

Katarina Novikova (KN): Interview with the head of secretariat of the NGO “Reanimation Package of Reforms” Artem Mirgorodsky (AM). Interviewer: Katarina Novikova (KN). Place of record: Kyiv.

KN: Artem, what are the most important stages of your life that influenced the choice of your position?

AM: Probably for the first time I seriously grasped the necessity of participation in the civil position in the early 2000s, when I was still a student at the National Economic University. Back then Yushchenko was expelled from the Cabinet of Ministers and this caused people's outrage. I remember that there were appearances in front of the Parliament, and together with a colleague and our supervisor we went to support Yushchenko, still the Prime Minister at that time. I drew poster by myself and I gave an interview to Reuters and DW because I knew English. It was real manifestation of the people's will. This is how in the early 2000s I gained experience of conscious citizen who can get his mates and even his mother involved. We thought back then that to support Yushchenko was important because he was a successful banker, compared to Kuchma's era.

Motivations

Willingness to act

Activity

Giving interview to Deutsche Welle

When the Orange Revolution began, I worked as a marketer in a public catering network "Quickly". We had two branches at the Maidan - in the underpass and in a shopping center "Globus". All of us went out to Maidan, all the firm, saying that for one week we will not work and the directors of the company reacted peacefully to this idea. I came out with the initiative to feed people at the cost of and the network manager supported it. We were selling dumplings with meat, salads and tea for several days, trying in this way to support that protest. This was only a warm-up to the Euromaidan however, as there were no tragic events. In the morning I was meeting people from my department at the Metro station Arsenalna, organizing actions etc. Back then we were supporting a particular person, Yushchenko, not a set of values as it was now during the Euromaidan. We were acting within the frames of a specific resistance.

Orange

Activity

Supply food

Motivations

Supporting Yushchenko

During the Euromaidan I also got involved by a call of the soul as a conscious resident of Kyiv living in the center at Pechersk. I went to the "Silpo" supermarket, bought the products and made 40 - 50 sandwiches for the protesters. At the Maidan I started to get acquainted with people, and I was regularly going there until 1 am. Later me and my acquaintances got the understanding of the situation and started to look for a job for ourselves there. This was basically a republic in a republic: everyone was doing his/her own job, cleaning the snow, bringing the firewood, cleaning the garbage, delivering the necessities. We were really looking for work there. Therefore I was engaged in many things. One day we were even scenting the toilets with the purchased products. We were also delivering a lot of food and clothing. Until the first confrontations of 18 - 19 of January 2014 at Hrushevsky Street, Maidan was more like an organized festival of the civil society.

So, because of my acquaintances at the Maidan, on the 21st of January I got into one meeting. It was a presentation of the ideas of five people responsible for the security of transportation. After all, there was a problem of the injured and sick people who became ill or their chronic diseases got revealed because of strong frosts that time. They were lying in the house of the Trade Unions and in the City Hall, as well as in several other locations. However, there was not enough of proper medical care and medicines, and it was worthy to consider hospitalization. There was an idea to move them out, but in such a way that they would not get into government hospitals, especially those who were wounded, because then they would immediately get the attention of the police, and the criminal cases were opening on the spot, and many of them were even taken away from hospitals into police departments.

We quickly realized that it was a very good idea. I and my fellows had cars. We understood that we shall buy several phones, find operational headquarters near the Maidan, dozens of volunteers, agree with medical services, as well as church institutions. We have agreed with four monasteries, including the Lutheran church, the Cathedral of St Basil the Great near the Lviv square, the Capuchin brethren monastery at Perova Boulevard 1, and St Michael monastery. We have created a system of a duty at the Maidan, business cards were spread among the doctors, and the process of safe transportation thus began. We were taking out patients to these shelters every evening. Later Olga Bohomolets learned about our initiative and gave us the possibility to

Activity

Maidan organization

Supply food and clothes

Events

First confrontations

Situation

Medical care

External solidarity

Church institutions

Activity

First aid

Actors

Olga Bohomolets

place our office in her institute because it was conveniently located near the Maidan. This is exactly how we were working every day until the end of February, and as a result several hundreds of people were evacuated.

It turned out that in the course of work we unintentionally have created a database of victims on the Maidan. No one had such a database, since the Ministry of Health was not engaged, because the state pulled itself away from all those problems. Consuls of various countries, including the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany and Romania appealed to us through mediators. They wanted to take the victims for treatment, and they needed assistance to provide the data of the really ill people who needed treatment. We started meetings with them and a series of visits to hospitals to select people for treatment. Thus the active phase of the transportation of victims abroad began. This phase lasted for about two months after the Maidan. In this way we took out for treatment about 270 people (3 planes to Poland, 3 to the Czech Republic and Germany, 1 to Romania, as well as several private flights to Lithuania).

This is a story for several hours and that's why I'm summarizing. We realized that we shall organize the database because it was a real asset to our work. After the Maidan many people begun to disperse, some for studies, some for work. Then I came out with the initiative to create a civil society organization, even though I have already worked in business for a long time. I was fascinated by social activities. The majority have supported me, and together with Ivan Demyanets, Oksana Syvak who is currently the Deputy Minister of Public Health, we created the "Initiative E plus". Ulana Suprun (currently the Minister of Health Care who was with us on the Maidan) helped to give it the name.

So we began to work with the assistance of a Czech organization called "People in need", which is the biggest non-governmental organization in Europe, counting 700 people. They helped us to properly create the database. After all, they have already created such a database before, helping during the floods in the Czech Republic. We acted, and then the "Canadian Craft Foundation" from Toronto gave us the first grant. It was enough to spend the whole summer of 2014 traveling in Ukraine and composing the database of victims. We established the contacts with local volunteer coordinators of medical care and carried out meetings with the victims, who, at that time, had already returned home. This was for example more than 100 people in two-three

Activity

Creating of data base of victims

External solidarity

Treatment in Czech Republic, Poland, Germany,

Activity

Organizing „Initiative E plus”

Actors

Ivan Demyanets

Oksana Syvak

Ulana Suprun

External solidarity

Czech organization "People in need"

Canadian Craft Foundation

Activity

Creating database of

days. The updated database was composed of interviews, personal data, information about the injuries, scanned copies of all medical documents, of passport, all the information about the person and the circumstances of the injury, that is the place, the date, kind of humanitarian assistance received. By the end of the year we completed around 800 injured personally, and also we got around 200 contacts of people whose surnames had been confirmed but we hadn't conducted personal meetings with them.

After that, the second phase started, when other charitable organizations, in particular "Caritas Ukraine", expressed the will to cooperate with us. At that point, the initiative of sending the children of the victims for recreation was launched, as well as psychological help to their families, education etc. Thus, we realized that we were moving from the humanitarian projects and getting involved into greater activity. Then the war had started and the Anti-Terrorist Operation, and also some of our volunteers, were redirected there. We had already registered our organization legally by then. The Council of Europe appealed to us to finalize and to partially transfer our database to the General Prosecutor's Office and to the Ministry of Health so that the seriously injured victims would be able to receive a state compensation.

In this way the Revolution of Dignity had finished for me and for my colleagues at the institutionally new level. We left it not separately, but in organizations, which we created and which continue to actively work after the revolution. During these two years our organization has received more than three million euro of various grant and charitable help. And even much more we received in the form of goods, especially from diasporas in Canada, USA, for the currently injured in ATO zone as well.

Because of this revolution we became totally different citizens. We didn't come just to shout as before, but we were acting in an organized manner and creating different legal forms of activities, and we continued to work after the end of the active phase of the Maidan. I'm very proud of the fact that our organization withstood, since a whole chain of volunteer structures had closed. Nevertheless, even though they ceased to exist, they became an example for a new wave of volunteering to support the ATO zone. And people started to be involved in that, people who didn't take active part in Euromaidan; it's very pleasant, that people didn't stay aside during another difficult period in Ukraine. Although an ordinary person isn't able to work longer than for

Western Policy

Financial support

Grants

Charitable help

Actors

Volunteers

3 months in active volunteering mode. It is not money-earning, it's a big commitment, and you have to have the means for living. At the same time you see the real grief of people and sometimes it's difficult to communicate with them. Psychological exhaustion comes. That's why those people who still work in this sphere are real heroes.

There is no doubt that those civic organizations became the pillars of society. I am the head of the Secretariat of the largest coalition of NGOs, now counting 66. We have more than 300 participants-experts, more than 90 laws of Ukraine became laws thanks to "Reanimation Package for Reform" (RPR), and we received many positive comments from ambassadors. It's a very powerful activity, even though only 3 % of the population is actually involved in it. And through Euromaidan, according to various sources, had passed from 7 to 14 % of the population. This is the minority that changed the country.

Actors

NGOs

NGOs

Today such organizations as RPR, "The New Country", "Vox Ukraine", "Easy Business" and a range of other organizations operate as, in fact, a separate branch of power. Politicians cannot ignore us. In times of Yanukovych NGOs had their own schedule of meetings in the Parliament, they had their own room, and the MPs were recommended to go and speak with a public expert. Now we carry out our reform clubs within the walls of different fractions. Now a representative of RPR has the right to come out with the priorities from the society to the conciliatory council, where only the MPs have the right to enter. It's unbelievable and they don't have it in some foreign countries. We have many delegations from foreign youth organizations from Sweden, Poland, Romania and Germany, USA, Belarus and Russia. And there is no country that said that they have something similar. They either already have a well-built state system which doesn't require such an assistance, or they are not developed in this regard.

Internal Policy

Attitude to
NGOs

RPR is based on values of Euromaidan and was founded on Maidan on the 7th of March 2014. There was the first inaugural meeting at the "Journal" at Tolstoy Street back then. The representatives of major civic organizations met there and decided to create a platform that would coordinate their activities in the Parliament. There are a number of bills that lay in a drawer for years, and there was a need for one platform that would have resonance and would be able to coordinate it with one voice. In fact, the biggest problem of the civil society in previous years was actually the lack of system and the lack of unity. We have developed, thanks to a network of

talented managers of the civil society sector, a legal system that created balanced governance. There is no one director or one owner, all is based on symmetry. There is a supreme council – a meeting where everyone has a voice, all members of the organization, and non-associated members are just listening. The task is to promote the reforms of decentralization of power in the national security, culture and other fields. It is a new level of Trade Unions. At the moment we are getting financial support from the European Commission, and before that – from the governments of USA, Sweden, Poland and Soros’ foundation.

Euromaidan helped to gather under the aegis of values. Today, those people are forming the basis for future government and political parties. Already now the founders of the RPR Hanna Hopko, Svitlana Zalishchuk, Ostap Yednak, Oksana Syroyid and Oksana Prodan became politicians. MPs Nayyem and Leshchenko also played the role of the ideologues in the process of establishing. I am sure that Maidan created it, together with the unity of protesters there, and with common values and the goal. I recognize that we were got a thrill from it at the Maidan, despite the tragedy of events that were developing around. I eye-witnessed death. I was taking the injured with my own car.

KN: You mentioned that the Euromaidan gave a set of values, what are they and how people were learning about them to unite and work together? Were these values declared or formed there?

AM: I will begin with an interesting story from our activities. We had an agreement with the Capuchins brethren to bring people to stay with them, but with their phones off and with their phones’ batteries removed, so that they would not be revealed. They were providing good conditions for the victims, in separate guest rooms with beds and showers. Once I was delivering there a dark-skinned boy and I had a task to check whether he was an agent. I asked where are you from? I'm from Lviv, and where do you study? - School nr 8, and where do you work? - **Emotions** Nowhere. I was already afraid, whom I’m taking with my car. So I’m asking further: and why did **Fear** you come to the Maidan? He is silently watching me. Then I ask: are you for the European civilization or for culture? And he answered - I'm for the culture. “We need to raise the cultural

bar”. Firstly I thought that he was saying something weird, and then I started to think about his words. And indeed, the reason of our misfortunes is the lack of a certain culture that leads to neglect and corruption.

So, for which values I was standing there? Me myself and my family went there for the European integration. I came to Maidan before the beating of the students. But most people came after the beating. We were talking already about specific issues – about justice, responsibility, order and dignity for every citizen, and transparency. And actually about culture, because Euromaidan was a platform of cultural exchange, there were all the representatives of the society. We saw ourselves as a single nation there. In the process of Maidan, the vector of the European integration had shifted and stopped to be a priority. For example, Afghans were against the EU. Nevertheless, justice was uniting all the protesters. We shall work on culture indeed.

Events

Beating of students

Motivations

Justice, dignity

Emotions

Disappointment

And when, the Euromaidan was over, some participants became politicians, we saw, that they are not able to deal with their tasks in the light of the Revolution of Dignity. They were both bad managers and involved into corruption schemes. After all, some participants were not just Euromaidan activists but members of different parties who were planning their further career. However, there is a chance that people coming from civil society organizations will become decent and successful politicians.

KN: So, the motivations to participate in Euromaidan were European integration and the desire to restore social justice? But how were the people gathering?

Motivations

Self-interests

AM: There was self-motivation, nobody was rounding up anyone. I found my organization fellows at the Maidan. Back then Euromaidan was as a magnet attracting young and ambitious people. Everyone understood that important processes were taking place there, everyone was doing his/her own business and looking for a group according to his/her interests. Our group grew from 7 to 45 people. We didn't carry out FB activity back then. Many were saying – I heard the students had been beaten, I got into a minibus and I came. And when the Maidan was already in

full swing, to come there became a must visit and a must see. This touch to it was seen as something very important, especially after the New Year. Initially, people often had their personal motivation, and then the feeling of participation in a great historic event appeared.

KN: Was Maidan a street protest? How was it possible that organizational initiatives that now are influencing the legislation reform were born there?

AM: To protest doesn't mean to throw the hot mixtures. There are always different layers – some are radical or aggressive, other moderate, and some are supporting the protest with the expert support, although they may not be located directly at the Maidan. In fact, it was them who worked to merge the informational space and thus they still continue to act.

KN: You talked about the failure of some members of the Maidan in the role of politicians. On the one hand there are legislative initiatives, and on the other there is still corruption in the country. How do you define corruption?

AM: The main task of politicians is to ensure social justice, distribution of property, funds and resources that belong to the society. And corruption is the violation of fair distribution of social benefits, placing the personal benefit above the common, appropriation of the common funds. Ukrainian society is totally corrupt on all levels. And hence there is mistrust to others, because everyone is trying to survive one by one. It is now important for us to establish civic initiatives and to act in order not to return to the post-Soviet camp.

Motivations

Fight with corruption

Emotions

Expectations

KN: Thank you for the conversation.