

Interview with Timofey Zlatkin (TZ). Interviewer: Vitalii Ovcharenko (VO). Place of interview:
Kyiv

VO: Could you please introduce yourself?

TZ: Some journalists call me a volunteer, I have already done military service. I have tried a lot of things in my life and have already worked as a lawyer and a journalist.

VO: Were you born in Donetsk?

TZ: Yes, I was born in Donetsk, but lived both in Donetsk and in Yenakiieve.

VO: Can you tell me about the most important situations in your life which led you to get involved in public life?

TZ: In public life?

VO: For example, why did you become a journalist?

TZ: Well, frankly speaking, I became a journalist by stupidity. Basically that is the only reason. And we mostly did the “crimes”, i.e. investigative journalism. I usually tried to keep a low profile. And when this war started then it just...

Influences

Place of
origin –
Donetsk,

VO: Could you explain what motivated you to do investigative journalism?

TZ: Good Lord, this was back in 2004-2005.

VO: Starting with the Orange Revolution?

TZ: No. The Orange Revolution had nothing to do with that. It was on its own. Previously I went to the “hot spots” because I am a war correspondent, so because of this... In fact the Donbas is the sixth conflict in which I participate.

VO: And in what conflicts did you participate before?

TZ: Well, only as a reporter.

VO: Clearly.

TZ: The Middle East, the Balkans, a bit in Africa, in Israel and Palestine, Iraq, and then Kosovo, but we were there when everything was coming to an end and there were no active hostilities by that time.

VO: I see. Could you tell me, for instance, what topics were discussed in your family, after all you spoke about politics in the evenings.

TZ: Lord. About politics and just everything. To be honest, I was a committed communist, but I was not affiliated with any political party. I was an active Komsomol member. As a matter of fact, this probably led to my social life and social activism, as I did not start my involvement in community organizations until 2005. I mean, to help and participate in some of them as an expert, because we were involved in many projects. In the first place those were the Foundation for Regional Initiatives (FRI) and the Democratic Alliance, but I also worked closely with other youth organizations. You might remember that there was the youth movement Nashi (Ours – English) in Donetsk, not that Russian one. There were lots of things.

Influences

Communist ideology

VO: Do you remember your grandparents? What did they do?

TZ: No, I do not remember them.

VO: They died and you do not remember them, is that correct?

(TZ Nodds his head).

VO: Then could you tell me if there were any protest moods in your family or they all supported the authorities?

TZ: No, to the contrary, nobody supported the Kyiv authorities. I do not recall that there was anybody in my circle who liked them, not just my family. I cannot say that they were either advocates or opponents of the authorities. The authorities were viewed as a government machine. This related not only to the Verkhovna Rada or the President, the Cabinet of Ministers, but also the local authorities and, how to name it... Not opinion leaders, but the so-called “upstanding people” in our town. Those were not politicians, but that could be a businessman or a director of a company and so on. They were treated as the authorities by ordinary people. That is, what a director of a factory would say, or a director of the city gas authority, who for instance was a head of the Party of Regions in Yenakiieve, but in fact this was the same corrupt structure. The city council, local businessmen, local organized crime and directors of enterprises – four in one, let’s put it this way. Therefore no one wanted to bear with such authorities and have anything in common with them.

VO: Could you please tell me whether there were any differences related to the history of Ukraine, between the official version and the way your family viewed it?

TZ: Yes, there was a huge difference as compared with the official history. This was particularly true when I went to school and every year we had new textbooks on the history of Ukraine, with a new version every year. That is, rather not a version, but interpretation.

VO: When did you go to school?

TZ: Until 1998, if I remember well. I started exploring history already as a grown-up, and for example Rutchenkivske coal deposit (i.e. Rutchenkivske Pole in the city of Donetsk, where the mass graves of the NKVD victims were found in the late 1980s – author), if you recall it in Donetsk, those were not the prisoners of war executed by the NKVD officers, but as they are

History

Soviet
Union
(Rutchenkiv
ske Pole in
Donetsk)

called now, WRA (wounded Red Army soldiers – author). And when Germans occupied Yuzovka, as it was called then, or maybe it was already called Stalino (former names of Donetsk – author), they did excavations and engaged the locals to show them that the Soviet authorities did that, not Germans. Then for half a century it was misrepresented in all textbooks and all publications in the media stating that the massacre was carried out by German occupants and fascist aggressors. When the army of General Vatutin (the Red Army General – author) came to some regions of the Donbas, Italians and Germans got on their transport and left, and in fact there were no battles, except for some sites of the front. However, when you read history textbooks, you feel a real cognitive dissonance. It happened this way, the locals also say that, so what rubbish are you talking about? What severe battles? It is written that there was a guerilla movement... But there was no guerilla movement at all. All tales about the Young Guard (the story about a big underground organization in Krasnodon widely used by the Soviet propaganda – author) and so on is a total bullshit. When you communicate with people, you realize that everything may be said in such an official manner. Unofficially, what really happened, contradicts some concrete facts.

History

Soviet
Resistance

("Young
Guard"
Undergrou
nd
organizatio
n in

VO: What social class did your family belong to? What was the environment you grew up in?

TZ: My mother is a nurse at a hospital of infectious diseases, my father used to be a military man, he got the rank of the lieutenant-colonel and worked with radiodetector stations that were placed basically in the whole Central Asia, so to say, on the border of the Soviet Union. After that he was a miner, having worked underground for a quarter-century. So my family was an ordinary Soviet family, nothing special.

VO: Do you have any photos from the Soviet times?

TZ: Some are in Donetsk or Yenakiieve, but I do not have them with me here.

VO: Did you have any experience of communication with the priests during the USSR time?

TZ: I was very young when the USSR still existed. I could say that childhood is the best time, but my childhood was during the perestroika years. Up until now I am fond of soda vending machines with soda for a copeck, for three copecks.

History
Gorbach
ev's
Perestroika

VO: How do you assess the role that the priests played in the collapse of the USSR, maybe during the Soviet time in the Donbas?

TZ: In my opinion, they had nothing to do with the collapse of the USSR. The nationalistic and far right wing radicals were involved in that. The “softest” out there were the Rukh members, so to say. They had a hand in the collapse of the USSR and the independence of Ukraine. Generally speaking, Donbas was for the most part viewed as the “red” region until 2002. Because the communists won every election at every level, to the Verkhovna Rada, the regional councils, and the local councils. Either the communists or those who were related to them. Later they were forced out by the administrative structures, and eventually the Party of Regions came to power. Although these are the same people. They were just called differently. There was the For United Ukraine alliance, and Zlagoda (Unity), and the Green Party, and the NDP, whatever they were called, but basically same actors remained on the stage.

VO: Do you know anything about the miners' strikes?

History
Miner's
strikes in
Donbas
region

TZ: The miners' strikes can be divided into three components. The first and the most common component was a split-up of the state budget. A strike broke out at a coal mine, that coal mine did not pay wages and spared, so subsidies were taken from the state budget to repay the outstanding wages and so on, and thereby the budget was split-up. That is, under the guise of protecting the rights of miners' trade unions, there was the split-up of money, in alliance with very same trade unions. Secondly, miners very rarely protested against their working conditions, which were absolutely inadmissible. Huge resources were allocated for that, but again, millions and even billions were stolen. And third, miners and steel workers were taken to the streets for some political actions. They were just packed to buses and trains and brought like cattle so that they would stand there and shout, hitting their helmets and waving flags as usual.

VO: Yes, but we are talking about the later protests, and I ask about the protests that took place in the late 1980s - early 1990s.

TZ: Well, look, I was 9-10 years old in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed.

VO: Maybe you remember that your father participated in those protests.

TZ: No, he did not. To the contrary, he was against the dissolution of the USSR. That is, there was doublespeak during the so-called referendum in December. How was the question posed then? We want independence, but as part of the Soviet Union, everyone interpreted it this way. Then we read the documents carefully and it turned the other way around – we strongly wanted independence from Moscow, we wanted to be on our own. So this is how the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991. I found this out later when I studied the documents.

History

Ukrainian
Independence
Referendum

VO: Did you participate in *Ukraine without Kuchma*?

History

Protest action
„Ukraine
without
Kuchma”

TZ: Yes, I went to Kyiv. This was my first protest experience. Back then I was an active Comsomol member, but still. Compared to Pinochet's or Yanukovich's regimes, Kuchma's regime was peanuts. Everyone protested. As the saying goes: everyone ran so I ran as well. It was interesting to participate in that protest. And then again, I was also interested in the systems of street protests, what they were like in reality. I saw a lot of people who remain big politicians even today. I sometimes spot them on TV. I saw them as ordinary people, as citizens of their state, what they were like. Everything was on the surface. Many people rose on this action.

Place

VO: Did many of your friends, acquaintances from Donetsk go to *Ukraine without Kuchma*?

TZ: Well, I do not know. In those groups where we participated, maybe fifty, maybe one hundred persons were from Donbas, from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

VO: And what did they do? Were they also journalists?

TZ: Not necessarily journalists. Yes, they can be indicative, like Maks Kasyanov. But there were many people apart from such bright personalities.

VO: Could you name some, without giving names?

TZ: Students, doctoral candidates, I know one professor. And even back then he worked at the Institute for Strategic Studies which at that time was subordinated to the Security Service of Ukraine, and later to the President. But he headed the Donetsk branch, and participated in *Ukraine without Kuchma* in Kyiv, at the dawn, so to say. Many absolutely different professions. Mostly people with a degree.

VO: Did you go there together? Or did you meet there?

TZ: It depends. It was not necessarily organized. For example, “I am going, and you also going, let’s go together, it is always more fun going together”.

VO: In your opinion, did *Ukraine without Kuchma* have any impact on the Orange Revolution?

TZ: Had *Ukraine without Kuchma* succeeded, this would have been a huge advantage. But a number of political parties instead of providing support, started to give up and not care a toss about this thing. So it ended as it ended. This reminds me of Decembrists who came and said to the tsar to step down. But they pushed off people. We had a slightly different situation: people came, but all others, let’s say “Decembrists” who seemed to be against Kuchma’s regime, turned out to be, let’s say “scoundrels” (rephrased by the author).

Place

Donetsk

Donetsk
region

Actors

Pro-
Yushchenko
head
offices

VO: Did you participate in the Orange Revolution?

TZ: No, I did not. I came there, watched. I did not understand that whole thing, that crowd. And honestly speaking, I made fun of it. During the time of the Orange Revolution I was able to

Orange
headoffice

remain neutral and impartial. I had a lot of problems as couple years later those who participated in the Orange Revolution were disillusioned about it. The words like “I warned you, I told you” were not taken adequately. When my friends and I made a video “Razom nas bahato, nas ne podolaty” [*Together we are many, we cannot be defeated*], a popular song composed during the Orange Revolution, with dancing animals from the *Madagascar* cartoon, we sent it to our friends, and then to computer clubs in Donetsk. It went viral. Then we started presenting that record to our friends from different oblasts who attended events in Donetsk. And once at the Forum of Youth Media in Zaporizhia in 2005 there was a debate on highlighting the national idea in virtually every portion of student publications. So I presented this video to them and just watched a totally crazy reaction they had to it. Most guys rose. I thought one girl would spit in my face or punch me. Like, “How dare you to degrade the ideas of the Maidan! People stood freezing there! And people are just dancing animals?”. I said, “Yes, I agree with you. Your words, not mine. I am sorry, but you said that”. People were simply used, not even to change the regime, but just to a beautiful picture. Because I was an observer, and as a journalist I covered the election campaign, how it was held in Donetsk and Donetsk region. The actions of pro-Yushchenko head offices, Orange head offices and so on, there were a couple of them, including Our Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko’s Bloc and others, they all worked not for the sake of it, but just going through the motions, like, we worked off the budget and screw that... I then thought that the victory as such was not in our interest. As I understand it, the main bargaining was in Kyiv, and not in the regions where there were massive violations, massive stuffing and similar “carousels”.

**Orange
Revolution**

**Orange
Revolution**

Place

Donetsk

**Forms of
protest**

Putting tents

Actors

Journalists

VO: Do you remember how the Orange Revolution events unfolded in Donetsk?

TZ: I remember that the tents were put in Donetsk following the example in Kyiv, though they were completely empty, no one lived there. Near the Oblast administration and at Lenin square. And a Donetsk journalist sued the Party of Regions and said “Guys, you violate the law and the Constitution, just like in Kyiv”. And they were like “Come on, you are from Donetsk, what’s wrong with you?”. “Well, what’s wrong? You could at least have notified yourselves. You are the

Party of Regions, which has power in the Oblast Council and the Oblast State Administration. You could have notified yourselves and pretended that there was at least some legality in why you gathered here”. So the press-conference was called and everyone started to peck that guy, Maks, like what’s going on? That guy is from Donetsk. So why the hell did he sue the Party of Regions? And he said, “What are you guys for?”. They replied, “Well, we are against that orgy which is going on in Kyiv”. So he said: “You know guys, when I wanted my wife to have our second child, I did not put tents, or fly flags and banners from my balcony, I simply did my job”. All journalists started laughing at that point, there were roars of laughter, and the press conference was disrupted. This was probably the most spectacular event that happened in the Donbas during the Orange Revolution.

VO: What in your opinion was the motivation of people who participated in the Orange Revolution?

Motivations

Desire for changes

Against

TZ: To change regime, and against authorities. There was a need for a change, but they did not start to change their mindsets, they started to exchange one thing for another. But essentially nothing changed. The system was not changed. Indeed, there appeared some elements of the freedom of speech in Ukraine, and indeed some fundamental principles were changed due to intervention of the European and international organizations. Everyone remembers the case of Salov. The decision of the European Court of Human Rights is more fundamental than the principles of Ukrainian legislation, it changed the role of the freedom of speech in Ukraine. However, it was brought to naught in a couple of years.

Orange Revolution

VO: How did the Orange Revolution change you?

TZ: It did not. I did not support the Orange Revolution, although many of my friends participated in Pora organization. But when it started to split, so to speak, it was indeed something revolutionary. Pora had a horizontal hierarchy of governance. It did not have a single center, and this was a novelty, it was fresh, new and cool. It appealed to many people. I still like the slogans which Pora then had. However, when splits started, and there was the Black Pora, and then the Orange Pora as a political party, and later the Orange Pora as a non-governmental organization, this was already political bartering, and the whole idea turned into a usual soap bubble which burst at a certain moment.

VO: Who was the leader of the Orange Revolution in your opinion?

TZ: Well, everyone was shouting “Yushchenko”, “Yulya Tymoshenko”. In practice the Orange Revolution, as well as the last Maidan demonstrated that people got organized in the first place, just ordinary active people. Then the middle class got involved, some movement began, but after some time the same old political leaders and movements that existed previously started to assume the leading role.

Actors

Victor
Yushchenko

Yulia
Tymoshenko

People

VO: Did the Orange Revolution events result in any changes of the political system in Ukraine?

TZ: Of the system – no. There were no changes of the political system. The only thing that was somehow improved was the freedom of speech. That’s it. The system did not change. Economically, nothing got changed. Nothing changed in regulatory and development system. The economy of Ukraine developed on its own independently of different political upheavals. This can be verified by all macro and micro political indicators. There is a curve with practically no recessions. Even when there were artificial crises like for example the “swine flu”, and there were some crisis moments against the general situation, the level of depression and stagnation was

Orange
Revolution

Outcomes

never reached. There were falls in some indicators, but overall – no. Economic development did not substantially differ from economic development of our neighbouring countries. I am not speaking of Poland, for example, but of the CIS countries. The GDP in Ukraine was not much different from the GDP in Russia, irrespective of how huge the income was. It differed by 0.2, sometimes by 0.3, not more than that. In general one could say: “People grow poor there, they die, suffer...” But in reality that was not true, in reality the indicators remained unchanged.

VO: The last question related to the Orange Revolution: did you communicate with the staff officers, maybe with those from the opposition, or maybe you had some contacts with, for example, Our Ukraine, or Klymenko?...

TZ: I did, but they had their own circle; those were political business projects, and there was nothing more to it...

VO: What do you think about the general support of the people in Donetsk and Donbas towards the Orange Revolution?

TZ: Again, those were political business projects. The support of the people in Donbas, and generally in Ukraine, proved to be useless, so to speak. Again, probably starting from the Orange Revolution, both the Party of Regions and its rival party started to pay for involvement in their work: for standing in tents, observing, participating in meetings, demonstrations, processions, election commissions and so on. It was called volunteering, but they were paying for that. This spoiled the Ukrainian people incredibly. And I will go further than that and say that volunteering came to naught in Ukraine, and getting ahead of myself, during Euro-2012 there were people dressed in blue and yellow t-shirts with the sign “Volunteer”, who received good reimbursement for their work. But it was not volunteering.

Actors

Party of Regions and its rival party

Activity

VO: Let's get to the most interesting part, the EuroMaidan of 2013-2014. What were the causes of the protest, in your view?

TZ: The main reason was, I think, that the ruling authorities started to wrest away all businesses within their reach. Until the last Yanukovich's rise to power, so to speak, the racket functioned in the way that they approached a business and took a certain percentage from it. However, during the last events they just came and took everything, the whole business. If you did not want to give it the easy way, they would take it the hard way, by sending criminals to you or closing your business down for some past violations. They started to simply grab assets... As we see a new economic concept emerged in Ukraine at that time – "to grab", i.e. to take over without any consequences. This is related not only to illegal takeovers. An illegal takeover is probably the mildest economic crime that is possible in our country. When businesses were simply taken over, in all spheres of activity in our country, it was something crazy. In my opinion, this was the main reason for the protests, because small and medium enterprises revolted, they were on the verge and could not resist, so this created the economic background of the whole protest.

Revolution of Dignity

Motivations

Seizure of small and medium enterprises in Ukraine

Actors

VO: What about the failure to sign the Agreement in Vilnius? Do you think it was also a reason?

TZ: It was like with Franz Ferdinand: he was shot, and the cause for the First World War is there... The same with Vilnius. The enormous pressure influenced in the first place. A spring was pressed for so long, and so hard, that in the end it straightened and led to a social upheaval. However, I believe that the turning point was the beating of the students at the Maidan. Then people finally realized that they would not be able to sit back and do nothing, that something needed to be done. And so the nation rose...

History

The third Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, 28-29

Motivations

Beating of students

Figuratively speaking, the EuroMaidan itself can be divided into 4-5 parts. Those were totally different EuroMaidans. The first one was “you will answer for the bloody Christmas tree”. This was the most important thing. The second one – “Yanukovych is a faggot etc.” And so on, up to the so-called alcho-hundred, which still remained on the Maidan after its victory and behaved indecently, they befouled the whole idea...

VO: Do you think that the political crisis could be resolved otherwise, rather than by protest actions on the Maidan? For example, through negotiations?

TZ: Such negotiations were constantly carried on, basically up to the last day until Yanukovych fled. However, there was no stopping already. That is, when the protests were only beginning in Kyiv, and the students were dispersed at the Maidan, there already appeared observers in the Donbas, as they identified themselves. We managed to interview those people. They were from Russia, from different regions, and actually those were the people who set up the whole separatist movement, which later became the background of military actions in Ukraine.

Place

Independence
Square in Kyiv

Donbas

Events

Beating of
students

VO: Do you say that this could not be stopped from the very beginning?

TZ: No, it could not, because if we look at publications by the major Russian media and compare them to the events in Ukraine, we will see that some stove-piping literally preceded the next stage of development that happened in a week or two. That is, this was a specific project developed by Russian special services: what would happen after the Maidan, after it would be dispersed completely and bloodily just like it happened in Beijing a short while ago (I actually think that the Maidan finished without much losses), that not a mere social outburst was planned, but the state authority in the country was to be totally discredited. As a result, a bunch of different republics

Russia's Policy

Propaganda

Support for
separatists

could be created, and you could name them whatever you like – the Donetsk People’s Republic, or Kryvorih etc., it does not really matter.

VO: Could you please tell about your participation in the EuroMaidan?

<p>TZ: I was involved as a journalist in the EuroMaidan. Under this pretext, I sometimes managed to help my friends from the EuroMaidan. For example, the Berkut often allowed only people with press or red cross cards. We joined several groups and sneaked in some food and means of protection through the barriers. Or, when we needed to make our way to a specific place, and for that we needed to go around almost the whole Maidan, but we could make a shortcut, we were able to do so. Or, when we carried aid from Donetsk by car, I put on my yellow vest with the sign “Press” on it, and also put this sign on the window of the car, and we were not always, but very often allowed though the militia cordons where other transport was not allowed... Thus we managed to bring some aid from Donbas.</p>	<p>Actors</p> <p>Berkut</p> <p>Activity</p> <p>Supplies (food, means of protection, medicine) Carrying aid</p>
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VO: What kind of aid was that?

TZ: There was basically everything. We collected money, medicine, food, warm clothes, first aid equipment, means of protection (helmets, body armour), whatever was needed. At that time this was huge help. I even remember that more than two-three thousand Hryvnias were sent from Donetsk every day. And Kyiv was thankful to Donbas, because no other region in Ukraine sent as much aid to the EuroMaidan in Kyiv as Donbas did.

VO: Did you participate in the EuroMaidan only in Kyiv, or also in Donetsk?

TZ: Well, it was not exactly participation in the EuroMaidan... Sometimes I showed up there, but I had slightly different tasks. For me, security of my friends who were there was of greater importance. We contacted with different security services, which were responsible for that, and again, with groups of separatists who organized a kind of an anti-Maidan.

Actors

Security services

VO: They were called titushkas...

TZ: Well, no, titushkas were just guerillas, and the anti-Maidan was organized by people from the Party of Regions and the like... That is why sometimes information provided at proper time was much more useful than going out with flags or singing.

Actors

Party of Regions

Activity

Organizing the anti-Maidan

VO: Can you call yourself a participant of the EuroMaidan?

TZ: Well, in some way, yes.

VO: Would you say that the EuroMaidan was as well and remarkably organized as everyone thinks it was?

Activity

Self-organization

TZ: I would even say that it was self-organized. People gathered on their own and resolved all emerging problems themselves. I remember that here in Kyiv the EuroMaidaners occupied the Philharmonic at the European Square. Guys gathered there and started arranging things: they put a table, some brought coffee, and others brought cookies and so on. However, there was no that thing, not a boiler, how do you call it? ... for water heating? So guys standing next to me said: "Let's go. Who will go with us? To help us drag that thing...". We got into a car, went to Metro,

Actors

People

Forms of protest

Occupation of the philharmonic

bought that machine that provides hot and cold water, and brought it back. Someone asked: “And who...”. “Well, we paid for it ourselves...”. And it cost some four-five thousand Hryvnias. That is, people organized everything on their own, and there was terrific order inside the Maidan.

I spent some time at Sofiyivska, Lukyanivka... I put on all my equipment and a jacket over it, called a taxi, asked a taxi-driver to take me to the Maidan (I intentionally looked for a normal taxi-driver, not some “vata”). [*“vata”, from “vatnik” - a cotton padded jacket, is a slang term denoting chauvinist, often marginalized supporters of Russia who eagerly believe in everything Russian TV and Putin say.*] After he brought me there, I got off, hustled to the Maidan territory, and only then I felt safe. People did everything themselves and did not take orders from anyone. When somebody came – and there was a huge number of instigators – he would be immediately withdrawn from the territory of the Maidan.

Actors

Instigators

I remember that some women, bawlers as I call them, began to scream and squeak, but many already got used to take it easy. Like: “Oh dear, a woman feels bad, please call an ambulance... Medical service will come in a moment and give her treatment...” Because she was just screaming. They screamed in order to push the panic and escalate situation, but everyone knew it perfectly well.

VO: What was the most important about self-organization at the Maidan?

TZ: That initially no political forces were allowed. I very well remember that there was an agreement that no political party could fly its flags, there should be only EU flags and the national flags of Ukraine. That’s it, no one could bring their flags. Yes, you can belong to political structures and movements, that’s fine... but again, please have some decency.

Actors

Political parties

VO: Would you please tell me how your family and friends reacted to your participation in the EuroMaidan?

TZ: My mother did not know at all what I was doing. She thought that I was a journalist, and that's it. My close friends... some helped with words, some with deeds, generally mostly with deeds; some thought that I was crazy, and said that it was bullshit, why I should get involved and who needed that after all. But there were no ultra-radicals, so to speak, who would be like "go ahead, smash them...". However, when there was a serious or critical situation, people fought. They were not, so to speak, a bunch of psychos or nut jobs craving for fighting, nothing like that. They knew what they struggled for, up to Instytutaska Street.

VO: Who was your main enemy during the EuroMaidan?

TZ: The main enemy... perhaps the Berkut and cops. Those were my biggest enemies, because I have not seen such meanness that they carried out during the Maidan in a long time. There were numerous situations when some beaten EuroMaidaners, in blood, were just thrown into police vans. They stood behind Hotel Ukraine. We went there and asked: "Please let us provide medical assistance (I was the only journalist, the others were medical workers), just let us look, provide assistance and that's it". It was bitter cold, and finally the guys approached us, a son, yes, a son ... [49:50 - inaudible]...we started recording, this lieutenant broke in, shouted that I was a bad guy and started closing the door. And I was holding the window. He pressed, and pressed, and at some moment that window broke into pieces. My hand was covered with blood, but never mind... He ran out and started shouting at me that I broke the window of the police van, and that I should be held liable for that, and so on. Others reacted to that quickly, then some deputies from Svoboda approached, and from some other parties. In the end they did not release people, who were still unconscious, but took them somewhere, and we did not see them again.

Actors

Berkut

Militia

Protesters

Events

Actors

Medical workers

Activity

Medical care

VO: What role did religion play at the Maidan?

TZ: Well, in my view, it did not play any role, because all those priests were marching to the beat of their own drums. They were just walking about, arranging prayers, which mainly took place near the stage, regular admiration of the Lord and things like that. However, in my opinion, this was a useless waste of effort, energy, resources and time. Because even when some priests came out between the Berkut and protesters, they were not able to stop either side. They just demonstrated a nice picture. I call it merely PR, stupid PR. They came out and showed that they were such wonderful people, that they were for peace and reconciliation, but they did not really do anything.

Actors

Priests

Activity

VO: What about art?

TZ: At all times art played a role of a prostitute or a slut which supported the existing regime, and nothing more.

VO: And what role did the history of Ukraine play at the Maidan?

TZ: I don't even know what to say... Probably the recent history played its role in a way that, as the saying goes, the lid came off. But speaking generally, the whole history of Ukraine has not affected our present days at all.

VO: Would you please tell what role the media, Internet and social networks played during the protests at the Maidan?

Actors

Media

TZ: The role of the media during the EuroMaidan was rather negative, I would say. Because a lot of media were engaged in fabricating stories, misrepresenting facts and openly telling lies. They deceived themselves, screwed themselves, so to speak without swearing. The social networks, in contrast, played an important part in allowing people from different places of Ukraine to coordinate their actions, communicate and instantly receive information about what was happening on the ground, and were perceived in a special manner, without comments or various projections. That is, they presented things as they were, and not as the media wanted to present them.

Activity

Social networks communication

VO: How would you estimate the policy of other states in relation to Ukraine before and during the EuroMaidan?

TZ: If they did not interfere, we would have finished everything long ago...

VO: What state interfered most, in your opinion: Russia, the USA or the EU?

Western Policy

TZ: Probably the EU. Russia is not interference, but a specific threat and a direct attack, in my view. Interference involves calming down and sort of peacekeeping and those are actions taken by the EU members: Germany, France and other states. It reminds me of a situation when thugs mob a girl in a dark side street and are going to rape her, while spectators stand nearby, and by-passers would say: "Hey, guys, come on, do not touch her, let her go", or "Hey, what are you doing, please calm down, no need to overreact...". And then they would just move on.

Interference
Peacekeeping
Calming down
Germany
France

Russia's Policy

VO: What were your expectations regarding the results of the protests? What was your biggest disappointment? What do you think was positive? Maybe something surprised you after the protests finished?

TZ: My biggest disappointment was that the apparatus as such fell to pieces, and after its self-recovery it turned into a monstrous creation that devours itself.

**Revolution
of Dignity**

Outcomes

The positive thing is that the Maidan brought lots of people to senses, and lots of people began to really think and understand what is going on around them. It is not that some opinions are imposed on them, but they themselves are informed, see it and understand it perfectly.

The result... I am not happy with the result, the result is not final, that is, the protest is not finished yet. What demands were raised by the EuroMaidan, except for dismissal and arrest of Yanukovich? To change some systems. This did not happen, so the Maidan is not finished yet, neither the Orange Maidan, which could be called a trial version, nor the EuroMaidan. When the war broke out, many people went to defend the East and Crimea and to hold the aggressor, while people remaining in the rear simply forgot why they went to the Maidan, and why they stood there. They have not finished, have not accomplished their task.

VO: What was the crucial moment during the EuroMaidan, in your opinion?

TZ: There were several such moments. For example, the second assault of the Berkut.

Events

The second
assault of the
Berkut on 10-
11th of

VO: When did it happen? Just to follow you precisely...

TZ: It was in early December.

VO: 10-11th of December, something like that, I participated...

Events

TZ: Yes, exactly. There was a crucial point when Nigoyan was killed. There was a crucial point sometime around the New Year, when the laws were adopted...

Killing of Serhiy Nigoyan

Anti-protest laws in Ukraine on January 16, 2014

VO: 16th of January...

Events at Hrushevskoho Street

TZ: Yes. And as a matter of fact, the events at Hrushevskoho Street and the shooting at Instytutska Street were the crucial point.

Shooting of protesters at

VO: Let's move to the final stage, which is quite philosophical. In the waves of protests, were there any important precedents for Ukrainians throughout the history of Ukraine, for example, revolutions of the twentieth century?

TZ: To my mind, this is actually a pointless question, because the most important thing for Ukrainians is to live, work and raise their children in a normal country in the first place. This is true not only for Ukrainians, but basically for any other people.

The events of the early twentieth century probably have had some influence... Well, probably genetically something remained... like executions of the 1930s... I have recently learned that according to the latest research of the Balkan events, PTSD is hereditary. So it could be that we have a deep PTSD, starting with, say, serfdom up to date. And there were dozens of such PTSDs. So yes, maybe in this respect, precedent events could have had some impact.

History

Terror of the 1930s

VO: Which events that took place in the last period of the USSR influenced outbursts of protests in Ukraine after 1991? Does familiarity with this issue help with understanding of the essence of the late protests of the 1990s-2014?

TZ: No, absolutely not. Those are different times, different generations. Think, for instance, of the Revolution on Granite that took place in 1990. It differs radically from... In fact, I do not recall any similar event in Ukraine's history. Although it happened when I was a child, I have nevertheless studied those materials and I know the people who participated in the Revolution on Granite. Two of my friends were the organizers of that action. One of them became a well-known journalist and an active member of the Ukrainian opposition. As to the second one, calling him "vata" is not strong enough, because I have not met such a cowardly, lying and foolish person who actively takes a pro-separatist and pro-Russian position in a long while. Two persons, two organizers – so I do not understand how the revolution could have had an impact.

**Orange
Revolution**

VO: What attitude did the protesters and the government have towards the heritage of the Soviet era and Russia's imperial role during the EuroMaidan?

TZ: Probably as the old Soviet slogan goes: "Plants to the workers, land to the peasants, communism to the communists", i.e. to take national wealth from oligarchs and current authorities and return it to the state.

**Revolution of
Dignity**

Motivations

VO: Did a post-colonial syndrome have any impact during the EuroMaidan, a willingness to mentally and morally separate from Russia through the EuroMaidan?

To move away
from the system
of Soviet values

TZ: Not so much from Russia yet, as probably to move away from the system of the Soviet values, which remain quite strong up to date. We have been getting rid of them gradually, but not fully yet. If we travel around Ukraine and look, we will see that the old Soviet way of thinking and the system of values remain so deeply rooted and so much alive in many regions of Ukraine, that it is simply unbelievable. I would go on and say that Donetsk in 2012 was an example of a Ukrainian city and unity of the Ukrainian citizens as a single nation. So far I have not seen such a city in Ukraine as Donetsk was in 2012. People were united not so much by football as by interactions with different mentalities, nations etc. I still remember a story which someone told me about a guy from Russia, Rostov, if I remember well, who was a football hooligan, and so he heard a lot about the ultras of FC Shakhtar. He came to Donetsk to fight with them, and intentionally dressed himself as a fan of a French team to fight with someone, because traditionally Donetsk always supported England. And he said: “Geez, I have been walking here for half a day, and probably received some 13 beers because I lost...”.

VO: How do you assess the role of the People’s Movement or any other organization in the protests and in the Ukrainian movement generally?

TZ: The People’s Movement played its main role in the early days of Ukraine’s independence, and now it became a crowd of old farts living in their heroic past and trying to preach morality to the younger generation, which does not care a darn about their achievements that were less than insignificant.

VO: Why, they played their part in Ukraine’s independence, in the beginning?..

TZ: They played a role of ceremonial bystanders and mere puppets there, nothing more than that.

History

People’s
Movement
of Ukraine

VO: Is there oligarchy in Ukraine?

TZ: Of course there is.

VO: Would you briefly describe its role in public life?

TZ: There is an immense looting of funds, mineral resources, people and using all of those for own benefit. Again, depending on whom we would define as oligarchs: businessmen running relatively clear businesses, although they started back in the 1990s, or oligarch businessmen, who are only concerned about lining their own pockets and nothing more. If we speak about an ordinary businessman who cares for his business and wants to further develop it, he contributes to it in the first place, also in the social sphere. In the long run, he would gain super profits. I have a friend who went to look for abandoned boarding houses in the Kyiv oblast back in 2014, because he wanted to purchase them in order to conduct rehabilitation of the soldiers after the war is over. He went there in the summer of 2014! In July or August. Excuse me... He has some serious business, and money is not a problem for him. He once told me: "I have heard that the roads are worn down there, so I bought myself a helicopter". I asked him: "Why do you need a helicopter?". And he replied: "I don't know, I realized in a month that I do not need it and gave it to the medical workers".

**Internal
Policy**

Oligarchy

VO: What role did corruption play in the beginning of the protests? What is the essence of corruption in Ukraine?

TZ: This is a very hot button, and I do not want to talk about it just because everything is presented as corruption today, virtually everything. Take, for example, the laws on combatting

**Internal
Policy**

Corruption

corruption – they are the least evil that can exist. Nevertheless, when someone says that a bribe is corruption, as a lawyer, I am very much opposed to that. A bribe is a criminal offense. It has no relation to corruption whatsoever. Yet when someone gives a bribe, everyone cries that he is corrupt, that he gives or receives some money for some service. Come on, this is not corruption, this is a criminal offense.

VO: Is corruption not a criminal offense?

TZ: No, it's an administrative offense. Then again, if we say that we have the Anti-Terrorist Operation, and not a martial law, if we are fighting against terrorism, it should mean that we snuff terrorists. Is that correct? Yes. So why on earth do we negotiate with them?!

VO: How did people know which forms of protest would be the most efficient, in your view? Or they did not know, it is merely...

TZ: They did not know. There are numerous mechanisms available in Europe which are actively used by its citizens, in addition to mass protests. A mass protest is the most extreme point. However, in our country it became a soap bubble which is exploited by various criminal or political organizations. What now often happens is not a protest. There is a considerable selection of mechanisms which are objectively effective, and which can be used not only somewhere in Switzerland, for example, but also here, in Ukraine. I have many friends who live in Great Britain, Germany, France, or the above-mentioned Switzerland and who know about it. When they come to Ukraine and talk about it, they ask: "Why would not you use it?". Well, because nobody knows about it, and nobody believes that it is effective. We got used to that we can take to the streets, protest, and something would change. But no, guys, we need to work every day, and not just walk around and wave a flag.

**Internal
Policy**

Frustration
(no effect on
reality)

VO: Does participation in previous protests encourage participating in future protests?

TZ: Rather on the contrary (laughs). If you participated in some protest and got in the neck, next time you will take pains with that and stand back.

VO: What was the motivation for participating in the protests? Why did some people not participate in the protests? For example, why did people from the Donbas not get involved until the war broke out?

**Revolution of
Dignity**

TZ: Because they understood that it was impractical, that it did not make economic sense: “If I go to the protest, nobody will pay me for that, if I support the EuroMaidan... – but why on earth do I need that European Union?...” 86 % of population of Donetsk oblast have never been outside of the oblast, not a single time... 86 %... They have no idea what life looks like in Kyiv, Odesa, not to speak of Lviv or Zakarpatia. What Europe can they think of, if their aims and ideas are down-to-earth? They cannot set things right on their own land. When you speak with people, they say: “It is Yushchenko’s / Poroshenko’s / Yatsenyuk’s / Avakov’s / someone else’s fault” – “But wait, let’s try a different approach: who is your local councilor, district councilor, city councilor, do you know him?” – “Why on earth should I need him?” – “But why? This is your house, your street, your roads, street lights, garages, whatever, your unlit entrance hall, after all... Should a president, a prime minister or any minister be responsible for that, or your own neighbour, who was elected by you in exchange for a bottle of vodka? And then you accuse someone at the top...” This is complete rubbish...

Motivations

Impractical

No economic
sense

VO: How did those people who participated in the protests view authorities and the society? Where did the line between authorities and society go during the protests and afterwards?

Actors

Internal troops

Militia

Forms of protest

Rallies

TZ: The line between them went along internal troops, cops who surrounded all rallies.

VO: And regarding the mental and moral aspect, as well as the value system, there was a difference between the EuroMaidaners and the cops, was not there?

TZ: Yes, there were huge differences regarding the values. Although many cops who were sent to stand and guard here, in particular I knew about those from Crimea, had an arrangement that they would not beat people. Nevertheless, their values have changed, and they are now in Crimea (I am in correspondence with them) where they joined OMON squad, or whatever the name is, and they torment and beat people who are there now. Their values changed drastically, at least three times, I can say.

Events

Beating of protesters

VO: And what about other cops, not only those from Crimea... Let's speak generally: militiamen who stood there and the EuroMaidaners. What was the difference, apart from the cruelty that you have already mentioned?

TZ: If we take militia as a power that guards certain interests of the ruling groups, the EuroMaidaners wanted to eliminate them as such. The main message, the main idea was, as far as I remember, not so much against the cops, as against those who sent them. Because of this, the EuroMaidaners managed to draw many cops to their side. On the other hand, this was sort of a job for militia, and people stood there for their lives, for their future...

Actors

Protesters

VO: Whom did the protesters rely on during the EuroMaidan?

TZ: Basically, they relied only on themselves.

VO: Whom did the authorities rely on?

Actors

The authorities

TZ: On power structures and on the capital which they had accumulated.

VO: And titushkas?

Actors

TZ: Effectively, this was the same power structure: they rallied their gangs, gave them a load of money and said: "Go ahead, commit excesses, beat whoever you want to, nobody will punish you".

„Titushkas”

VO: Have you seen real titushkas?

TZ: Lord (laughs)... There was a small fight at Mykhaylivska... Well, they mauled me a little (laughs).

VO: Who was mostly protesting at the Maidan?

TZ: In what respect?

VO: In moral, axiological respect...

TZ: Citizens of Ukraine who were fed up and came to change something. This is a general observation, I am not speaking of details, i.e. what private motives people had: someone came out for the idea, someone came out because his friend or girlfriend was beaten, yet someone went along for the ride, and there were also those who went to act as instigators for money. Because such things also happened, there is no need to hide this.

Revolution of Dignity
Motivations
Different objectives

VO: Which role did those protests play in evolution, probably, in transformation of the Ukrainian society? Or did they not play any role at all?

Revolutions
Outcomes

TZ: They gave us an opportunity to let off steam and, for many people, to find themselves. For example, Lenka Belozor, who used to be an ultranationalist journalist, joined a volunteer battalion. Someone was a worker or a miner, came out and stood on the Maidan, and now is almost an officer of the National Guard.

VO: Did the EuroMaidan not prepare people for the war, also in moral respect? Did it not change understanding of the Ukrainian identity? Did it not make you a better Ukrainian?

TZ: No, the war made me a better Ukrainian rather than the EuroMaidan. Before I used to say: "I am a Jew and I have my own oddities", but now I say proudly that I am a Judeo-Banderite... I have become one unintentionally. So the war, aggression of the external enemy helped more with self-identification. The Maidan led to self-identification as a citizen: to come out, to express one's

Russia's Policy
War

civic position, to declare oneself from the right side. Identifying oneself as a Ukrainian took place a little later.