

Interview with Kovalyk Anatolievych (KA). Interviewer: Vitalii Ovcharenko. Place or record: Kharkiv

VO: Tell me about the most important events in your life that influenced your decision to work in the social sphere.

Influences/History
Perestroika

KA: If I may start from afar, then I was definitely influenced by Perestroika which was announced by Gorbachev, the rock concerts and so on. And then there were the 1990s, the hunger strikes. I participated in the student hunger strike, we fought for independence. We had five demands then: independence, the communist party to be outlawed, the Komsomol to be outlawed, Masol to resign and all of the properties to be nationalized. And the most important question, of course, was independence of Ukraine.

Hunger strikes in the 90s

Revolution on the Granite

VO: What topics were discussed in your family in the Soviet times? Politics, everyday life?

Form of protest

KA: That's difficult to say. Of course, everyday life was discussed. And, of course, we talked about the Communist Party getting out of hand. It became very clear at the beginning of the 1980s. I was still little back then, but I could feel it in the way my grandmother and parents talked about it. In the late 1980s, when the Perestroika was announced, the communist criminals were not punished and you could feel the rise of the bandits. I think the thugs came to power in 1987-88. And we all felt it and discussed it.

Hunger strike

Motivations

Five demands

Independence

My grandfather was repressed in 1937. My life was sort of strange in that way... My grandfather came from Galicia. But I never got to meet him, he was executed in 1937. And yet my father was a communist. But he was a communist and a patriot at the same time, because he felt that we had to protect Ukraine somehow. And we tracked down our relatives from Lviv in 1983. Those were the relatives from my grandfather's side. We did not know them earlier because we grew up here. My father was born in Horlivka. And it somehow turned out that patriotism prevailed in our family. Unfortunately, my father died when I was 18, but I still felt that patriotism prevailed in our family because both sides of my family had survived the dekulakization and Holodomor and the events of 1937.

Situation

Rampart banditry

Influences

Family

History

Great Famine

VO: What examples from Ukrainian history influenced you to become a civil activist?

KA: Most importantly, my grandmother's stories. Both of my late grandmothers and one grandfather survived the war. My grandfather had served in the Soviet Army, so he had a lot of stories to tell. About how the Soviet troops were thrown into action, how they were forced to defend Kyiv, going against tanks with just bricks in their hands. And my grandmothers also had stories to tell. One of my grandmothers on my father's side lived through the revolution, she lived in a village. She saw the hungers of 1923 and the famine of 1927 and the forced collectivization of 1933. And the repressions. My grandfather had been taken away a month before my father was born. He was executed. My father never saw his father. All that was left was one photo. And even that was a bad-quality picture. They took my grandfather away for being a farmer. The same thing happened on my mother's side of the family. The situation was a little bit different there, the family was religious, you see. And all of these facts just connected in my brain. And when Gorbachev announced perestroika in 1985-86 and things became more or less democratic, my grandmothers still warned me not to repeat all of the things I'd heard at home. I didn't understand it back then, why wouldn't you talk about these things? But then it became apparent that, when all of these movements started, and when we hung up the Ukrainian flag on the building of the Dokuchayev University in 1989, I was immediately told off and threatened that I would be expelled from the university. But the strangest thing was when my Russian teacher asked me to read out loud Pushkin's "Deep in Siberian Mines". I started reading, but he kept stopping me and asking me to start over. I asked him what the problem was and he told me that I was pronouncing the Russian letter "g" incorrectly. And that was what that time was like and all of that helped me reach my decision to become an activist. And, besides, my parents and grandparents and uncles were patriots. They never tried to hide the fact. Maybe they didn't fight the system openly, but they never pretended to be something they were not.

Influences

Grandmother's and grandfather's story

Repressions in the family

History

Perestroika

Activity

Hanging up the Ukrainian flag

Influences

Ukrainian history discussed at home

History

Great Famine

VO: Was there a difference between the officially taught history of Ukraine and the things you discussed at home or with your friends?

KA: Of course. The difference was huge. Because I knew what the Holodomor was. My grandmothers forbade me to ever talk about it, but I knew about it from my childhood. And my grandmothers forbade me to ever mention it, and so did my father and my mother. The system was like that those days, if I had said something, God forbid... As soon as the conversations about things like that started, about how my grandfather was repressed, about why he had been executed, or about how my grandmother stole those ten spikelets or about how only two of her twelve children survived... I was forbidden to talk about any of that. One time, when I was still a kid, that was in the late 1970s, I wasn't allowed to leave the house for two days so I wouldn't say anything to anyone. Because we were surrounded by people who were listening very carefully.

VO: In what environment did your family function during the Soviet period? What were the main interests of the people that you were surrounded by?

KA: It's paradoxical, my grandfather was repressed a month before my father was born. And he was pronounced an enemy of the state and executed in 1937. And he was executed for.. For being a farmer, like everyone in my family had always been. Well, maybe I'm the black sheep in the family, I went into politics. So my grandfather came to Sloboda Ukraine in 1914. He was still a kid then. They were fleeing the Austro-Hungarian rule, they thought that life would be better here. Then came the revolution, he met my grandmother. She had come from Pryluky, she came to the Kharkiv region when she was older. I know everything about my grandparents and their parents too. Where all of them had come from and why they migrated. So my grandparents met. And the paradox was that my grandfather was taken away a month before the birth of my father. And executed. In 1937. And then came the German occupation, the Romanians terrorized the land. And then, my father told me that the government was interested... Well, he told me all of this when he was older... It was in the government's interests for him to hold a high office, he was in charge of one of the regions. It was called the Communist Party back then, but in truth he was, well, as you would put it today, a national patriot. He forbade a lot of the constructions to be made in the Sloboda region. Well, for example, when they were building the Chernobyl station... Although it's probably best not to talk about that. He forbade a lot of things. He was in charge of the Kharkivskyi Raion of the Kharkiv Oblast, one of the largest regions in Ukraine. But he wasn't

Influences

Repressions in the family

Execution of the grandfather in '37

a secretary of the Communist Party. He was just a party member, but he was the head of all the region. And that's why he was put down often, because of his surname. They knew that his father had been executed. They used that information against him. When it was needed. That's how I understand it. Unfortunately, he died when I was 18, and we didn't really have a chance to talk about all of it before then.

VO: Did you know any priests during the Soviet times? How would you assess their role during those times?

Influences

Religion

Baptism

KA: My father and both of my grandmothers and my grandfather and my mother, they secretly... Well, one of my grandmothers was actually quite religious, but she was more of a Baptist. But she never let anyone know about that. And the other grandmother was quite religious, too. That united them, even though they had certain religious differences. But they christened me in secret, and my older brother too. And I know that my dad liked priests. But not the ones who were spies. Now they're called the Moscow Patriarchate, but back then we used to call them the truthful and untruthful priests. The truthful priests were the ones that could be found somewhere outside of the big cities. Somewhere in rural areas. That's where we went. But we were afraid of the priests that called themselves the Russian Orthodox Church. I remember going to church with my grandmother once, it was actually a Russian Orthodox Church, and my teacher saw me. And I was told off at school after that, they told me that going to church was bad. But, in reality, people always had faith. And they'll always have it. The priests, especially the ones in the Russian Orthodox Church, they were usually sellouts. I have no doubts about that. I know a story... We had a Father superior here, his name was Nicodim, he was expelled from his parish, so he went to Lviv and got into some trouble there, then he came to us and caused trouble here, too. Sadly, a lot of those priests were actually KGB collaborators. There were good ones, though.

"Truthful" and
"untruthful" priests

Russian Orthodox
Church

--

Influences

Informal clubs
during Soviet
times

VO: Why did people gather into independent groups during the Soviet times? Were there informal societies in the USSR?

KA: There were. There were clubs. Special interests clubs. Same people always understand in their minds that you have to fight back against the crazy things going on. Take modern Russia, for example. There are a lot of clubs in Russia right now. I know about them, I try to support them and help them as much as I can. There were different interest-based clubs back then. History clubs, for example... I was a member of one of them when I was a kid. My parents supported that, I was involved in a club where kids studied the Second World War. It was important, because we discussed history in those clubs. Not the official history dictated by the government, but the real history. We talked to the veterans. One Soviet Union hero told us things that had never been written before, things that you couldn't print. We were fascinated by all of the things he told us, we were only about 12 years old back then and he was telling us all of this stuff we had never heard of before. Like, for example, about how the Soviet partisans shot one another in the Chernihiv region, because each group thought that the others were Nazis. You could only imagine how many people died, the gunfire lasted for five days. There were many things that we hadn't been told. People were afraid to talk about these things, but the old folks had nothing to be afraid of anymore. The veteran who told us these stories was 90, he had no fear and could tell us the truth. He told us about how he fought an armed German soldier, armed only with a gardening tool. When you're an active person and you grow up in an active family and things like that are discussed, it leaves a trace. Even when all of these conversations are held in secret.

VO: What books and what people do you remember from the Soviet times?

Influences

KA: I remember Gaidar. Only you could interpret his works differently. Back then we only read one of his books, the one we were supposed to read, "Timur and his Team". The idea was quite good, of course. I remember reading "The Young Guard". But, if you study history well, you can figure out that "The Young Guard" wasn't really about the Soviet people. It was more about the Ukrainian resistance. And, of course, I read the usual things. Arthur Conan Doyle, Alexander Dumas...

Literature

VO: What were the causes of the Revolution on Granite?

KA: We were young, the revolution started, Perestroika began, and it gave us a tiny bit of free air. We were young, our brains were working differently, we weren't scared by the government as much then. We were reading samizdat, we had heard a lot from our parents. And from our grandparents. We were studying history, visiting the archives, even though we were pretty young back then. And when we saw what was going on... normal life couldn't go on. When we saw the things about the leading role of the Communist Party and the Komsomol in the constitution... We wanted to, putting it roughly, play rock music and do the twist, we wanted to be free. And all of this pressure led to the Revolution on Granite. And we were united by that, we had our leaders. Martyan from Lviv, Oles Donyiy from Kyiv. The main goal was to get rid of the totalitarian regime, to win the independence of our country. And we knew perfectly well even back then, maybe we even understood it on some kind of genetic level, that we didn't have anything in common with Russia. Our peoples are not related, they're different from us, they're Tatars basically. We were nationally conscious, we read the forbidden literature, we knew all of that.

VO: What forbidden literature?

KA: Samizdat. Doroshenko, they even started printing Hrushevsky in the early 1980s. There was a lot of banned literature going around. You read whatever was somehow connected to your interests. For example, being a biologist and a farmer, I read a lot of books about that. I read a lot of Lysenko's works. It was interesting to read from a professional point of view. Every few sentences he would write odes to Stalin and quote Lenin's ideas. And he didn't care about Mendelian genetics or socialist ideas and thought that Vavilov should be jailed. And his bizarre ideas were supported by the Communist Party. And his ideas were along the lines of "if you feed a pig wheat, it'll turn into a cow". He didn't believe in genetics. So, the people who supported the Revolution, we were all in different spheres, not all of us were historians. I'm a biologist, there were also people from the arts institute with us. A lot of people from the Kyiv University: Donyi, Kyrylenko, Rozenko, Zubko, many of them. Markyian and Kotsurba from Lviv. And they all majored in different things. But we were somehow united. And it made sense that we ended up there, that was what we were slowly moving towards. I've been thinking about it and I came to the conclusion that our parents somehow... I guess, it has a lot to do with the way we were

Influences

Samizdat

Revolution on the Granite

Motivation

Desire to get rid of the totalitarian regime

Actors

O. Martyan,

Oles Donyiy

Influences

Samizdat literature

Doroshenko

Hrushevsky

Actors

O. Donyi

V. Kyrylenko

M. Rozenko

V. Zubko

I. Kotsuryb

brought up. Maybe we weren't that different from the rest, but we had been told more. So something united us all and we went out onto the streets. The first and foremost demand was Ukrainian independence, the ban of the Communist Party and the Komsomol, for all of their properties to be nationalized. And for the Prime Minister, Masol, to resign.

VO: Who was the first person from that circle that you met and how did you get involved with the protest?

KA: We had all known each other and had visited each other in Lviv, Odesa, Donetsk and Kyiv, where a lot of the guys were from. We discussed different student protests and then a Student Brotherhood was founded in Lviv and students in Kharkiv also founded their own group. Then those organizations were united into the Ukrainian Student Union. So we were all united somehow. And it's not like we were conspiring against someone, it's not as if the CIA got us all together or something. Of course, there were traitors among us. And we knew about that. We didn't beat them too much, but we also didn't let them get too close. And when the Revolution started and we went out onto the streets, we weren't marching with some abstract ideas, we weren't just trying to cause a riot or cause bloodshed. We had concrete ideas and demands. The most important one was the independence of Ukraine. From Moscow and all the rest. All of the other things were secondary.

VO: Do you have any photos from that time?

KA: Yes, I do.

VO: Why did you personally get involved with the protests?

KA: Any sane person, any sane student had to get involved with the protests. We were well-educated. We read a lot. We could read anything we wanted then. And any person who was capable of thinking, who could read and analyze, had no choice but to join. And then we also knew all of the things we had heard from our parents and grandparents and we knew what all of

Activity

Organization of rallies

Revolution on the Granite

Forms of protests

Going onto the streets

Motivations

Concrete demands

Actors

Students

that would lead to. I knew where they were trying to lead us. And then, when all of it happened, I witnessed the barricades in Latvia. I was an exchange student in Latvia when the coup started and I was one of the defenders of the Latvian parliament. And when I now hear people saying that the Soviet soldiers weren't doing anything bad there... well, I was a grown-up person then and I know for sure they were shooting at me then. And I knew what all of it was coming to. But, thank God, we realized that we couldn't live like that any longer. How did we come to that thought? I don't know exactly, but I guess it was our upbringing, our friendship, we all suddenly realized the same thing. And there were many of us. And Chemerys was there, and Lutsenko visited the protests. Lukianenko too, the dissidents supported us a lot.

Revolution on the Granite

Actors

Chemerys

Lutshenko

Lukianenko

Dissidents

VO: What happened in the Latvian parliament? What did you do? How did you protect it?

KA: I'll be brief. It was scary there. When they sent military units into Latvia during the coup... Of course, when soldiers are shooting at the ambulances and you're running somewhere and you're a foreigner in the country... it's scary. The only thing I can say is that it was scary.

VO: Tell me how did the Revolution on Granite start?

KA: Well, we gathered slowly, then we set up tents. And then the people started joining us and supporting our demands. And then, the people who were from the regions left back to their hometowns. Because we had, for example, a point in Kharkiv, where we gathered the people who had come from the other countries, from Siberia or the Far East. They took busses to Belgorod and then took other busses to Kharkiv and our people would meet them and take them to Maidan and they would join the Revolution on granite and take part in the hunger strike. And some people are saying that different organizations funded the protests, but the only funds were the ones that we had earned before the Revolution. You could earn some money back then, unloading wagons of coal, for example. Our parents also gave us money. So the people would come to Maidan and we'd meet them. There was a sea of people, a huge crowd. And yes, I'll agree with the point that maybe we were exploited in a way by the politicians. A bit. But revolutions are always like that.

Revolution on Granite

Form of protest

Putting tents

Hunger strike

VO: How would you assess the organization of the Revolution on Granite and how did the professors feel about the student protests?

External solidarity

KA: Their feelings were ambiguous. The protests were well-organized. Some universities helped us and so did many enterprises. I know, people say that the Kharkivites and the people of Sloboda were against it. But I also know that the Malyshev Factory started supporting us financially later on. Yes, it was difficult at first. At first we had to eat, before the hunger strike started. We also had dry hunger strikes later on. But the question concerned the professors. It depended on the university. The Kyiv Polytechnic University supported us. Many people in Kharkiv supported us. Well, maybe there weren't many of them, but some of them supported us. There were different cases. There were conservative people. Universities had whole departments where people studied the Soviet history, so most of the professors who worked there didn't support us. The people who worked there were mainly ex-KGB and they studied all of the Communist Party Congresses. I feel dizzy just thinking about how insane all of that was. So, naturally, those people didn't support us. But the people who were smart and sane, the historians who were sane historians... Yes, they supported us.

Support by some universities and factories from Eastern of Ukraine

VO: Was the Revolution on Granite some kind of example for the protests that took part later in Ukraine?

Events

KA: Without a doubt. There were attempts to start student protests in 1993 or 1994, but they were unsuccessful. Then there were the "Ukraine without Kuchma" protests led by Chemerys and Lutsenko, who had been part of the Revolution on Granite. Then came 2002, 2004. I know all of that. Of course, it's tragic that the last revolution turned violent. I participated in it, I got new people to join, I tried to protect them. But, unfortunately, there were a lot of bastards and a lot of people died.

"Ukraine without Kuchma"

VO: What does the form of the protests on Maidan remind you? Are those protests inspired by the Cossak history or the Tiananmen Square protests or is it something typical for Ukraine?

Revolution on the Granite

Motivations

Being tired of banditism of authorities

KA: All of the people who were with me during the Revolution on Granite have kids now. They have a lot of friends, many of them are professors. This is a reminder of self-awareness. And the fact that we're tired of banditism and thugs being in positions of power.

VO: Can you recall the most symbolic moments of the Revolution on Granite?

Events

A women trying to take off the jeans of the protester imposing him being a spy

KA: Sure. There was this time when a woman started trying to take my jeans off, she kept yelling that I was a sell-out who had been bought by the CIA. She kept screaming "take your jeans off, you traitor!". It was a nightmare, people really thought that if you were wearing jeans, you were some kind of traitor and a CIA agent. I sure remember that. But that's mostly to joke around. But I also remember being hit in the face. Especially well I remember being punched by the cops. I remember a lot of things, but the thing that I'll never forget is getting a huge amount of new friends, comrades who you'll stand for until the very end. And you know they'll stand for you.

VO: Did you participate in the "Ukraine without Kuchma" protests?

KA: Yes. Not very actively, for health reasons, but I did help out.

VO: Tell me briefly about it.

Events

"Ukraine without Kuchma"

Actors

L. Kravchuk

KA: I took part in it because we all could see that Kuchma was becoming senile. Had we been able to overthrow him then, all of this madness wouldn't have happened. So many deaths would have been avoided. But, unfortunately, he didn't understand that at the time. Kravchuk had agreed to a snap election in 1994, he understood that he couldn't hold on to power like that... That's why I respect Kravchuk and I think that he was the only president who really could be called a president. I don't want to say anything about our current president, Peter Alekseyevich (Poroshenko), because his time still isn't up. But the others were just bureaucrats and bandits. Kravchuk had been the only normal politician. So if Kuchma had agreed to a snap election when the "Ukraine without Kuchma" protests were going on, then the country would have gone in an entirely different direction. But that's just wishful thinking. I couldn't actively support the protests

L. Kuchma

for health reasons. But my people, my team from Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Poltava and Sloboda took part in it, the organization helped out a lot.

VO: Did you take part in the Orange Revolution?

KA: Yes.

VO: Tell me about it.

KA: The Orange Revolution was a calm one. Everyone was euphoric. Everyone wanted the best for the country, but... If I'm being entirely honest, I think that there were only two real revolutions in Ukraine. The Revolution on Granite and the Revolution of Dignity. The Orange Revolution and all of the others were just passing things. The Orange Revolution wasn't really something that serious. Well, maybe that just my biased opinion of Yushchenko, but I never really saw him as a leader. And I think that all of the political elites made a mistake when then entrusted an accountant with the future of the country.

VO: What was the most important thing during the Orange Revolution?

KA: The only thing I'm thankful to Victor Andreyevich (Yushchenko) for... Well, I think the Orange Revolution was another wave which rose from the previous revolutions (some people might call them riots or protests)... The main thing was that all of the patriotic political powers tried to unite themselves and stopped fighting over their differences. I am thankful to Yushchenko for bringing up the topic of unifying all of the Orthodox churches and also for making the Holodomor a widely-discussed topic all over the world. All of the other things... He didn't do anything for the economy. Although he did do something for it while he was Prime Minister, he was a good accountant, after all, he kept the hryvnia strong, so I am thankful for that, I guess.

VO: Who was responsible for the political decisions from the government's side and from the the opposition's side?

Orange Revolution

Emotions

Euphoria

Actors

V. Yushchenko

Orange Revolution

Outcomes

Patriots united

Events

Politics of memo introduced by V. Yushchenko

KA: That's a difficult question. I think we won't get to the bottom of that anytime soon. We can guess and make assumptions, but there were different situations there.

VO: What was your role during the Orange Revolution?

Activity

KA: I mainly just helped patriotic and self-aware people get together and I made sure they wouldn't get lost or get in trouble. I was living in Kyiv at the time and I also tried to keep them fed. I paid for that from my own pocket.

Organizing and gathering people

VO: Do you still have any photos from the Orange Revolution?

KA: I have some, yes.

VO: Tell me, what was the role of the most affluent Ukrainians during the Orange Revolution protests?

KA: They didn't have one. They're all greedy as hell. I say many performers there, they would come and bring things for the protesters. I saw many businessmen, the ones who weren't involved in politics. They also supported the protesters. But the ones who are still in power... I think they just tried to get something out of it. Just like they made money on the Revolution of Dignity.

Actors

Businessman

VO: What were the main goals of the Orange Revolution?

Motivations

KA: The main goal was to get rid of Kuchma, to stop Yanukovich and his thugs from coming to power. You can't say "stop the Donetsk bandits", because that wasn't the main thing. It was clear that the regime had to go. The bandits couldn't seize power. It didn't matter if the bandits were from Donetsk or Dnipropetrovsk, they couldn't be allowed to seize power over the country. We couldn't let them destroy Ukraine. But, unfortunately, we betted on the wrong accountant.

Re-establish the rule of law

Getting rid of Kuchma

Preserving bandits' clans from power

VO: How would you assess the role of the foreign politicians in regulating the conflict in Ukraine? Who deserves a special mention and why?

Western Policy

Support by Poland and Baltic republics

KA: Of course, Poland helped us a lot, and so did the Baltic republics. And Germany. The others didn't help as much. But now, after Trump's victory, we can expect the geopolitical landscape to change. I think that soon our only allies in Europe will be the Baltic countries. Maybe, Scandinavia, Poland and the UK. I think that we shouldn't expect a lot of help from Spain, Italy and France. They'll change their political course, along with Germany.

Orange Revolution

Outcomes

Dissatisfaction with Yushchenko giving over to Yanukovich

VO: What was your biggest disappointment after the Orange Revolution?

KA: The biggest disappointment was that Yushchenko gave it all over to Yanukovich.

VO: Did the events of the Orange Revolution lead to changes in the political system in Ukraine?

KA: No.

Lack of changes in the political system

VO: Did the aftermath of the Orange Revolution strengthen the oligarchy or not?

KA: They didn't strengthen the oligarchy, but they created a new oligarchy with new rules. Although, that's not exactly true. That wasn't the aftermath of the Orange Revolution. The people who supported the Orange Revolution were the people who had open souls and open hearts and smart thoughts. But what happened after that... All of the scandals between Yulia and Yushchenko, all of the mess with the cabinet of ministers, the mess with the president... That's what led to a new oligarchy, in the end. I call that time the two rules of Leonid and two rules of Victor. Victor Yushchenko gave it all up to Victor Yanukovich. Why exactly he gave it all up is unclear. Criminalists or historians should figure that one out. But the facts remain. And the people who are involved in politics or who have something to do with politics... Those people know what happened. And the other people should read up on it and draw their own conclusions. But the people who supported the Orange Revolution, the ones who participated in the Revolution on

Orange Revolution

Outcomes

Political fight for power between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko

Granite, the ones who were a part of the Revolution of Dignity... Those are the people who are the basis of our state. It's thanks to them that we saved our country. Well, we lost Crimea, we lost a part of Donetsk. But an army has been built. The volunteers are the same people who went out onto the streets during the revolutions. Or their family and children.

VO: What was the main cause of the Euromaidan?

KA: I'm not sure how to say this politely... Well, we went through several revolutions before the Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity... And the Ukrainian people are smart... And, most importantly, we don't like getting f*cked over. When we're told that we're moving in the direction of Europe and we want that, and then we're told that we're changing our geopolitical course and joining Asia... And then we're told something about taxes... And we see all of this corruption and lawlessness... Among the police and the judges. And it's still there, this lawlessness, we still haven't cleaned that up.

Revolution of Dignity

Motivations

Fight against lawlessness

VO: Could the political crisis have been solved in any other way? Apart from street protests?

KA: No. In my opinion, the history was so complicated that it would have been impossible to solve that crisis in any other way. I've gotten into a lot of arguments with very respectable political scientists over this.... The thing is, if those thugs hadn't been defeated then, there would have been even more deaths. And we wouldn't have lost Crimea and Donetsk, we would have unrest in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Kyiv.... I'll tell you what Lenin once said... Despite everything, it wouldn't hurt for some people to read Lenin once in a while... "the bottoms don't want and the tops cannot live in the old way", that's when a revolutionary situation occurs. We had the same situation then, but the other way around. Because the situation was hopeless. It was just something that showed us all how hopeless it all was. It wasn't really about Europe. I don't think we'll be allowed to join Europe anytime soon. The people who visited Europe will keep visiting it. It was just a sign that made us think about how many times we'd been f*cked over.

Emotions

Hopelessness

VO: Could the protests have ended without bloodshed?

KA: At that time, no. From what I heard, I think that Yanukovych wasn't really in charge, some other commissars were. And, on the other hand, the forces of the Maidan didn't really have one leader, one central power. There were many central powers there. Some of the people are in power now, others aren't. But the main thing that led to the bloodshed was that the people in power didn't know what was going on. They didn't understand anything and they didn't care.

Events

Bloodshed on the Maidan

VO: Were the protest leaders willing to compromise and make some kind of a deal?

KA: Well, they tried to make a deal. A political one. But the other side started shooting. And it's obvious that our so-called "brother" from Moscow didn't want the opposition and the government to reach some kind of deal. He didn't want for all of it to end quietly. Had the protest leaders and our Western allies pressured Yanukovych a bit more, then maybe it all would have ended peacefully. But Russia didn't want that, they wanted for the shooting to begin. Putin needed that. But he did not take into account all of the differences between Ukrainians and Russians. We're very different people. Our thought process is different. Our people have been through revolutions and we won't be tamed again. He can't do what Stalin and Brezhnev once did. He just did not think of that.

Russia's Policy

Propaganda

Provocations

VO: What were your responsibilities during the Euromaidan?

KA: I helped out as much as I could. I organized groups, organized... Never mind, that's not important. I did what I could. I hate it when people start bragging about all the good they did and when medals start being passed around. I've been trying to do all I can for this country all my life, my whole life has been connected to Ukraine and Ukrainians. All of it. Although I have relatives in Horlivka, in Yenakievo, in Russia, in Moscow. I had relatives there. Because they're so brainwashed now that they believe that I would eat their children alive.

Activity

Organizing people and groups

VO: Was the Euromaidan really as well-organized as everyone seems to think?

KA: No. There was no organization. It wasn't organized. Things are well-organized when everything's clear. This was chaotic. The people went out onto the streets and organized themselves. Everyone found their groups, they united themselves. And then those groups and their leaders somehow figured out a way not to get into each other's way and to somehow coordinate all of those people. It wasn't organized. The people just decided to go out onto the streets. They didn't want to bear any of it any longer. That's it. When people start talking about how well-organized it was, that's stupid. Nobody organized anyone. People just decided they had had enough. I know many cops from Kharkiv who took vacation leave and joined the Maidan. They'd had enough. They'd been forced to just arrest a certain number of people every month just to keep the stats good. I'm not saying things are great now. But it's better...

Situation

Organization of the Maidan

VO: What was the most important part of the self-organization during the Euromaidan?

Emotions

KA: The self-awareness. The people who came to Maidan understood why they were there. So they decided to come to the Maidan, they came to Kyiv? Why did they do that? They needed to be aware that they came to Kyiv to save Ukraine, save their homeland, save the people. And the "European choice" was just an excuse. Everyone saw what was going on in Russia. They knew that life wasn't that bad in Belgorod or Kursk, maybe in Vladivostok, Moscow or Saint-Petersburg. But they knew what life was in the other parts of Russia. Everyone has friends or relatives there, they heard stories. Like Russian professors saying they can only discuss history secretly, hiding in kitchens and talking in hushed voices. That's just insane. And the Euromaidan was just a litmus test.

Self-awareness

Motivations

Saving Ukraine

Not to become like Russia

VO: How did your family and friends react to your involvement in the Euromaidan?

External Solidarity

Support of family and relatives

KA: My mother, naturally, was worried. People were being shot and killed there, how could she not worry about me? 90 per cent of my family supported the Euromaidan. Some other relatives, for example, my cousin and nephew from Horlivka and Illovaish were too brainwashed, it was hopeless even trying to talk to them. When the shooting began there, I helped them escape, they

Situation

Brainwashing in Donbass

were refugees, volunteers helped them. But they came back and they're still calling me a fascist. Everyone is a fascist in their view.

VO: Who was your main enemy during the Euromaidan?

Actors

Berkut

KA: The Berkut special police, of course. That's not a secret. A person who isn't afraid of anything isn't a person. I was worried about the people who had joined me, who had trusted me and came to the Maidan. But none of them died, luckily.

Emotions

Fear

VO: What was the role of religion, art and Ukrainian history during the Maidan?

Events

Discussing history on the Maidan

KA: A huge one. Especially history, people from different regions would gather and discuss history and it was really fascinating. A group of us came to the Maidan, there were about five people who had really strong negative feelings about the so-called "banderovtsy". They called everyone from Western Ukraine that. But they also hated Yanukovich. And when they started to get to know one another, they realized that they were one people. They became friends, some of them even got married, unless I'm mistaken. The thing is that they tried to separate us, they labeled us as banderovtsy and Westerners, Russian-speaking, Ukrainian-speaking and so on... I have a friend who's ethnically Russian. He considers himself to be a Russian patriot, but I've never met anyone who was more of a Ukrainian nationalist.

History

Stepan Bandera

Situation

Internet and social media

VO: What was the role of the media and the Internet during the protests?

Facebook

KA: The media covered what they could. They had a huge role. And the journalists died there too. They covered what they could and showed people what they were allowed to show. Most of the media outlets belonged to the oligarchs, so they couldn't show everything. Now we can see what they filmed and wrote there, but we couldn't see it then. But those things they filmed back then were terrifying. And the Internet? We didn't have time for it. When we could, we sent each other text messages, maybe Facebook helped us out from time to time. But you couldn't use Facebook much then. But the media did what they could. I bow my respect to the Channel 5 and other

Influences

Freedom Radio

Voice of America

outlets that could show us what was really going on. Because, the thing is... Even now, there's not enough truthful information out here. After the Revolution on Granite, I felt that the first thing Ukraine had to do was to organize something like the Freedom Radio (we listened to Radio Svoboda and the Voice of America back then) and make sure people heard us all over Luhansk, Donetsk and the Kuban region. Because, if you think about it, the Kuban region is a part of Ukraine.

VO: How would you assess the role of the foreign states during the Euromaidan?

Western Policy

Declarative support

KA: They had no role. They supported us with words, but that was it. Maybe, the Baltics and Poland did more than that. The UK. But others didn't do anything. As usual. But they should have. They signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, after all.

External Solidarity

Poland and Baltic states

VO: How had you imagined the result of the protests? Do you have any disappointments after the Euromaidan?

Revolution of Dignity

KA: Of course. There are disappointments. Especially after the electronic declarations. But I knew a lot of things before that. But the biggest disappointment with the Revolution of Dignity is that many people died and many are still being killed today. And that the so-called political elite is fighting over who gets the crown and is not unified. And, as a result of that, the lustration isn't going well, the anti-corruption laws aren't working, most of the officials are the same ones as before. They changed a few faces, but most of the system hasn't changed. Look at Avakov, for example. He tried to reform the police, it has gotten a bit better. Despite what people say, the places where I've been, the police are respected, people fear them and crime has gone down. But that isn't enough. What about other things? What about the judges? And all the rest? There haven't been enough reforms.

Outcomes

Disappointment

People killed and still being killed

Lack of changes and reforms

VO: What moment during the Revolution of Dignity would you consider to be the breaking point?

KA: I think there were two breaking points. The first one was, despite my skeptical attitude towards Parasiuk, had he not announced that we were going to storm Yanukovych... I would consider his announcement to be one of the breaking points. And the second one was when Yanukovych and his cronies started getting on their planes. Without even understanding what they were doing, they had let down their Moscovian master and interfered with his plans. But the first, the most important breaking point was when those idiots attacked the defenseless students... I'm just trying to imagine what would have happened if they had attacked us like that in 1991. And when they sent thugs there with sticks and guns, when they started beating them up... And when a million people went out onto the streets the next day. Nobody was organizing them and bringing them there, they came because they felt it was the right thing to do. All of them did. That was the breaking point. That's what I call national self-awareness. Leaders didn't matter.

Events

V. Parasiuk's speech

Events

Beating of students

VO: For the Ukrainians who participated in the waves of protests, were the previous revolutionary events of the 20th century an important source of inspiration? Or were they inspired by other important historical events in Ukraine? If so, which events?

KA: Of course, experience is accumulated. Of course, they remembered the revolution of 1917 and the Revolution on Granite. And all of our fallen boys, the ones who were buried on Askold's grave. All of that is accumulated and... Well, nations have this ability to understand their own culture better when they have more knowledge. And even though Ukrainians speak different languages, they still have that knowledge and that knowledge sits quietly in their minds and it resurfaces in their time of need. And some part of that experience remains in their subconsciousness.

History

Chornovil released from prison

VO: Which events that took place in the last years of the Soviet Union influenced the protests in Ukraine after 1991?

KA: The funerals of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that took place every year. And the democratic elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union in 1989. And, of course, I should mention the dissidents being freed.

Election to the Supreme Council in 1989

Chornovil and the others, who had been freed then. Of course, all of that influenced the protests. That's a whole era, a decade.

VO: How did the protestors and the government feel about the Soviet heritage and the imperial role of Russia? Starting from 1991.

Internal Policy

Attitude towards
Russia and Soviet
legacy

KA: Well, in 1991 it was clear, that people weren't fond of the Soviet heritage. It was clear during the Revolution of Dignity that we still had to get rid of it. 1991 was the year when we fought for our independence, we knew then and there that we didn't need an empire. The empire didn't give us anything. Starting with Peter I and Catherine the Great, the empire has held us down.

VO: Were there any organizations in the history of Ukraine, for example, Rukh, that somehow influenced the development of civil society and the protests after 1991?

History

"People's
movement of
Ukraine" ("Rukh")

KA: Well, Rukh had a different name back then. At first it was called the People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction. And then they started calling it "Rukh". Then there was Prosvita, of course. Then there were other ones. Not the ones we have now, that's a masquerade. Then there were real organizations. And societies that studied history and culture. And students used to create political clubs. And all of it influenced the society, yes.

VO: Does oligarchy exist in Ukraine?

KA: Of course.

Internal policy

Corruption

VO: How did corruption influence the protests? And what is the meaning of corruption in Ukraine?

Nepotism

Banditism

KA: Corruption is what stops us from living. That's the whole meaning of it. Bribery and nepotism. Banditism and nepotism. When someone's in trouble, he can't solve his issues before

he talks to someone or gives someone a bribe. Collective guilt. By knowing the right people you solve your problems. Politicians are putting on a show of fighting one another and then drink vodka together. That's what's stopping us from changing the system. After some of the electronic declarations that were published, I guess some of them will stop acting that way because it's not in their interests. Even the people who don't use the Internet and have no clue of what's going on, even they'll hear something and start suspecting something. The problem is that most of our television channels belong to the oligarchs.

Internal Policy

TV Channels
belonging to
oligarchs

VO: Could you compare the way the protests after 1991 occurred and what meaning they had? What do they have in common and what were the differences?

KA: The thing that all of the protests starting with the 1991 Revolution on Granite, the student revolution of 1992, "Ukraine without Kuchma", the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity had in common was that the people started being aware that they are one nation, one people. And the people started understanding that they wanted to be understood, they started being self-aware. And that all of the country, Crimea, Luhansk and Donbas included, need to move in the direction of Europe. And that people don't want to be dragged to Asia. People started understanding that we don't have an older brother. That we're united and undefeatable. That's the only important thing. The difference was that some people tried to use these revolutions to their advantage.

Revolution on the Granite

Orange Revolution

Revolution of Dignity

Outcomes

Awareness of being
one nation

Awareness of the
Ukrainian identity

VO: How did the people know how to protests and which forms of protests would be the most efficient?

Forms of protests

Revolution

Walking onto the
streets

KA: The people watch TV, they read things on the Internet, they read the press. The most effective protests are always revolutions, that's the way it has always been, everywhere. It's always been obvious that the most efficient way to protests is to walk out onto the streets and show them... But that doesn't work if you're alone. That's why people in Russia are forbidden to gather in groups. Because when people get out onto the streets and when they're not afraid... The laws of the 16th of January... They wanted to have the same thing they have in Russia. To forbid

Events

The law of January
the 16th

people to gather in groups of two and to forbid more than two cars to drive together. But we're not Russians, we have a different level of self-awareness. And the people, one by one, realized that they had to get out onto the streets. Because if you don't get out onto the streets, tomorrow they'll come knocking on your door.

VO: Did taking part in the previous protests motivate you to take part in the next ones?

Motivations

KA: No. Well, if you take me, for example, after the Revolution on Granite, I had a calm life, because, in my mind, the way my family saw it, we had already gotten our independence. The independence of our country. The independence of Ukraine. Later on, I joined the protests because I could see the insanity that was happening. That's why I took part in the protests. Pretty much. And the last protests, especially as far as the Revolution of Dignity is concerned, it was clear that if the people didn't do something and didn't protect their rights, their state, then that would mean not protecting you own family and yourself.

- Seeing the situation in the country
- Protecting people's own rights
- Protecting the state
- Protecting family

VO: What motivated people to take part in the protests and why did some people chose not to join?

KA: I've thought of this before and I think there must have been two reasons. Either they were satisfied with the situation and were getting something out of it, or maybe their relatives were getting something out of it or were solving some of their problems with bribes and such. Or there is also a second explanation, and a more likely one. Many of our people, unfortunately, are still very naive. Well, not many, but a lot of them. And that's the way it is all over the world. Most people are passive. And they don't read much, and their biggest problem is that there is no electricity or that they can't afford to buy bread today. Just ordinary everyday situations like that. And, to be honest, I don't think too few people participated in the protests. If you look at the photographs that were taken from the sky, you'll see how many people participated. And it wasn't just Kyiv. Many people in the regions were also protesting. Take Kharkiv, for example. And those were the people who had been frightened by the idea of terrorist attacks and still went out onto the streets.

VO: How did the protestors see the society and the government and what were the main differences between the protesters and the people who supported the government?

Orange Revolution

Motivations

Pro-governmental support for money

Bribes

Revolution of Dignity

Actors

Titushki

Vadyk Titushko

KA: There wasn't a difference. If we're talking about the Revolution of Dignity, that is. Or the protests of 1991. If we take 1991, for example, when we were on hunger strike, and people would come over and yell "take off your jeans, the CIA gave them to you". There were people like that. But the others... We were giving out literature there, samizdat. And people were interested, they read it. And many of them supported us. In 1991, the government thought that it was invincible. And the students won. And during the Revolution of Dignity... I'm not going to discuss the Orange Revolution or the "Ukraine without Kuchma" protests... Frankly speaking, the people who supported the government were the bribed people who had been led to poverty and who were willing to stand around yelling "Hooray, hooray for Yanukovych" all day long for the miserable 50 or 100 hryvnias. That's the whole story. They didn't really support the government, they just did what they were told to do. And the so-called titushky, the paid thugs who supported the riot police and beat up journalists. The guy they were named after, Vadyk Titushko, wasn't really to blame, he was just an athlete who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. And he didn't have a clue what was going on. He just didn't read enough...

VO: Who did the government depend on and who did the protesters depend on?

Actors

Armed forces

Berkut

KA: The government depended on its thuggish connections and on money. On the armed forces and the bandits. Mostly it depended on the armed Berkut fighters. The ones that were serving it and did its bidding. And on the so-called titushky thugs. The protesters didn't depend on anyone. They went onto the streets because they felt it was the right thing to do. Who could they depend on? There was this time, I remember it as if it was yesterday, when this farmer came to us and brought three pigs. He said he had ten pigs, but killed three of them and decided to bring them to the Maidan so the protesters wouldn't go hungry. He said he wanted to support us because he was fed up with everything that was going on in the country. And things like that happened all the time. And it wasn't just people from Western Ukraine that supported us, people from Donetsk and

Luhansk supported us and brought us clothes and food. They say that the Maidan was funded by someone, but I haven't seen any evidence of that. And I hope it's not true.

Actors

Students

Retired people

Workers

Civil servants

Entrepreneurs

VO: Who were the protesters? What kind of people were they, what were their goals?

KA: It all started with the students, then other people joined in. Retired people, workers, civil servants, entrepreneurs... And they all had one goal. They were fed up with what was going on. They had all hoped our country would move politically towards Europe and then they realized they had been fooled. And that was a wake-up call. And the extortion was horrific. People are less afraid nowadays and that's good.

VO: Could you tell me what role did the latest protests have in the evolution of Ukrainian society?

Revolution of Dignity

Outcomes

KA: People became more self-aware. People started supporting one another more. People from different social backgrounds started seeing each other more and started understanding each other better. They started understanding that they have common problems and it doesn't matter who earns ten hryvnias more or one dollar more. People finally realized that we have one country. And that we don't need a brotherly country. We have our own homeland and our people are united. And that we're not going to put up with this exploitative nomenclature.

Self-awareness

Understanding among different social groups

No need for "brotherly country"