

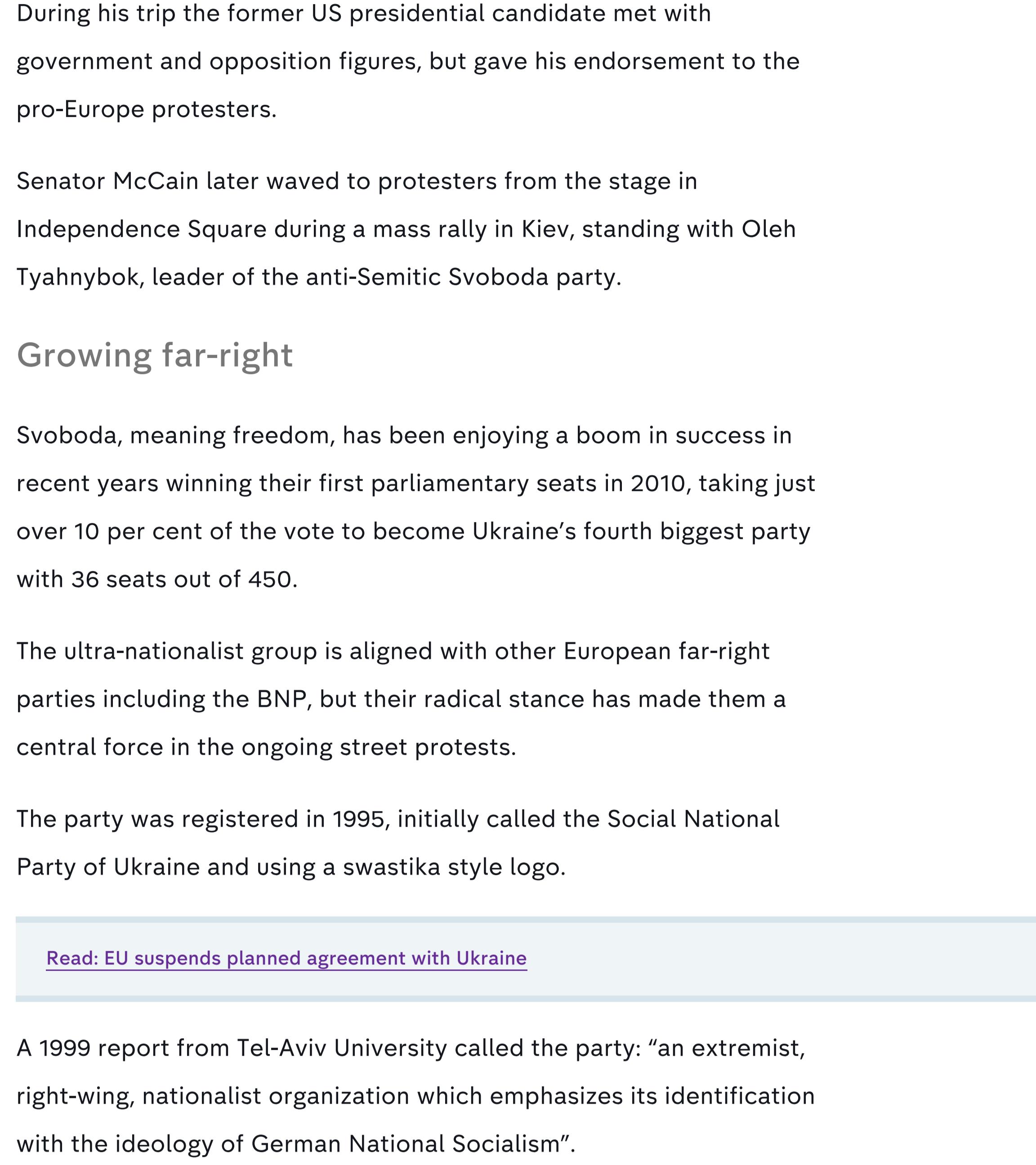
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Far-right group at heart of Ukraine protests meet US senator

By Brian Whelan

Protests continue in the Ukrainian capital after an endorsement from US Senator John McCain but at the heart of the movement in Kiev lies an extreme right wing party with links to the BNP.

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[Ukraine's pro-EU protests show no sign of stopping - US Senator John McCain](#) dined with opposition leaders this weekend, including the extreme far-right Svoboda party.

During his trip the former US presidential candidate met with government and opposition figures, but gave his endorsement to the pro-Europe protesters.

Senator McCain later waved to protesters from the stage in Independence Square during a mass rally in Kiev, standing with Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the anti-Semitic Svoboda party.

Growing far-right

Svoboda, meaning freedom, has been enjoying a boom in success in recent years winning their first parliamentary seats in 2010, taking just over 10 per cent of the vote to become Ukraine's fourth biggest party with 36 seats out of 450.

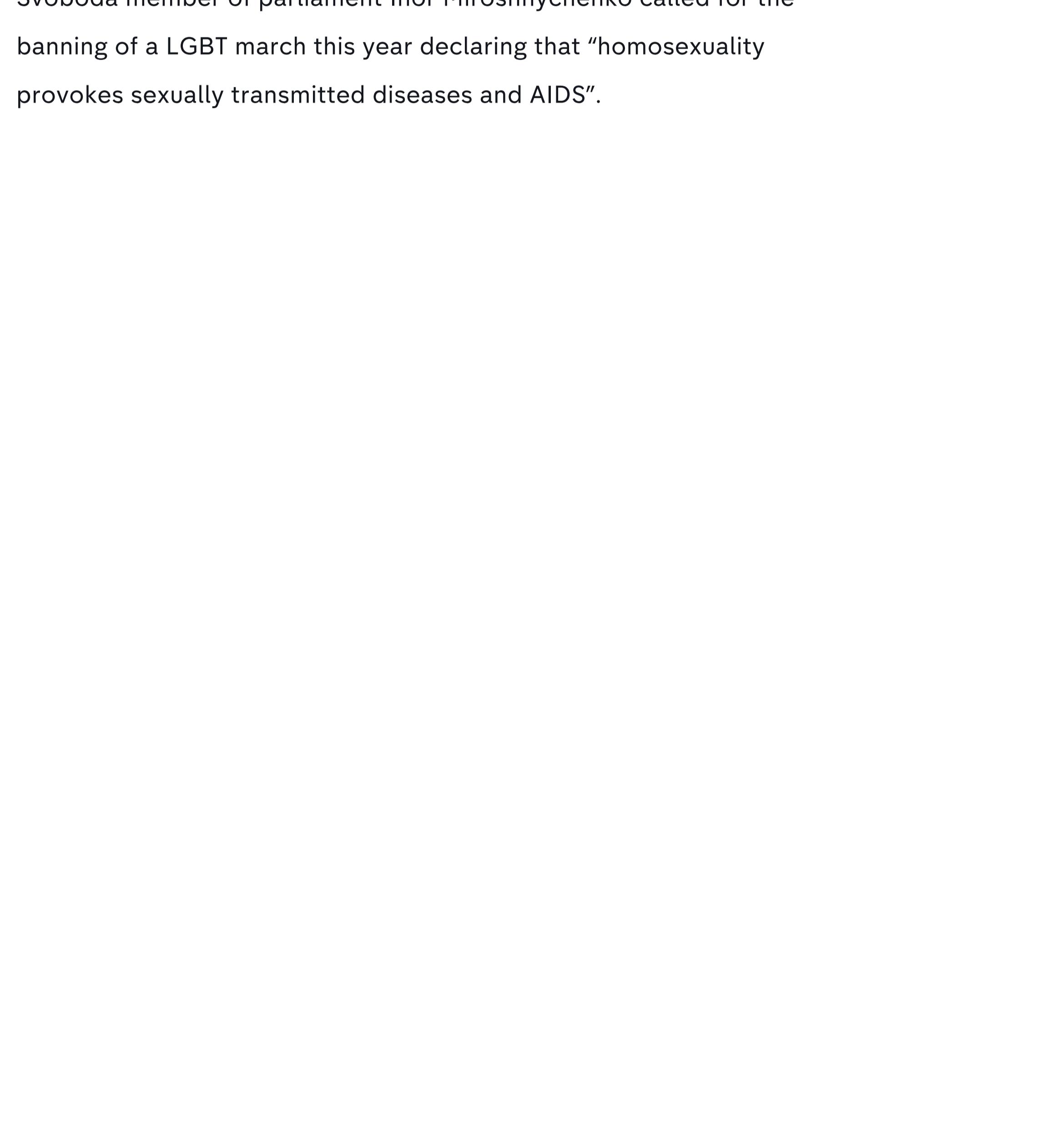
The ultra-nationalist group is aligned with other European far-right parties including the BNP, but their radical stance has made them a central force in the ongoing street protests.

The party was registered in 1995, initially called the Social National Party of Ukraine and using a swastika style logo.

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A 1999 report from Tel-Aviv University called the party: "an extremist, right-wing, nationalist organization which emphasizes its identification with the ideology of German National Socialism".

The party broke with their most extreme elements a decade ago, expelling groups of neo-Nazis and rebranding with a new name and logo.



'Jewish mafia'

However, in 2004 leader Oleh Tyahnybok gave a speech attacking what he called "the Moscow-Jewish mafia ruling Ukraine" and in another speech declared: "the Moskali, Germans, Kikes and other scum who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state."

Despite the controversy his statements attracted in the West, Tyahnybok was voted Person of the Year by readers of Ukrainian news magazine Korrespondent last year.

In another outburst from the party their deputy chief, Ihor Miroshnychenko, wrote an anti-Semitic attack on Mila Kunis on Facebook: "Kunis is not Ukrainian, she is a Yid. She is proud of it, so Star of David be with her."

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