

Interview with Maxim Striha (M.S). Interviewer: Iryna Miniailo (I.M.). Place of record: Kyiv.

I.M.: OK. The subject of our research is three revolutions. Before we talk about it, I would like you to tell me a little bit about the stages of your life and which stages influenced you as a person.

M.S.: You know, about this is written in sufficient detail in the article about me in Ukrainian Wikipedia. So, I was born in 1961 in a family of scholars, a descendant of the old Ukrainian intelligentsia, most of my grandparents' peers died, so that's why I am happy that they survived and made me who I am. Participation in public life, of course, at the time of Gorbachev's perestroika, as we didn't have any public life before that. I was a Frondeur in Soviet times but I didn't take part in the dissident movement, although I maintained relationship with some of the dissidents and with their families. In 1989 I was one of the founders of the Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society and a member of the first audit committee. In the same year I was a member of the first constituent congress of Rukh (People's Movement of Ukraine), in 1990 I was elected a member of the Kyiv city council of the first democratic convocation and there I was a deputy chairman of the Commission for protection of culture and historical space, which consisted almost exclusively of representatives of academia and technical sphere and was very effective because of that. A brilliant physicist Ivan Ivanovich Ukrainskyi was the chairman of the Commission. I took an active part in the assistance, so to speak, of the first Revolution on Granite as a member of the city council.

Influences
Family

History
Gorbachev's
Perestroika

Revolution on
Granite

I.M.: Can you recall any events in your personal life that allowed you to feel empowered to participate in public life?

M.S.: You know, I had a stable Ukrainian consciousness from my early years; I was a Ukrainian-speaking Kyiv resident in the times when it was not trendy yet. And correspondingly, when the horizons of what was allowed have expanded... Before that we were trying to preserve the Ukrainian culture in any possible way within the allowed limits, by writing the works or literary texts in the Ukrainian language, but when certain "cracks" for legal activity appeared then, of course... As you remember, Gorbachev's Perestroika dealt with 3 aspects: environmental (because

History

Gorbachev's
Perestroika

of Chernobyl), the issue of historical memory and the issue of language preservation. This initially resulted in three organizations: the Memorial, the Green world (Zelenyi Svit) and the Ukrainian language society, and then on the basis of this Rukh appeared which had more or less general political slogans. Or still general democratic slogans back then, we shall say.

I.M.: If to speak of the Revolution on Granite, working then as a member of the city council, how did you first get in touch with that group at that time?

M.S.: Well, I didn't work, I was just a member at that time. And I worked my whole life with physics of semiconductors. And in the late 1980s, early 90s, all the groups were closely related. And those who came to the Kyiv council those passed there, and those who didn't pass they created life in the street and, in fact, it was possible to begin the Revolution on Granite because, before the planned demolition of the tent camp, we managed to approve (after all there was a shaky majority of democrats + centrists) at the session of the Kyiv council the decision about permission of mass actions on four squares of Kyiv, including the area of the October Revolution square of that time - the present Independence square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti). The militia treated the decisions of the Kyiv council with respect back then. It was a wonderful time when the legitimate decisions were implemented. For this reason, the tent camp was not demolished as it had been planned and it lasted successfully throughout the entire action.

I.M.: But what do you actually remember about the course of events? What key points would you identify?

M.S.: In fact, not everything was going at upsurge in the history of the Revolution on Granite. Demonstrations of hundreds of thousands people walked through the city with the slogans "Down with Masol, down with Kravchuk!", well, Kyiv residents were joining this, and there was great enthusiasm indeed... Although, after the demands were formally satisfied, and this was in fact limited to the resignation of Masol's government and to the appointment of Masyk as an Acting Prime Minister, the reaction came very quickly. My perhaps most dramatic memories were related to the onset of this reaction. As I have already mentioned, everything was unfolding very

Revolution on Granite

Actors

Democrats
Centrists

Places

Kyiv City Council

Events

Session of Kyiv City Council

Actors

Kyiv militia

Forms of protest

Tent camp

Revolution on the granite

Forms of protest

Demonstrations

Emotions

Enthusiasm

Actors

People

Kyiv residents

Vitaliy Masol

Leonid Kravchuk

Kostyantyn

Actors

Mychailo

Gorbachev

Activity

Gorbachev's

decree on

holding military

parades

dynamically, and by the end of October Gorbachev, still the then President of the USSR, issued a decree on holding military parades in the capitals of union republics, in cities-heroes because of some anniversary of the October revolution. And, on one hand, there was the inertia of all these events of the Revolution on Granite, and a large number of people who decided to not allow the occupation army to go through Khreshchatyk and, on the other hand, a strong order of the military... And all of us knew back then, well there was a huge leakage of the information, we had many allies in that time's KGB, in the army... In other words, there was an order to start here something similar to Tbilisi, to arrange a bloody pogrom in Kyiv. That is, the scenario was very simple: people block the passage of the Soviet army, the Soviet army is cleaning the way with sapper shovels, and the cleaning of the city from the nationalistic elements is taking place. And further the events were unfolding very dramatically: on the 30th of October the session of the Kyiv council starts where this Gorbachev's decree is placed as the first issue, and in parallel regime the old Executive Committee whose powers were extinguished I guess until the 1st of December, led by Mykola Lavrukhyn, such a manager, decides to allow this communist military parade on Khreshchatyk. Moreover, the same evening Lavrukhyn told my acquaintance, a doctor, that I approved today a death sentence to myself but I'm a soldier of the party and I wasn't able to do otherwise. And then again, at the session of Kyiv council the Chairman Arnold Nazarchuk resigned, such a moderate, from the "red directors" of Elektronmash. Since the Kyiv council was divided, they were elected in a package: the Chairman of the Kyiv council from the communists Nazarchuk and the deputy Chairman Musiyuk - a young physicist, my colleague, from Rukh. And here, realizing that in 7 days there will be blood in the city and you cannot help it (and he is formally the highest official in the city), Arnold Nazarchuk resigned. And, to tell the truth, it was a terrific feeling, because I was a sober enough person to realize that we are a pretty much decorative power, but formally we are the highest constitutional authority in the city (the laws were designed exactly in such a manner back then), and so 7 days later there will be a huge blood in the city and it will be "on your head", and you will have to be responsible for this. And the Kyiv council back then was the following: it had to consist of 300 members according to the list, in reality there were 289 among whom around 125 were the communist bloc, around 110 were the democratic block, and the rest - a small "bog", the so called "democratic center". In order to approve the decision, 145 voices out of these 289 were necessary. But according to that time's

Actors

Kostyantyn
Masyk

Mykola
Lavrukhyn

The Executive
Committee

Leonid
Kravchuk

Events

Session of Kyiv
City Council

Actors

Mykola
Lavrukhyn

Arnold
Nazarchuk

Oleksandr
Mosiuk

Places

Kyiv City Council

Actors

Communists
Democrats
Centrists

law, two third of the members from the composition according to the list had to take part in the vote, so 200 people. That is, the minority was able to easily "block" the decisions with simply non-participation in the voting. After that firstly Musiyuk who was formally remaining the highest official in the city, even though Lavrukhyn and the Executive Committee had the power levers in the reality, he rushed to Kravchuk to ask for help. Kravchuk waved his hands then (he still felt very uncertain at his position) and said that you will disrupt me the session of Verkhovna Rada and he washed his hands. The then Acting Prime Minister, Kostyantyn Masyk, had a more constructive attitude. He said: "Guys, I cannot cancel the parade. But if you approve the decision to move it from Khreshchatyk to any other street of Kyiv, I promise that I will execute this decision as an Acting Prime Minister. Thus he gave us the algorithm. With this algorithm, we entered negotiations with the communist bloc. And, surprisingly, in these negotiations, for the first time, they revealed independence and didn't follow what was ordered to them. The Kyiv militia was very conservative at that time but they realized that the army will start the "cleaning" and then all these excesses will fall anyways at the militia, and they didn't want that. That's why they took our side. But, at the same time, the official party leadership in Kyiv, the then-First Secretary of the City, Anatoliy Ivanovich Korniyenko, was clearly remaining at the position that the parade has to take place on Khreshchatyk and that's it. That is, the session of Kyiv council under the leadership of Musiyuk opens and the compromise option of the solution is introduced: to allow the communist demonstration on Khreshchatyk, to move the military parade to the Victory square, and at the same time to allow an alternative demonstration of Rukh at Volodymyrska street. A strong "preliminary bombardment" for this project of the decision is taking place, and I see how the face of Korniyenko is changing when the militia suddenly begins to support him. The voting is announced. There was no "Rada" system back then, yet there was the name voting procedure: every member had a card with green, yellow or red back - "for", "abstained", and "against", where his name was, he was signing at the back side, put the number of voting and its time, and handed the card over. And so, the first voting takes place, and I still remember these numbers: 176 "for", 2 - "against" and 20 - "abstained", so according to the numbers "for" is more than enough but 2 people are lacking to the bar of 200, and the decision doesn't pass. Then the first serious heart attack in my life took place, because I have a strong imagination and I imagined very clearly what will happen in Kyiv in two days. However, we

Events

Negotiations

Actors

Kyiv militia

Anatoliy

Korniyenko

Events

Session of Kyiv
city council

Actors

Oleksandr
Mosiuk

Events

Communist
demonstration
Military parade
Demonstration
of Rukh

Places

Khreshchatyk
Victory square
Volodymyrska
street

realized everything very quickly: we looked at this "chessboard pattern" where the votes were shown, we saw who was not present, who didn't vote. I personally was assigned to speak to one of the leaders of the Executive Committees, to whom with the means of the "clean Russian language" for which I reach very rarely, with the use of merely Russian words, I explained to him that there will be "tratata" with your children here. It helped by the way, and in the afternoon he voted. Another two we drew from the hospital. After the lunch break the issue was again placed for the vote, but it's visible that even physically there is not 200 people in the room: a group of around 10 people sits and defiantly smiles disrupting the decision. Musiyuk is delaying the voting: it had to take place in 3 minutes according to the regulations, and he delayed it for 30 minutes, and he already says "Deliver the cards", and suddenly I see how the head of the counting commission Herasymenko brightened, a school director, a moderate but rather disposed to us centrist. He rushed to the podium: 178 "for", 2 "against", 20 "abstained", and all together 200 people took part in the voting - precisely, without any reservations, the decision is approved. And then this little group rushes immediately: Korniyenko? Was there such a member of the council Tarasenko? for such dirty assignments... I still don't know what was motivating these people.. This Tarasenko always walked with such a filthy suit covered with dandruff... In other words, I do not think that he personally was corrupt, but he was ready to fill Kyiv with blood in order to safely preserve the happy communist power here. He says: "The decision is falsified!" Musiyuk here got his bearings and said: "I entrust the mandate commission to verify your statement and to report it back at the next meeting. The session is closed, the next meeting will take place on the 11th of November". There was still only one same stamp of Rada and of the Executive Committee back then, and we, members of council, using our immunity (we still had it back then) catch (twisting his hands behind his back by the way) the Secretary of the Executive Committee Holodenko who initially was trying to escape from the building, and take the stamp from him. This was before the computer era: we spoiled the penultimate letterhead, and I very neatly, typing with one finger, retyped this decision to the latest letterhead, Musiyuk signs it, puts the stamp, rushes to the Council of Ministers, to Masyk. The next day, we hold a meeting to reduce the possibility of clashes as much as possible, even though some provocations still took place. There were still the guys from the Union of the Ukrainian Youth, some 30 people who wanted to block the passage of troops to the Victory square as well, and they were beaten, severely beaten. But it

Actors

Holodenko

Oleksandr
Mosiuk

Kostyantyn
Masyk

Internal Policy

Provocation

Places

Colonel
Hryhoryev

Activity

Voting

Actors

Herasymenko
Korniyenko
Tarasenko

was nothing compared to the fact that tens of thousands of people could have been beaten. Of course, the provocation with the MP Khmara took place at Khreshchatyk... Well, I am not going to evaluate MP Khmara and his actions... Well, it was a famous provocation with the Colonel Hryhoryev and a gun, resulting in the arrest of MP Khmara... But thanks to this, there was not much blood in Kyiv on the 7th of November 1990, even though it was planned.

I.M.: And what about the alternative Rukh demonstration? Please, tell me a little bit about it.

M.S.: I wasn't there because I was with Musiyuk at that time (and I was one of his closest colleagues, I was in the leadership of the Democratic Bloc) and we went everywhere around... We only saw it. It was pretty big, but we mostly were in the places where there was a possibility of clashes: around the Communist demonstration and at the Victory square itself. And since Musiyuk was formally the higher official, they allowed us really everywhere: there was indeed respect for law back then. But these sizzling glances of the military who were already ready for the bloodshed but they were not allowed - this I will remember for ever. The pendulum still wavered many times after that...

Actors
Oleksandr
Mosiyuk

I.M.: Do I understand correctly that these were the forces stationed in Ukraine but the stuff..?

Actors
The Soviet
army

M.S.: There was still the Soviet army back then! The position of the politicians of the Soviet Union was such that Russians, Kazakhs and so on did military service in Ukraine. And Ukrainians served in Kamchatka and Central Asia. There were few ethnic Ukrainians at that time there, and they actually were cooperating with us... I don't remember now how many there were percentage wise but probably not more than 10. That is, it was indeed an occupation army, a classic Soviet one. It was under the command of the well-known General Gromov, the Commander of the Kyiv district, who apart from that was the last Soviet commander in Afghanistan.

General
Gromov
Provocations
Beating
Actors
Persons from
the Union of
Ukrainian Youth
Actors
Students

I.M.: Could you clarify? You said that people joined the Revolution on Granite. How would you describe the mass character of this process? How many were there?

**Forms of
protest**
Camp-beds

M.S.: Well, the square was filled with the students on camp-beds. People were coming, sympathizing. Sometimes it was a bit, so to speak, spectacular when my fellow writers conducted a one-day hunger strike of solidarity. And, on one hand, there are the students who were really starving and they were already bowed by wind, and on the other hand the people who against this background decided to come for one day...

Forms of protest
Hunger strike

I.M.: How they would now say "making PR".

M.S.: Yes, making PR. But, on the other hand, there actually was, I would say, the tectonic shift in consciousness. After all, the famous Soviet classic, writer-soldier Oles Honchar demonstratively left the communist party exactly at that time, when his granddaughter starved on granite.

Actors
Oles Honchar

I.M.: And what can you say about the Kyiv residents, the ordinary people?

M.S.: The attitudes were different. Students were doing occupation strikes, trying to capture the premises of the Red building... And the attitudes towards this were different. Of course, the consciousness was different back then, and Kyiv was much more passive. That is, there was a large stratum of residents who were used to Soviet values, they had hostile attitude to this, but they were not the majority. The majority of Kyiv residents, still, were in favour. Although a rather small part was ready to participate in this actively, but the majority was in favour, which is actually proved by the results of all the elections in Kyiv starting with 1989, when the first more or less free elections took place, in Kyiv the so to speak democratic candidates always won. Then, there was a lot of hesitation after that, the onset of reaction: the attempt to arrest Khmara, the attempt to remove the blue and yellow from the building of the City Council flag which we hung there officially based on the decision of the Presidium of City Council.

Forms of protest
Occupation strikes

Actors
Students
Burghers
Kyiv residents

Events
Attempt to arrest Khmara
Attempt to remove the blue-yellow flag from the building of the

I.M.: Are you talking already about the period after the Revolution?

History
Gorbachev's referendum
Novo-Ogarevo process
GKChP
The declaration of independence

M.S.: Yes, after the Revolution. Then there was this Gorbachev's referendum for the preservation of the USSR, then there were actions of solidarity with Lithuania when in March Gorbachev threw the army to Lithuanians and Latvians, and there was the Novo-Ogarevo process, the GKChP and the declaration of independence. In other words, of course, the Revolution on Granite was an extremely important event, although it was the most modest revolution in Kyiv and the least bloody, and maybe it had the least mass character of all others. But still it showed that very big shifts took place and it was a precondition of passing of the Act on the state independence on the 24th.

I.M.: You said that there were big shifts... In which areas and what kind of changes were these?

M.S.: All of us were going through a very difficult transformation back then. For example me, with my whole, so to speak, Ukrainian identity, in 1989 I didn't believe yet in the independence of Ukraine. That is, the limit of my dreams was: filling the Soviet Constitution with real content, transformation of formal sovereignty of the SSR to the real one. In other words, in the most courageous dreams we were supporters of such a confederation, of the conversion of the Soviet totalitarian state to a more or less loose confederation.

I.M.: But when you say "all of us", who is that?

M.S.: The Kyiv intelligentsia. At that time there still was such a relatively large class which no longer exists today, because it has already perished... Basically, it was composed of the scientific and technical representatives of scientific institutions: academic, departmental, so-called "boxes" which worked for the defence industry. Doctors, pedagogues... Well, all these groups... I probably belonged to the slightly higher cut of this environment because I was already a PhD, an employee of the institute, but all of us thought in a more or less similar way.

Actors
Kyiv
intelligentsia
(scientific and
technical)

I.M.: But why do you emphasize that it was precisely the scientific and technical intelligentsia? And what about the humanists?

M.S.: There were practically no humanists among the intelligentsia during Soviet times. And the humanistic intelligentsia which existed was usually Soviet. There was a large proportion of representatives of Marxist-Leninist science.

I.M.: Well, you have described the world view of the circle to which you belonged. And do I understand correctly that there was another circle with different expectations?

Revolution on the Granite

M.S.: Definitely, definitely. There was a small circle of people who before me realized that there must be independent Ukraine, but they were few, and people were afraid of them because they were frightening with their radicalism. It was the group of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, the Ukrainian republican party formed in April 1990. And there was also the group of the good old-fashioned sort of Stalinists, a special Marxist platform was created in the Central Committee of the CPSU back then. And there was a group of such compromisers who are together with the authorities: it was a very broad amorphous mass starting with the Head of Verkhovna Rada USSR Leonid Kravchuk who at that time was much less radical then after, and finishing with "aunt Motya", an economist who lived in the Soviet system very well, getting their 150 rubles and was very much afraid of all those Rukh people which as you know "will crush".

Actors

Ukrainian
Helsinki Union
Ukrainian
Republican Party
Marxist Platform

People's
Movement
of Ukraine

I.M.: OK. And what about the students? We call it the student Revolution on Granite

M.S.: Well it was not only student revolution, but it was the first of all student revolutions.

Actors
Students

I.M.: And if to speak about the motivation of those who took part in it. Can you highlight any groups?

M.S.: You know, at that time I was no longer a student.

I.M.: But what are your feelings?

M.S.: You know, students are always more radical.

I.M.: You said that "we didn't believe in independence". Does this mean that they believed?

M.S.: Well, it is possible that they believed. Maybe they already... But for me the understanding of the fact that Ukraine should not play in all these games with federations but must be fully independent, it came already in 1990, and I was not the last here. With all my Ukrainian traditions, with the fact that our great-grandmother taught us already during childhood "Shche ne vmerla Ukraina...", and Yefremov and Durdukivsky are the figures from our family history.... But all were accustomed to the fact that this empire, it is unbreakable... So, all of us were going through a very rapid transformation. Moreover, it occurred at different stages. At the stage of this fight for the language when we started to build the Society of the Ukrainian language, the situation back then in 1988 was so shoddy that the maximum of what we demanded, referring to Lenin, was the harmonious Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism. In other words, "let the Ukrainian language have at least a little of such rights as Russian has". And by 1989 we already clearly stood for the status of Ukrainian language as the only state language in the Ukrainian SSR and in fact we have achieved this: the Law "On language" was adopted somewhere in early October 1989 by Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR.

Influences

Childhood
Patriotic
education

History

1989 Law "On
languages in
the USSR"

I.M.: OK. If to go a little bit deeper into the environment which was actually protesting, do you see the determinant role of any professors?

M.S.: I believe it was not considerable. It is my intuitive impression, but there were no professor-leaders. There were people which were rather dragged there by the students, but there weren't any older leaders, it was a purely youth action. Maybe even the people who started it, they themselves did not initially understand how serious this was. But the situation turned out in such a way that it was already pushing them to continue until the end. But, for sure, the elders, so to speak, the leaders they did not have them.

I.M.: OK. You mentioned the Ukrainian Helsinki Union and the figures associated with it. How would you assess their role in these protests?

M.S.: You know, again, it was not decisive, as it seems to me. People from the Ukrainian Helsinki Union were still rather scaring away back then. They seemed to be too radical, and when someone was demanding drastic steps, it was rather frightening the masses. Although, of course, the fact that they were implicitly throwing these ideas and going ahead - this was very important.

I.M.: At which group they were throwing ideas?

M.S.: Well, to the student, more general group. There also was a huge number of this kind of informal newspapers back then: at first informal, and when the Revolution on Granite took place, then there were printed independent newspapers as well. And in 1989 there was still a bunch of newspapers printed in the old manner, I have preserved a bit of these in my archives. Certainly, this was also forming, shaping us, but for sure they were not the leaders either. Levko Lukyanenko was very important as a figure but he was certainly not the person who led these processes.

I.M.: OK. And if to come back to your activities as a member of the Kyiv City Council, what other contacts with the protesters you had back then?

M.S.: You know, every day we were in the very thick of things, and just imagine that every day crowds of hundreds of thousands were coming to Verkhovna Rada to demand something. And these internal troops (already Ukrainian, local) stay around Verkhovna Rada and are going to defend it in case of an assault. And so between those internal troops and the crowds we stood, as a thin chain (we were only around a hundred), we are the deputies of the Democratic bloc of the Kyiv City Council with homemade blue-and-yellow badges for which we were very much respected, stood between these and those to prevent the bloodshed. And now I can tell you when I started to hate MP Khmara for a lifetime: he led the people to a breakthrough, I saw that, it was

Events

Girls
doused by
water

The
injuring of
a member

Actors

Levko
Lukyanenko

Place

Verkhovna
Rada

Actors

Crowds

Internal troops

Deputies of the
Democratic
bloc of Kyiv

City Council
MP Khmara

right next to me. That is, the internal troops didn't want to beat anyone, but he wanted the aggravation, and he led a group of these students for a breakthrough, to the very square at Verkhovna Rada, and there they hustled these girls which were later poured water at and taken to hospital. And then this MP Khmara stood proudly, protected by his immunity, satisfied that he had achieved local tensions. Maybe he himself had already forgotten that episode, but I will remember it for all my life, because it was next to me and my colleague, a member of the Kyiv City Council was injured, and the main blow fell on him because Khmara led people exactly through him.

I.M.: And what do you think what was his goal?

M.S.: He needed to radicalize the situation. Such people as Khmara were very much afraid that the situation will "calm down", they believed that the situation needed to be maintained and I think that Khmara was very much unsatisfied that we didn't allow the bloodshed at that time. Because in his understanding, if the blood would be shed back then and the people would massively rebel after that, then Ukraine would become independent 5 months earlier and maybe on more favourable terms. In other words, there was a group of people who were deliberately going for the radicalization of the situation without taking into account potential victims. And I've always belonged to those who believed that victims should be avoided.

I.M.: OK. Speaking about the development of the events, can you say that your expectations concerning the development of the situation were changing?

M.S.: Of course, they changed all the time. They changed so often, the situation was so dynamic, and it was sometimes very close from euphoria to despair... I remember clearly my impressions from the time of GKChP when a comrade called and said that there is a coup in Moscow, and I went to the Kyiv Council, and I didn't have any hope, I put on some old sweater because I knew that the prisoners are thrown to some unsettled premises. And so I went to the Kyiv Council to die for freedom with an old sweater, and Ivan Ivanovich Ukrainskyi, unlike me, was an optimist. We met there and he just said that they will escape after three days. And you know, when after

Actors

Khmara

Emotions

Euphoria

Despair

History

GKChP

Places

Kyiv City Council

Actors

Ivan Ukrainskyi

Khasbulatov

that we contacted the reception of Khasbulatov with a normal city phone, I thought there is something in this. Because they turned off the governmental connection, the so called "high frequency", and they forgot to turn off the ordinary long-distance connection, and so we were in contact with the Parliament of the Russian Federation which was at the time under siege and which was the center of resistance in Moscow. But I remember my thoughts at the time: as how silly we are that at one time we didn't agree to confederation within the frames of the Novo-Ogarevo process (and in 1991 I was already completely for independence and against the Novo-Ogarevo process), because it would have been at least a confederation, and now it's unknown what will happen to us. And two days later we already had independence! So as you can see, everything was changing very quickly back then.

History
Novo-Ogarevo
process

The
proclamation
of
Independence

I.M.: Do I understand correctly that there had not been any kind of clear expectations?

M.S.: But it was also impossible: everything was so dynamic, so diverse, we had a very poor understanding of the real state, of the purpose, and this was at all levels. I remember, for example, when the first foreign consulates appeared and we were going around and looking because Kyiv was so stuffed with all sorts of completely useless stupid Soviet bureaus that the whole space was occupied with offices. And we together with the later-famous Kyiv Mayor Omelchenko who, at that moment, was just a member of the Executive Committee, were going all around the city and looking for premises for one of the consulates and we couldn't find anything because it was unknown who sits in which building, it was only visible that there was light in the windows. In other words, it was an amazing epoch in a certain way.

Actors
Oleksandr
Omelchenko

I.M.: OK. You said that the requirements were formally satisfied, right?

M.S.: Formally, and not all of them. Well, you remember: they dismissed the government, but as of everything else...

Activity
Dismissing the
government

I.M.: In your opinion; did it have any importance for the further development of events? And why the requirements were met formally?

M.S.: Formally, because everyone understood that the situation should be "removed" somehow. Because, on the one hand, the guys were ready to die, and very soon they would really start to die, and the people who were in the leadership of Verkhovna Rada, especially Kravchuk, didn't want the guys to die. And I believe that everyone played such a game back then: here we will pretend that we satisfied the requirements so that the hunger strike will stop, so that the guys will not die. And this game, I believe, was followed by everyone: the guys themselves, the MPs, and Kravchuk because it allowed removing this enormous tension.

Actors

Leonid Kravchuk
The demonstrators
The MPs

Forms of protest

Hunger strike

I.M.: And can you say that this protest in some way was a model for the following protests?

M.S.: I don't think so. All of them unfolded by their own scenario. Just the place of Maidan turned out to be traditional, it was sanctified by the fact that the Revolution on Granite took place there. But each of the subsequent revolutions occurred by its own scenario.

Places

Independence
Square in Kyiv

I.M.: Speaking of Maidan, what do you think, why exactly Maidan?

M.S.: It's a very convenient square in the center of the capital. A communication center, two metro stations, everything is visible, all governmental buildings are nearby. It's on the edge of the governmental area, that is, on the one hand, there is the always hostile to all new Pechersk and, on the other hand, there is this old-Kyiv part from where there is already the exit to normal, democratic Kyiv.

I.M.: This means a certain symbolism, right?

M.S.: Just logistically, I felt it. I also live here nearby and I was going to Maidan but from this side, so it was much better for me than for those who lived in Pechersk. Symbolism also appeared but logistics is very important here as well.

I.M.: Is it more important than the symbolism?

M.S.: Well, you know, it's very difficult to compare the kilograms to kilometers.

I.M.: What do you think: did some traditions develop during this protests which became basis of the subsequent revolutions?

Forms of protest

Mass actions
Camping

M.S.: To a certain extent yes. Here, the mass actions at the square, the tours from the square with various circular routes. It wouldn't be possible to camp in front of Verkhovna Rada, but to walk from Maidan to Verkhovna Rada is possible.

Places

Independence Square in Kyiv
Verkhovna

I.M.: What happened to the protest forms further? How from the Revolution on Granite we moved to the Orange revolution?

Orange revolution

M.S.: Then if you remember there was the action "Ukraine without Kuchma". Now I'm already inclined to believe that this was a brilliant invention of the Russian special services which either blindly or not in used Melnychenko's films and, as a result, Ukraine didn't receive the membership in NATO back then, and it was the only real chance Ukraine had.

Russia's Policy

Protest action
„Ukraine without Kuchma”
Films of Melnychenko

I.M.: Meaning, you believe that this version is the most realistic?

M.S.: I, as a person who was very active in the action "Ukraine without Kuchma", as a friend of Georgiy Gongadze who worked with him, I can say that all this was very cleverly used by Russia. That we, when we were in the squares, we didn't think of it, we didn't know, and back then such a thought would have seemed to be wild for me, but now it is absolutely clear for me that this was an action of FSB, and a very well planned action which was bought by all of us.

Actors

Georgiy Gongadze

Orange revolution

I.M.: I feel a certain disappointment in your comments.

Actors

Viktor Yushchenko

M.S.: No, I'm not disappointed at all with the Orange revolution and with the fact that I was there, although I'm very much disappointed with Viktor Andriyovych and with some other figures. And

Events

“Ukraine without Kuchma”

I'm absolutely not disappointed with the Revolution of Dignity, I am happy that I was there, even though not in the leading roles. But yes, I am disappointed with the fact that all of us were fooled in the action "Ukraine without Kuchma".

I.M.: Do I understand correctly that the result of the action was such as it was sought by the manipulators? And what was the result?

M.S.: The result was very simple: a sort of an oligarchic system was formed in Ukraine but thanks to the fact that the visible places were occupied by several west-oriented people (Horbulin, Marchuk, for example), Ukraine was really going towards NATO and to rapprochement with the EU. It was necessary to discredit the Ukrainian authorities as bandit and totally corrupt, so that we would not reach there. This is what was done, and it caused the natural response. That is, the authorities were not that much corrupt when all this began, but when all this got poured out over it, then they finally began to act in this way.

I.M.: When you say "the authorities" who do you mean?

M.S.: Leonid Danylovych Kuchma and his entourage.

I.M.: Are we talking now about the Parliament?

M.S.: No, the Ukrainian Parliament was diversified, there have always been a couple of dozens of good people, there have always been a couple of hundreds of villains, and some bog of around 200 people that could be good people or villains depending on the situation. And things have always been madly difficult in this Parliament for the good people.

I.M.: OK. What is the connection between the events of the action "Ukraine without Kuchma" and the events of 2004 - 2005?

**Orange
revolution**
Outcomes

Actors
Leonid
Kuchma

Motivations
Changes

Actors
Leonid Kuchma
Viktor
Yanukovych

M.S.: The public expectation that something has to be changed. Kuchma, under the influence of all this, "stakes" on Yanukovych, apparently in order to show that if Ukraine is without Kuchma, then you will feel really bad. It is obvious that "Ukraine without Kuchma" discredited Kuchma completely, and he already took the step of revenge over entire Ukraine when he appointed Yanukovych as the successor, so that everyone would miss the country with Kuchma.

I.M.: Meaning there was some sort of an insult there?

M.S.: Apparently, yes. You know, he had an entire set of different figures, and with more human faces among others. And when the governor of Donetsk with criminal record was chosen, it was already clearly the revenge to all of us who walked along Khreshchatyk and shouted "Down with Kuchma!"

**Orange
Revolution**

I.M.: What do you personally remember about the Orange revolution? Describe the events.

Activity
Deputy
Chairman of
parliamentary
party Ukrainian
Platform
"Sobor"

M.S.: I encountered the Orange Revolution in the role of the Deputy Chairman of one small parliamentary party which was called Ukrainian Platform "Sobor" and which was the outcome of the merging of two parties: the Ukrainian Republican Party and the Ukrainian People's Party under the leadership of Anatoliy Matviyenko, and that's why I went through the Orange Revolution in headquarters, and at some level I was even involved in the adoption of some decisions, I developed them. Although of course I also stood at Maidan a lot: during the first night as well, when it was not clear whether they will destroy it or not...

Activity
Standing at
Maidan

I.M.: What was the first night for you?

M.S.: The first night was when the announcement of the results and the overall confusion took place, then the next morning when people started to gather at the Maidan and they didn't know what to do, and when the leaders as well didn't know what to say, and when in the parliament they had no idea what was happening, that's why the first night - is already after the announcing the results, when some people stayed at the Maidan, but they were not many at all, and there was

Actors
People from
Lviv

a question whether they demolish them or not. In principle, it would be very easy to demolish it. Then there were already much more people, people from Lviv arrived... Of course, now the Revolution of Dignity already overlaps with these events, and that's why I recall the Orange revolution as something safe and a little but theatrical, but to tell the truth I really remember this effect back then, the memory which will remain for all my life, when I wake up at night (and I live nearby) and listen if whether the heavy machinery goes to Maidan.

I.M.: Was there such an expectation?

M.S.: There was, and it was not unreasonable as it is known. But with all that, at the same time there was a lot of "carnival". Many theatrical things have been arranged. It was in fact unclear whether it will be possible to do it in a legitimate way, and that's why in parallel regime they were trying (I wasn't the initiator) to create some parallel structures of power in order to, in case of necessity, take the power by means of a coup. And we had conducted such a congress of councils at the Ukrainian House, using by the way such a purely Soviet terminology "Congress of Soviets". There were many members who have supported this, and we have chosen the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee. The plans envisaged that if Verkhovna Rada appears to be ultimately unable to make any conscious decision, than this body can, in case of necessity, take this role. Such a quasi-legitimate body. I remember how we run this congress, and how then all these members went under Verkhovna Rada... There were many such moments, but finally, pretty soon it became clear that the situation is moving to some normal solution.

Places

The Ukrainian House

Actors

The All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee Verkhovna Rada

I.M.: Pretty soon - when is this?

M.S.: From the moment when it became clear that they are ready to exchange, relatively speaking, Yushchenko for the constitutional reform, even though many didn't accept it and considered it a betrayal. I believe that it was the only acceptable option of the solution at the time, and only extremely weak personal characteristics of Victor Andriyovych Yushchenko didn't allow later to benefit from the possibilities which were open and vice versa created preconditions for the further revenge of Yanukovych in 2010.

Actors

Victor Yushchenko

I.M.: And what sort of possibilities were open then?

M.S.: The window of European integration was not yet completely closed at the time. Poland had just become a member of European Union back then, Bulgaria and Romania became members in 2007, in other words we were still able to "jump in the last wagon". In my understanding, this window had finally closed for us in 2007 when Europe hardly "digested" Bulgaria and Romania which are not better than us at all in terms of the economy, corruption and everything else, but they managed to jump in. And we didn't manage to jump in, because Victor Andriyovych and Yulia Volodymyrivna were busy with their exemplary "shoot outs" because of the power, and also Victor Andriyovych when he had to make decisions was just escaping to Trypillia to look somewhere for skulls and nobody was able to find him because he was "communicating with his victorious ancestors in the astral".

Actors

Victor
Yushchenko
Yulia
Tymoshenko

I.M.: Speaking of the protesters, do you remember how the events unfolded? What motivated the people who joined the protests?

Motivations

M.S.: Dignity, desire of freedom. At certain points this was the desire to be on the side of those who will win, and from nothing to become everything: to get access to power, to positions. There were such as well... But still, I believe that the vast majority of people who were coming there were just for dignity, and were guided by idealistic considerations.

Dignity
Desire of
freedom
Desire for
power

I.M.: And who on the authorities' and who on the opposition's side can be called the leaders?

Actors

M.S.: Well, many of the figures are known. As all these headquarters of Victor Andriyovych were built at different times. Since these people are alive and I still occupy some sort of an official position, so I don't want to...

Victor
Yushchenko

I.M.: OK. But maybe you can recall someone from the public?

**Orange
Revolution**

M.S.: You know, the Orange revolution gathered a large number of people, but the general public at that time (I have such an impression) didn't try to play such an independent role back then as it has played later on already in the times of the Revolution of Dignity. They mostly were going in the fairway of the politicians and didn't try to create something separate by themselves, and actually to switch with this to the status of politicians too.

I.M.: That is, we cannot know these people now? They didn't come to the public level?

M.S.: Most of them were in the same "wide range" except the cases when, relatively speaking, they withdrew for biological reasons. I still remember how in some TV program we were together with a very nice Deputy Foreign Minister Anton Butenko who had a stroke very soon after. But such figures who did not formally have political status but who played a very active role (like Ruslana in the events of the Revolution of Dignity), such people in the Orange Revolution I think were smaller in numbers.

Actors

Anton Butenko

I.M.: What were the goals of the revolution? Did you see, as a representative of the headquarters, some goals?

M.S.: You know, the tragedy is that I saw, but the absolute the majority of the people in the headquarters were occupied only with taking over power and with placing their own people at power levels, but as of the program - let's think about it later. That is, everything was in very general outline, general phraseology, but there was no clearly defined program. And additionally, when Yulia Tymoshenko, a convinced leftist, became the Prime Minister, and a convinced liberal Yushchenko became the President - the people which in principle weren't able to any collaboration, it didn't promise anything good, because they saw completely differently even the ways of solutions to the issues.

Actors

Yulia
Tymoshenko
Victor
Yushchenko

History

The Ukrainian
presidential
election of 2004

I.M.: You are already talking about more recent events. And if we want to come back to the events of those winter months, was there any sort of picture of what we wanted?

Actors

Ivan Vasyunyk
Anatoliy
Hrytsenko
"Razumkov
Center"

M.S.: I'll tell you one thing. And here I will name one surname. I played an active role indeed in the election headquarters of Yushchenko, and there was an activity led by Vasyunyk (the Vice Prime Minister afterwards), aimed at the development of a normal program. I was in the scientific-education unit. We conducted many roundtables, we developed a good program in the sphere of education and science, and then Victor Andriyovych said that "go away", I will take Anatoliy Hrytsenko from Razukmov Center, I will give him money and he will write a program for me which will be liked by people. And Anatoliy Hrytsenko wrote indeed that we need to come back to a 10-year school education because he knew from social sciences exactly that the people who are nostalgic of the Soviet times want a 10-year school. And then Anatoliy Hrytsenko with the persistence worthy of better application pushed this idea of a ten-year school for a pretty long time. And then this idea of coming back to a 10-year school appeared in the Program. And this led to a terrible conflict with Vasyunyk, and I was ready to make a scandal there because this slogan of 10-year school was really disastrous for Ukrainian education, and when it was actually realized later by Yanukovych-Tabachnyk, it was really one of the greatest catastrophes in our education in 2010. But then Victor Andriyovych had just accepted it because the irresponsible politician Anatoliy Hrytsenko, who loves to show himself as an honest officer, convinced Yushchenko that the voters needed it and that they would support it. And so, on a similar level, all program things were happening: even if something normal and deep was developed, then a conditional "Anatoliy Hrytsenko" came and said that there would be such a one simple slogan because the electorate would "eat it".

I.M.: But did these program developments take place during the revolution?

M.S.: No, it was long before. The good thing which was at the first stage: there was an attempt by a number of directions... That is, I can speak about my educational direction, but I know that there were several such directions. We conducted many round tables at that time, I still have many program developments in my computer which I used later on either in my first coming to the ministry or already now because these were good things.

I.M.: OK. And speaking of the goals of the protests, do you see any kind of a common pattern among the leaders of the opposition and the mass protesters?

M.S.: Well, you know: Yushchenko, Poroshenko, Kinakh, Moroz, Tyahnybok and so on stayed together at the podium and they didn't have any common pattern, and the people who were in the street even more. All were equal in not accepting of what was there, but all differed in the vision of what should be there.

I.M.: But in not accepting of what?

M.S.: In not accepting of injustice, corruption... That is, the "iron curtain" has lifted up, everyone more or less imagined that to live somewhere in the world is much better and fairer, that our lives are not good, and that our authorities, the bosses, the oligarchs and so on treat us like cattle. This was what people didn't accept.

I.M.: OK. Speaking of the oligarchs. Here you said that a specific oligarchic regime was formed under Kuchma. And how do you see them in the context of the Orange revolution? What was their role in the society, how the society was set in relation to them?

M.S.: Well, always negatively, although in general their role was different. Of course I have much better opinion of the oligarch Poroshenko or oligarch Pinchuk than of oligarch Akhmetov. However, I have more positive attitude towards oligarch Akhmetov than to oligarch Medvedchuk.

I.M.: And what was the specificity of the oligarchic regime you spoke about?

M.S.: Because of the fact that in the regime which existed at Kuchma's time, the oligarchs and Kuchma himself were at the same time not devoid of certain sentiments. That is, they were not deprived of certain ideas of justice, about the fact that it is still necessary to build somehow a more just society... This is my personal impression, it's difficult for me to say something here. But my acquaintance with the films of Melnychenko has made an impression on me that a drunk

Kuchma is led to the information that a Gongadze puts something very dangerous on the Internet (although Kuchma, apparently, had still a very poor idea of what the Internet was), and so the drunk Kuchma said something like send him to Chechens. I'm sure that Kuchma didn't mean cutting the head but already the people who knew exactly that such words were said, they already figured out the entire further chain: to put Kuchma on the hook, to discredit the authorities... I believe it was a very well thought-out operation the performers of which we will most likely never ultimately imagine.

**Orange
revolution**

I.M.: OK. Please, tell about the different role of oligarchs in the Orange revolution.

Actors
The oligarchs

M.S.: A part of them "staked" on the victory of the revolution, some of them until the end were staking for Yanukovych...

I.M.: Was their role decisive?

M.S.: You know, we are now starting to guess... Their role was important, but to say that something would not have happened...

I.M.: OK. And what was their role then?

History
Presidential
elections of
2004

M.S.: It is clear that the election of Yanukovych - it was a huge financial investment in the control over the commissions, visits of people who voted with absentee ballots and so on.

I.M.: You talked about certain sentiments and the idea of justice. What do you think; is it the only feature according to which you can differentiate the oligarchs, are there any other factors?

Actors
Rinat
Akhmetov
Victor
Medvedchuk
Victor Pinchuk

M.S.: Well, for example the same Pinchuk who made enormous efforts in order to justify Kuchma, and I cannot blame him for this because there are still family circumstances... And at the same time, he is a person of absolutely European views and sincerely wants the European future for Ukraine. But to say about Akhmetov that he is a person of European views is difficult for me,

although his Fund still made some efforts in this direction. And Medvedchuk is already a classic embodiment of the Asian way, and he never concealed that Europe is the absolute evil for him, and Putin and Russia is the absolute goodness, even after all what happened.

I.M.: OK. And what was the role of foreign politicians at the Maidan during the Orange revolution?

M.S.: I remember that we stood there on Maidan with Siwec and Buzek but they were the observers, their role wasn't active, they were surprised that people went out. Then of course when Kwasniewski started to come, and the dialogue had started. There was no such a figure as, relatively speaking, McCain who would inspire people in the Orange revolution. There were some moderators already in the negotiation process but I think there were no such bright figures who would speak openly about their sympathies.

I.M.: You say "moderators". Does it mean that until certain moment they didn't get involved in the process and then they got involved?

M.S.: Well, you remember, when the negotiation process in Kuchma's summer house had already started, then Kwasniewski appeared... Well, their role was very important because it was necessary to bring everyone together and to get them talking. Kwasniewski suited ideally for this role because he was a member of Komsomol, he knew Russian...

I.M.: And what motivated them, what do you think?

M.S.: Kwasniewski? Partly the idealistic considerations, partly pragmatic: after all it is more pleasant to have a civilized Ukraine of Yushchenko (as it was believed back then) by their side than a criminal one of Yanukovich.

I.M.: And who else from the foreign politicians? Who else you can recall?

Actors

Aleksander
Kwasniewski
John McCain

Western Policy

Mediation

Orange revolution

Actors

Marek Siwec
Jacek Kurski?

Events

Negotiations

Places

Kuchma's
summer house

Actors

Aleksander
Kwasniewski

M.S.: To tell the truth, I don't remember after 12 years. Kwasniewski was well remembered, there were more people but in my opinion their role was smaller.

I.M.: OK. You said that the biggest disappointment for you was Yushchenko and his personal qualities, the fact that he didn't benefit from the opportunities, right?

M.S.: You know, for me Yushchenko is a symbol of everything nasty that exists in Ukrainian character. There was a lot of good: it is such a Ukrainian archetype, but at the same time also nasty.

I.M.: Let's get three characteristics of each side.

M.S.: Positive features: respect for tradition, history, attempts to get deeply into the essence of phenomena. The negative feature is the colossal irresponsibility! That is, the inability of Victor Andriyovych to be less than one hour and half late even at an important meeting... Petty revenge and absolute inability to differentiate between the main and the secondary - these are also his negative features.

I.M.: Do you think that the oligarchic regime got strengthened or weakened in the years after the Orange revolution?

M.S.: Well, exactly because of Yushchenko and all his negative features, nothing happened to this regime. That is, the oligarchs kept their positions, only the configuration changed: somewhere someone got into the first row (however, later on they fell), while some else dropped out from there. But in general the rules of game remained almost the same as under Kuchma.

I.M.: And what kind of changes to the political system did the Orange revolution bring?

M.S.: Well, we had the experience, still, of this presidential-parliamentary republic, which turned out to be unsuccessful. Although, as it has turned out now, the system can still work: here, we

**Orange
revolution**
Outcomes

**Orange
revolution**
Outcomes

survived the war with a parliamentary-presidential republic, and it works. There were some positive decisions: Yushchenko made many good steps in regards to memory policy. Several very good steps were made in regards to language policy: all these Kyrylenko's decisions about the dubbing of movies... Of course, it was very unlucky that the world economic crisis started in 2008 which overlapped additionally and finished off all what could get somehow normally.

I.M.: Continuing further memories... How do you remember your public activity, which bright points were there in terms of social activity in these 7 years between 2005 and 2013?

M.S.: Well, in 2008 - 2010 I became the Deputy of Minister of education and science Vakarchuk on the issues of science. I spent two years in the same Committee, I made the attempts to integrate the Ukrainian science with European science: some things worked, but many more didn't. In 2010, I left under Tabachnyk, even though he didn't want me to go, because the working horses are always needed, but at certain point I realized that to stay longer means to discredit the name and not be able to ever wash it out. Because of that, after 2 months in the role of the "Deputy" I wrote a letter of resignation which was considered for one more month before the release. And after that... Well, all my life I existed in science, for me this is my life. In addition, I have my hobby which is in fact already the second hypostasis - it is translations, so I had something to do. I have never imagined that I will be back in this masterful cabinet, but in the end of 2013 when it happened that the society was already ready to explode, the greed and savagery of the regime had crossed all the possible boundaries, and the last hope was taken from the people, the hope which was cherished by them - Europe, then everything exploded in such a way that nobody was able to predict. And during this revolution I lived not in some headquarters since I had left the politics in 2010 realizing clearly that the activity in which I was involved was beneficial not to the society but only to the narrow circle of some people, the leaders. And all of us realized at some point that our resources were limited and that we did not have much time to do something useful. So I decided in 2010 to concentrate on my science and literature, but the life once again brought a "fad": at first the Revolution in which I was just an ordinary citizen in the street who stood at the Maidan, who was getting cold, bringing clothes, food, and money (giving a greater share of my earnings to the Maidan back then). I probably represe

Revolution of Dignity

Activity

Standing at Maidan
Bringing clothes, food, money

Place

Frontline on Hrushevsky street
Mykhailivska barricade

Actors

Cadets from Kharkiv

Emotions

Fear

Events

Death of a boy

Activity

Wife
distributing porridge

Place

Medical centre at Hrushevsky

Events

Berkut attack

Actors

Victor Yanukovych

Russia's Policy

Support for Yanukovych

Revolution of Dignity
Activity
Supplies (clothes, food, money)

majority: I wasn't in the front line, at Hrushevsky street, I didn't throw the inflammatory compounds to anyone, although on the night of the 11th of December I held the left flank of Mykhailivska barricade against these poor unfortunate frozen cadets from Kharkiv... Of course, compared with the experience from the Revolution of Dignity, the Orange revolution now seems to be such a sweet, almost idyllic, because for all of us at the Maidan - it was a scary experience, and especially the last month, when there it was blood, when I was terribly afraid not so much for myself as for my relatives, and not without any reason: on the 20th of February a boy was killed just one meter from my wife who was volunteering, distributing porridge. My daughter, who had arrived from Harvard, managed to leave the medical center at Hrushevsky, for literally 15 minutes before the Berkut broke in. Of course if she had spent 15 minutes longer there, she wouldn't have gone back to any Harvard anymore. That is, there were many such purely personal situations, and there were many general situations, because I didn't believe that it would be possible to stand the night from the 18th to the 19th, I confess. And I was an ardent supporter of an attempt to reach agreements on the 20th, and now I see that I was wrong. All my life I was a supporter of avoiding victims, but obviously Yanukovich's regime and Russia which was behind him were so horrible that it was not possible without victims... And these guys from the "Right Sector" which were deliberately going for sacrifice - I understand that they were probably right at that moment and I was wrong. Because otherwise we would just be exhausted, we would have left the arena, and the project "Ukraine" would have been closed. Because if we had not won the Maidan then perhaps, taking into consideration the modern technology and the state of the society, it would have been the end of project "Ukraine", at least in the form as it is.

I.M.: Do I hear correctly that your personal situation was much different from the one which you had in 2004 - 2005? If you describe the motivation, what motivated you then and now?

M.S.: The motivations were basically the same, but the roles were different. The civic duty. My deceased great-grandmother was a positivist and she accustomed me that there is the notion of civic duty which must be fulfilled. What to do - this is what was put in me... This is the civic duty, the desire to make a difference, although at the Maidan, understanding what kind of great forces are concentrated against us, I didn't believe in the victory until the very end. I just

History

The night of
11th of
December

Actors

Protesters
Cadets from
Kharkiv

Emotions

Fear

History

20th of February

Events

The Death of
Volunteer

Actors

Maxim Stricha's
wife and
daughter
Berkut

History

The night from
18th to 19th of
December

Revolution of Dignity

Motivations

Civic duty

Influences

Maxim Striha's
grandmother

understood that I had to stand there, to be there, so that not to call myself a bastard later, but as a realist... I thought that some options of agreements were possible, that maybe it will be possible to shake it, to change it from inside - of course, idealistic considerations, but... Thank God there were people who believed. And finally, thank God that the same that the not very balanced captain Panasyuk broke the scenario of the agreement and Yanukovych fled. Although, for this we also paid a very hard price, but if he had not escaped then we would have paid much more.

I.M.: Did you communicate with people on the Maidan?

M.S.: Well, a few times I was at the headquarters, of course I spoke there...

I.M.: What was your impression about the motivation of the people around?

M.S.: Well, pretty similar to mine, just since for me it was already the third revolution and for them very often the first one, so they very often were more active, stronger and more motivated than me. It is always more difficult to get through the third revolution than the first one.

I.M.: Why?

M.S.: You have already more experience.

I.M.: Less faith that something will succeed?

M.S.: Yes.

I.M.: You said that your daughter and your wife were at the Maidan. How did you discuss it in the family? Did you discuss the course of events, the expectations...?

M.S.: Of course we discussed them. They always were more radical than me: I've always been a supporter of agreements, and they didn't accept the idea of any agreements. Although these were

Activity

Family

Discussions

the discussions purely between us because at that time I had already very limited access to political leaders. I had of course, but at the time of the Maidan I had a lot of insider information, and at the time of the Revolution of Dignity I had just the same information as everyone else. And that's why I often hesitated to share my concerns with some leaders who knew the situation from inside much better than I did.

I.M.: Do you think that the protest leaders were prone to agreements?

M.S.: Well, they are still alive, ask them. I believe that definitely at different times they saw it differently. I believe that their positions were modified, depending on the real situation of the moment and of where it was inclined. In general, the responsibility of the people who due to circumstances, without wanting so, found themselves at the head and they had to pull this strap until the end even though it was very often unclear what to say and what to do because, in fact, there were no easy options. It was very easy to blame, but in the reality it was very difficult to propose something more reasonable than they did.

Actors
Protests'
leaders

I.M.: Do you have such an impression that no agreement was reached because of the fact that the Maidan community didn't support this?

M.S.: Of course, the Maidan community was strongly against, and it hampered the leaders very much. However, the fact that in their rhetoric, until a certain point, they still assumed the saving of some agreements has hampered also Yanukovych from the bloody steps of the demolition... In other words, it was a game on the edge, both from this and from that side... Today you can blame Yatsenyuk for this "bullet in the forehead" but I believe that at that point these were sincere words.

Actors
Arseniy
Yatsenyuk

**Revolution of
Dignity**

I.M.: How do you evaluate the role of such factors as the Internet, art initiatives, and religious initiatives in the Maidan?

Activity
Lectures
Prayers
Activity
Internet
activities

M.S.: It had a huge role at the Maidan of course. I myself participated in this university at the Maidan, I lectured there. I took part in these prayers. The Internet was virtually the only means of mass media, all of us became, in fact, Internet-dependent back then, because every half an hour we were checking the news, and one of the biggest fears we had was that they would introduce martial law and cut off the Internet.

I.M.: And the religious initiatives, leaders?

M.S.: Of course, an enormous role was played by His Holiness Filaret, the Kyiv Patriarch of all Rus' and Ukraine who proved to be a truly religious leader comparable to Peter Mohyla, Josyf Slipyj, and Andrey Sheptytsky.

Actors

Patriarch
Filaret

I.M.: The artists?

M.S.: Of course, among those people who very often just stood there in the ranks with everyone were artists compared to Vaysburg or Geozaryan.

Actors

Artists

I.M.: That is, they were just participating there same as ordinary people?

M.S.: Well, they took part as ordinary participants and they strengthened the spirit of other ordinary people, as it seems to me.

I.M.: And as of the other countries and their attitude to these events?

M.S.: Confusion, confusion. That is, nobody expected: Russia didn't expect it, America didn't expect it. In other words, in fact, I have such an impression that Russia didn't treat it seriously at all at the first stage, and maybe even treated this with a certain gloat as to further weakening of Yanukovich, so that to finally spread him out and so that he would already never rock the boat with any kind of European integrations. That is, me and you by ourselves where the witnesses of the fact that there was the Sochi Olympics in Russia and they completely didn't figure out the

**Western
Policy**

Confusion

**Russia's
Policy**

Confusion

History

Sochi Olympic
Games in
Russia 2014

moment... The plan to occupy Ukraine Russia had already had for a long time, of course. The fact that the Kharkiv Partisans were created in 2008 is evidence of this. But the beginning of the implementation of this plan was definitely not accounted for February 2014. Maybe for 2015, maybe they were expecting that Yanukovich would lose the election, would falsify them, the protests would begin, and then we would have to go... I and you will not find this out but the fact is that it was not supposed to be the February of 2014. Russia was obviously confused as well, and between the beginning of the events and the decision of the direct military invasion in the Donbas a period time from February until 24th of August passed. The same about America, it was not ready, and by this a new problem was created to be solved. And the same about Europe. That is, in fact, the victory of the Revolution is the victory of the Ukrainian nation and not of some foreign manipulations. Of course, we felt the solidarity of certain sympathetic politicians: a classic example is McCain. Of certain sympathetic European intellectuals, thanks to them. But in general only blunt Russian minds can speak that the Maidan was a CIA-technology.

Actors

European politicians
John McCain
External solidarity
Sympathy from politicians and intellectuals

I.M.: And which moment can be considered as a turning point to assume that the Revolution won?

M.S.: In fact, everything unfolded on the 20th. On the 21st everything was already over. If during the Orange revolution there was this moment from voting the constitutional amendments until the repeated 2nd tour when the revolution still kind of continued but the result was already clear, here nothing was clear until the very end.

Events

Turning point
20th-21st of February

I.M.: And if you were to summarize this period, what did the Revolution of Dignity give the country?

Revolution of Dignity Outcomes

M.S.: A chance. If it would not win, there would be for sure no chance. We were given a chance, in very difficult circumstances: the war with the insidious enemy. A society that pulled together into a political nation but still didn't fully get rid of stereotypes and doesn't quite understand yet that there is a heavy price to be paid for the independence, including a material one, because now we objectively don't have the resources to live normally. But hadn't the revolution won, we

Actors

Arseniy Yatsenyuk
Volodymyr Turchynov
Petro Poroshenko

wouldn't have had this chance. I have a calmer attitude towards the politicians because since Yushchenko I know that this is who they are... I truly believe that once monuments will be erected for Yatsenyuk, Turchynov and Poroshenko.

I.M.: For their actions in the spring of 2014?

M.S.: For their actions during the Orange Revolution, and in the spring of 2014. The price of mistakes was extremely high. They made mistakes, but they did not make any fatal error.

I.M.: Are you talking about both revolutions - Orange and Dignity?

**Revolution of
Dignity**

M.S.: No, I'm talking about the Revolution of Dignity, I'm not talking of the Orange anymore. I'm talking about the Revolution of Dignity and about the beginning of the war, Russia's invasion. That is, the most critical - March, April, when this cancerous tumour began to spread, and it was not known where it would stop, and actually only in the middle of May we were able to at least approximately localize it, when in the rear new administrations were taken every time... Only when we were able to localize this around the perimeter, when it became clear where were "our" people and where were the others, then it became clear that here we had already formed a front and we should continue to keep it. And when there is no front, and this cancerous tumour creeps and crawls, and it's unclear where it will stop, and when the intelligence brings every night reliable data that a large-scale invasion will begin today at 5 o'clock in the morning. When the boarder is all the time approached by planes and it is unknown how far they will fly, and it depends on you to issue an order or not, and the price of the order may include certain corresponding consequences. It is only now that some extremely irresponsible people can say that we could have kept Crimea... We were not able to keep it! Because there was no state then, we destroyed it by ourselves at the Maidan! Do we hope that the internal troops which were trying to kill us at Maidan but didn't manage to kill entirely, would go afterwards to defend Ukraine in Crimea?! Ha, ha! It's only our disgusting "sofa hundred" that is able to imagine such things.

**Russia's Policy
War
Invasion**

I.M.: Are you suggesting then a connection between the Revolution of Dignity and the further deployment of the events?

M.S.: Well, everything was continuous! We were not given any break. There were only 6 days between 21st and 27th of February.

I.M.: And what happened on the 27th of February?

M.S.: The capture of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea. If we have not formed the government during this time, there would have been a hook for all of us. At that time we had a legitimate government, because before that there had been no state: no militia, no army, some armed people were walking here: sometimes they were idealistic, and sometimes just those who were engaged in looting. There were no fronts originally: in April you could not shoot at the Russians yet. One very high level politician told me how he tried to drive "Alpha" with the guns to assault the Donetsk administration in mid-April, and those just stupidly didn't perform the orders.

I.M.: And speaking about the biggest disappointment in the Revolution of Dignity, what are they for you?

M.S.: I have no disappointments here. I believe that there are many disappointments for the people: the fact that corruption has stayed, that all are scoundrels... Well, relatively, my disappointment is the "Self-help". I hoped that this is a human project with a program, and it turned out that they are the same populists, like all others. I agree with Groysman that there are 3 deadly enemies in Ukraine: Russia, corruption and the populists, and all of them are equally dangerous.

I.M.: You said at the beginning that there have always been 20 decent people in the Ukrainian parliament...

Events

The capture of
Crimea
Supreme
Council and
Council of
Ministers by
Russians
On 27th of
February

Revolution of Dignity Outcomes

M.S.: Now this number is bigger. Well, now there is up to one hundred descent people in the Ukrainian parliament. Maybe a little bit less but substantially more than 20. Although there still remains around 200 scoundrels of course.

I.M.: And to summarize our interview, the last several questions are related to the comparison of these events. In general, do you see some process in these events?

M.S.: Well, you know what I wish? I wish to be a participant of only three revolutions in my life. For one human life I believe it's quite enough.

I.M.: I see. But what do you think that these events are related to each other?

Revolutions
Outcomes

M.S.: Definitely. This is a series of events. If the Revolution on Granite had not won, there would not be independent Ukraine, there would be no reason for the Maidan. If the Maidan had not won then the expectations of Maidan would not appear to have been betrayed, then there would have not been the Revolution of Dignity. And now... Well, we are in a special situation, we have the war, and for a good long time: it will not be over in the coming months or years, and now we have to learn how to survive...

I.M.: You said that the ideals of the Maidan have been betrayed. Does this mean that the ideals of the Orange revolution and of the Revolution of Dignity were common?

M.S.: Well, the Revolution of Dignity was "smarter" in the sense that people already to a lesser extent hoped for the leaders and for the state, and to much more extent they hoped for themselves, for creating the conditions for their own dignity, their own survival. Although, of course, we cannot say that we finally overcame the paternalistic ideas, because we have really a lot of them, and a bunch of politicians speculate on this.

I.M.: But what is the tendency?

M.S.: The tendency is nevertheless correct: all tendencies in Ukraine are correct, because you remember the elections of 1994... That is, the border of Ukrainian Ukraine is constantly moving to the East. I very often visit the Donetsk region now: just with these evacuated universities... The teachers and students there are wonderful, European-oriented people now. Just a little more - and they would be able to create a new environment in Donetsk, but they were thrown away from there. But in Mariupol and in Kramatorsk, if there was no large-scale war, nobody would have expelled them, and there would be normal European environment. And when the supporters of the communist ideas die in a natural way, and a little bit later the weight of supporters of local identity who now operate in the Opposition bloc is reduced, then finally we will also have a normal piece of Ukraine.

I.M.: OK. And what about the forms of organization of these protests? Do you see some kind of commonality? Do you see some fundamental differences?

M.S.: Well, the revolutions were different: the Revolution on Granite was very much localized, that is it was spinning around the Maidan, the Orange is Kyiv and the West. And the Revolution of Dignity, first of all, was unique by the duration: that is, to survive in such conditions, in severe winter for three months... I still have such sturdy shoes, with which you can stay long in the cold. And it was not only Kyiv, it was the whole Ukraine. In fact, Yanukovych started to shake when he realized that the governmental institutions have begun to be captured in regions.

**Revolution
of Dignity**

I.M.: And if to talk about the mechanisms of self-organization, how would you evaluate them?

Situation
Internet

M.S.: Of course, what distinguishes the Revolution of Dignity? This is already the revolution of the Internet era. The Revolution on Granite is the revolution of pre-informational era, the Orange revolution is the revolution of mobile phones and SMSs, and the Revolution of Dignity is the revolution of the Internet network.

Activity
Self-
organisation

I.M.: What role did they play?

M.S.: These are the ways of self-organization.

I.M.: But the motivation and how it worked with such a tool, how would you describe it? What was the principle of self-organization?

M.S.: The principle of self-organization is to most effectively find the people who share your thoughts and to establish contacts with them with the purpose of information exchange and of joint actions.

I.M.: As an ordinary participant of the Revolution of Dignity, how would you describe: was Maidan well organized, or was it a rather chaotic environment?

M.S.: Well, it is difficult to say, well organized according to which parameters? What I clearly knew is that here I will go through such a post, and there I'll throw money, and there I will leave the things, and there I will approach these people and will leave them the food, and the medicine I will deliver at that medical centre, in this sense there was a perfect organization. Because indeed, it has existed in such a way for more than two months.

Activity

Supplies
(money, food,
medicine)

I.M.: You said that during the three revolutions your motivation to participate in them has decreased...

M.S.: Maybe not so much motivation than just my power. Well, you know, when you are 50-plus due to the natural causes you feel not so fresh and cheerful as when you are 20-plus...

I.M.: Did such a phenomenon take place in your environment?

Actors

Valeriy
Petushchak

M.S.: Still, my generation kept well in spite of all, and even those who are older... It was nice to meet there the 75 years old Valeriy Disanovych Petushchak - the first Ukrainian who travelled the world on a yacht.

I.M.: And do you know people who refused to participate in the Revolution of Dignity because of the disappointment in the Orange Revolution?

M.S.: Well, there are specific people... I will not talk about the person with whom I stopped to communicate closely already in times of Yanukovich, the director of the nearby museum of Shevchenko, Dmytro Vasylyovych Stus, but he seems to have never enchanted in Orange revolution either...

I.M.: How would you describe this mechanism: I took part back then, but now I no longer participate?

M.S.: Let's say, there is a number of people who sympathized with the Revolution on Granite - the same Larysa Pavlivna Skoryk who afterwards, already in the Orange revolution, took part on the other side... There are always deviations.

I.M.: But this is not a tendency?

M.S.: This is not a tendency. In other words, despite all the disappointment with the Orange Revolution, I actually don't know a person who would say that I do not support all this Maidan because I believed in Orange revolution so much, and then all of them turned out to be such assholes... Although, of course, many carried in their hearts the idea that all of them turned out to be such assholes.

I.M.: And still they took part in the Revolution of Dignity?

M.S.: Yes.

I.M.: Which events in the 20th century have in your opinion affected all these waves of protests?

Actors

Larysa
Skoryk

Orange Revolution

Emotions

Disappointment
Belief

History

Iron Curtain

Second
World War
Kolyma
Buchenwald
Bolshevik
coup
Cold War

M.S.: Everything in history is interconnected. Of course, you can build from the time of Adam, but definitely we all exist in this part of European continent which, unfortunately, at its time found itself behind the Iron Curtain and now has this status of the "not completely true Europe". And certainly all of us were affected with the end of the Second World War with the victory of Kolyma over Buchenwald, the victory of the Bolshevik coup and the defeat of the liberation struggle, the fact, that there was the Cold War... Of course, all of this has affected...

I.M.: Can we speak about the continuity of motivations, forms or leadership tradition?

M.S.: But we have never had any leadership tradition, the forms were born situationally, the motivations are universal. Of course, the Ukrainian archetype was reflected in this: what was written in the late 1860s that Ukrainians and the Great Russians are very different indeed, because the first are anarchist inclined to liberty, and the others are collectivist and prone to tyranny, - this is the truth, and all these revolutions have shown this. We opt for freedom, and I am an anarchist by my nature.

I.M.: With this we shall finish the interview.

M.S.: Then I wish you all the success.