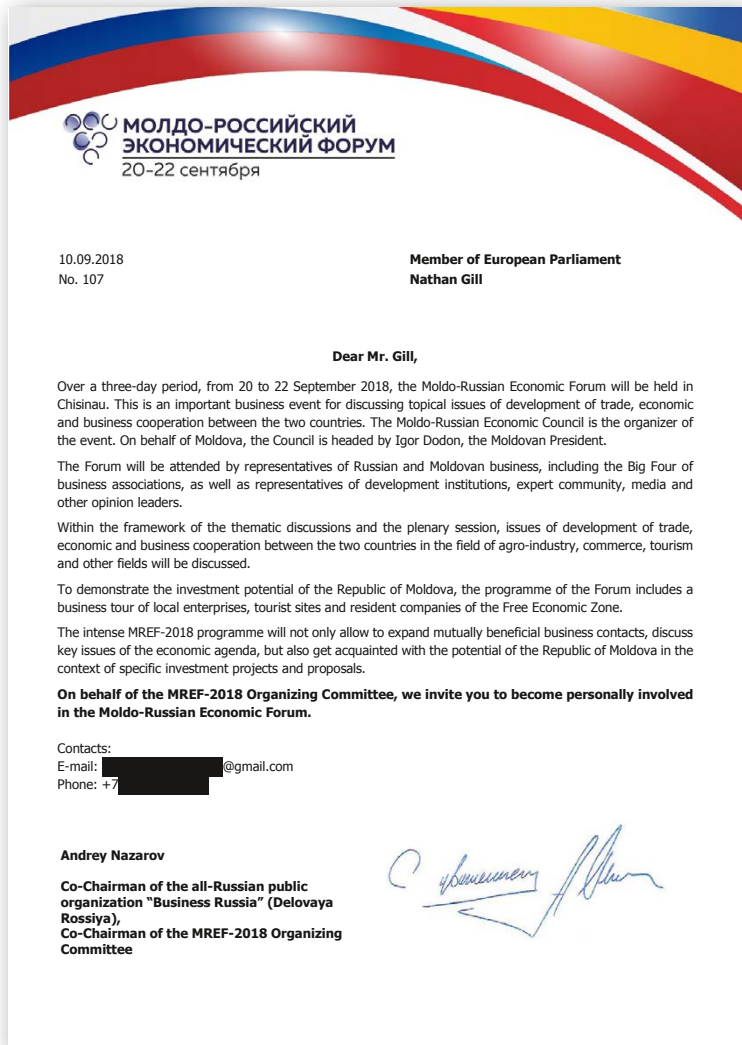
We will book for you a Hotel in the centre of Dnipropetrovsk (I will send you details later). You will be also transferred from the airport by car.

**I will be in Strasburg from 16-17 of April. If you have time I would love to invite you for a dinner so that we could discuss all the details in person.**

Best regards,

Janusz Niedźwiecki  
ECDHR  
+48 [REDACTED]

## Annex 5. A letter addressed to Nathan Gill and inviting him to take part in the Moldo-Russian Economic Forum that would take place in Chişinău, Moldova, on 20-22 September 2018.



## Annex 6. Janusz Niedźwiecki's letter inviting an addressee to take part in the International Forum "Development of Parliamentarism" that would take place in Moscow on 4-5 June 2018.

**From:** Janusz Niedźwiecki [<mailto:██████████@ecdhr.eu>]  
**Sent:** █ May 2018 █  
**To:** ██████████  
**Subject:** Invitation - Forum on Development of Parliamentarism - Moscow June 3-6

Dear ██████████

On June 4-5th, 2018 will be held in Moscow International Forum on Development of Parliamentarism. The Forum will be attended by Parliamentarians, diplomats and political experts from more than 100 countries.

Given your political experience, on behalf of European Council on Democracy and Human Rights and the Speaker of Russian Federation Duma, Mr Vyacheslav Volodin (official host of the Forum) we would like to invite you to join this event.

**The total program of the Forum is designed for 4 days (June 3-6, 2018).**

3 June: arrival and accommodation of participants, optional cultural program.

4-5 June: working days. There are three thematic sections planned: issues of legislative support of the world economy development in the 21st century, the role of parliaments in strengthening international security, the exchange of best practices of national legislation, etc.

There will be some additional activities/ sessions at the forum.

6 June: Departure.

Format of meetings (sections): panel discussions and round tables.

During the main events will be simultaneous interpretation into 6 official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian). To translate speeches from other languages it is intended to provide the delegation's interpreter with equipment for simultaneous interpretation by prior request (before May 25, 2018).

Venue: Moscow, Prospekt Mira, 119c, International congress and exhibition center VDNH Expo, pavilion 75 ([www.expo.vdnh.ru/en](http://www.expo.vdnh.ru/en))

**All travel and accommodation expenses are covered by the organizers.**

If you wish to take part in this event please, kindly confirm your participation as soon as possible. The number of participants is strictly limited. In the case of large number of applications, the order of submission of the applications will be decisive, so please make a decision as quickly as possible.

**In the attachment you will find detailed program of the Forum together with official invitation issued by the Deputy Speaker of Russian State Duma - Pyotr Olegovich Tolstoy.**

If you have any questions, feel free to write us or call us at +48 ██████████

Best regards,  
Janusz Niedźwiecki  
President of European Council  
on Democracy and Human Rights

## Annex 7. A letter (and its official translation) inviting an addressee to take part in the International Forum “Development of Parliamentarism” signed by Pyotr Tolstoy, Deputy Chairman of the State Duma.

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ДУМА  
ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОГО СОБРАНИЯ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ  
СЕДЬМОГО СОЗЫВА

**ЗАМЕСТИТЕЛЬ ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЯ  
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ДУМЫ**

ул. Охотный ряд, д. 1, Москва, 103265 Тел. 8(495)692-71-76 Факс 8(495)692-81-53 E-mail: [tolstoy@duma.gov.ru](mailto:tolstoy@duma.gov.ru)

г. \_\_\_\_\_ № \_\_\_\_\_

Уважаем \_\_\_\_\_

4-5 июня 2018 года по инициативе Государственной Думы Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации в Москве состоится первый Международный форум по развитию парламентаризма.

Эта инициатива призвана собрать на одной площадке парламентариев, мировых лидеров общественного мнения, ученых, интеллектуалов, для продвижения объединительной повестки международного парламентского сотрудничества.

Опыт многостороннего межпарламентского взаимодействия свидетельствует о значительном потенциале парламентской дипломатии, раскрытие которого требует расширения инфраструктуры для прямых контактов между парламентариями и ведущими экспертами разных стран.


Международный форум по развитию парламентаризма предлагает своим участникам удобный диалоговый формат для обсуждения широкого спектра вопросов международной парламентской повестки - от общих глобальных вызовов, проблем борьбы с терроризмом, незаконной миграции, информационной безопасности и защиты свободы прессы до прикладных аспектов современного нормотворчества. Особый интерес представляют возможности обмена лучшими практиками регулирования новых сфер правоотношений, связанных, в том числе, с цифровизацией общественной жизни. Такой формат взаимодействия сегодня востребован как никогда прежде.

Современные вызовы требуют новых прорывных законодательных и политических решений. Совместный поиск таких решений - главная задача предстоящей встречи.

Форум призван консолидировать усилия парламентариев и ученых, упрочить их взаимодействие, придать импульс развитию механизмов парламентской дипломатии на перспективных направлениях, выработать принципы свободного от политической конъюнктуры парламентского сотрудничества.

Имею честь пригласить Вас принять участие в совместной работе, рассчитываю на Ваш вклад в общие усилия в интересах справедливого и безопасного будущего для всего мира.

О Вашем решении прошу информировать Оргкомитет Форума: [dumaforum@duma.gov.ru](mailto:dumaforum@duma.gov.ru).

 Петр ТОЛСТОЙ

*Letterheaded paper*

STATE DUMA OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
OF THE SEVENTH TERM

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE DUMA

Ulisa Okhotny Ryad, 1, Moscow, 103265 tel. 8(495)692-71-76 fax. 8(495)692-81-53 e-mail:  
tolstoy@duma.gov.ru

Dear [REDACTED]

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation launches the first International Forum on Parliamentarism to be held in Moscow on June 4–5, 2018.

The goal of this initiative is to gather parliamentaries, leading global opinion shapers, researchers and intellectuals to promote a unifying agenda for the international parliamentary cooperation.

Multilateral interparliamentary cooperation proves the considerable potential of parliamentary diplomacy. To unleash it, we need to expand infrastructure for direct contacts between parliamentaries and leading experts from different countries.

The International Forum on Parliamentarism offers its participants convenient dialogue opportunities to discuss a wide spectrum of issues of the international parliamentary agenda – from common global challenges, counter-terrorism efforts, illegal migration, information security and freedom of the press to practical aspects of modern rule-making. Area of special interest is sharing best legislative practices of regulating new legal relations emerging, inter alia, from digital transformation of social life. Today such format of interaction is sought after as never before.

Current challenges require groundbreaking legislative and political solutions. Joint search for such solutions is the key goal of the upcoming event.

The Forum seeks to consolidate the efforts and enhance interaction of parliamentaries, researchers and experts, give momentum to the development of parliamentary diplomacy in perspective areas, elaborate principles of politically unbiased parliamentary cooperation.

I have the honor to invite you to join our work and count on your contribution to our common effort for just and secure future of the world.

Please inform the Organizing Committee of the Forum on your decision to the following address: [dumaforum@duma.gov.ru](mailto:dumaforum@duma.gov.ru).

Handwritten: *Respectfully*

Signed Pyotr Tolstoy

[REDACTED]

## Annex 8. Janusz Niedźwiecki's letter of invitation to observe the early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan that would be held on 9 February 2020.

**From:** Janusz Niedźwiecki [mailto:██████████@ecdhr.eu]  
**Sent:** █ January 2020 █  
**To:** ██████████  
**Subject:** Invitation - Election monitoring mission in Azerbaijan

Dear ██████████

On February 9th, 2020 parliamentary elections in the Azerbaijan Republic are to be held. As always on this occasion, The National Assembly of Azerbaijan (Milli Majlis) invites parliamentarians and political experts from European countries to take part in observation of the electoral process.

**The general timing of this short time electoral observation mission is from February 7th till February 10th, 2020.**

Draft program:

**Friday 7.02**

Arrival to Baku, capital of the Azerbaijan Republic.

**Saturday 8.02**

Meetings with the Azerbaijan authorities and political leaders

City tour

Joint dinner with invited guests

**Sunday 9.02**

Election day. We will visit several voting polls (about 8-10) in Baku and surroundings

**Monday 10.02 / Tuesday 11.02**

Departure of invited guests

Given your political experience, on behalf of the European Council on Democracy and Human Rights and the Milli Majlis - National Assembly of Azerbaijan - (our official Azerbaijan partner for this electoral observation mission), we would like to invite you to join the election monitoring mission to observe the voting and counting process in Azerbaijan Republic, on February 9th 2020.

Election observation is a vital ECDHR activity aiming to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It contributes to strengthening democratic institutions, securing the transparency of electoral processes, helping to deter fraud, intimidation and violence.

**All travel and accommodation expenses are covered by the organizers.**

If you wish to take part in this event please, kindly confirm your participation as soon as possible.

We will hold, parliamentarians from different European countries. The number of participants is limited. In the case of large number of applications, the order of submission of the applications will be decisive, so please make a decision as quickly as possible.

The official invitation will be sent after we will close the list of participants of this electoral monitoring mission.

If you have any questions, feel free to write us or call us at +48 ██████████

Best regards

Janusz Niedźwiecki

president of European Council  
on Democracy and Human Rights



## **Annex 9. The mission of Janusz Niedźwiecki’s European Council on Democracy and Human Rights at the Azerbaijani parliamentary elections held on 9 February 2020.**

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Name</b>                 | <b>Country</b> |
|------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1          | Stella Biziou               | Greece         |
| 2          | Angela Crovetti             | Italy          |
| 3          | Jaroslav Doubrava           | Czech Republic |
| 4          | Rumen Vasilev Gechev        | Bulgaria       |
| 5          | Manol Trifonov Genov        | Bulgaria       |
| 6          | Uli Henkel                  | Germany        |
| 7          | Grégory Elie Albert Jullien | France         |
| 8          | Anton Konstantinov Kutev    | Bulgaria       |
| 9          | Ettore Licheri              | Italy          |
| 10         | Osvaldo Napoli              | Italy          |
| 11         | Janusz Niedźwiecki          | Poland         |
| 12         | Katerina Monogiou           | Greece         |
| 13         | Věra Procházková            | Czech Republic |
| 14         | Jean-Luc Reitzer            | France         |
| 15         | Ulrich Singer               | Germany        |
| 16         | Lazaros Tsavdaridis         | Greece         |
| 17         | Katarzyna Ueberhan          | Poland         |
| 18         | Rania Younisova             | Czech Republic |

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# JANUSZ NIEDŹWIECKI'S UKRAINE-RELATED NETWORK

PARTY OF REGIONS



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OPPOSITION PLATFORM - FOR LIFE



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**ARNE  
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**NATHAN  
GILL**

# JANUSZ NIEDŹWIECKI'S RUSSIA-RELATED NETWORK



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**JANUSZ  
KORWIN-MIKKE**



**JANUSZ  
NIEDŹWIECKI**



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International Elections Study Center IESC (Lithuania)  
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