

Interview with Oleksandr Melanchenko (OM). Interviewer: Vitalii Ovcharenko (VO). Place of record: Donetsk region.

VO: Please name the most important facts in your biography that contributed to your involvement in public activity.

OM: Everything happened entirely by chance. I was a businessman, a simple man. Perestroika happened at the end of the 1970s-beginning of the 1980s and into the early 1990s. I thought that everything was going to be alright, that life was heading back to normal and that life was going to be European. That we had joined the world and nothing else was required. I was finishing my studies at the medical institute. Life was a bit hard, so I went into business. During my business career I was nominated to be a deputy (member of a city council), entirely by chance. There was a meeting in the hospital. We were nominating deputies and I was in a hurry to deal with my business matters. Those meetings were boring and not interesting to anyone. They started persuading one of the chief doctor assistants to submit his nomination. As usual, he was playing the fool: "What are you talking about? Your trust like this will be very difficult for me to bear." It was just putting on an act! I said, "Enough of playing the fool! If he doesn't want to, let's find someone else in order not to waste time." The chief doctor replied, "But who?" "Anyone will do! It doesn't matter."

History

Perestroika

Influences

Becoming deputy

For me, becoming a deputy was something like flying into space. It seemed impossible. This was scary. It was in 1998. I was 28 years old. "Let's nominate you!" I needed that meeting to end fast, so I said "Let's nominate me for a deputy of the city council." We nominated a chief doctor for the deputies of the regional council and me for the deputies of the city council and the meeting was over. The following day I came to work and was told to write out my bio, take a photo and submit some documents for the deputy position. I asked, "Are you crazy? I was kidding! It was not serious! Me, nominated for a deputy? He must be some cosmonaut!" They told me, "No, it's

too late now. The documents have been submitted. We had some representative here and everyone could see that we nominated you. You are now in the documents so this must be done. There are no special demands from you. The most important thing you should do is find the observers. Another important thing is for our chief doctor to get to the regional council.”

When I was submitting the documents, I was told: “Why are you trying to get there at all? You won’t get the votes at this constituency. There is a great guy nominated there. You shouldn’t even bother.” They nearly told me to withdraw my nomination. By this they offended me a bit and encouraged me to continue. I decided to participate for real. I started researching what it was, the way it should be done, what an election campaign was in general. I consulted my friends in Kharkiv. There were lawyers among them. They explained what an election campaign was and told me I had to promote myself. It turned out that I would have authorised representatives. In other words, I learned more about this mystery, what an election campaign used to be like for me. I worked on it. I engaged all my friends and family. We all worked at the constituency and I simply won the elections. Then it was all clear. I was 28 years old, a young deputy, got elected without any help, and it all started.

Later there was Vladyslav Lukyanov, a member of parliament. We had some business together. He got interested in politics. It was the People’s Democratic Party of Ukraine. He became a member of it and got us involved too. We helped him in his business a bit, purchasing vouchers. He had an investment company. We came to him with a business offer but he said, “To hell, with business, let’s do it. Let’s organize a political party first. The People’s Democratic Party needs to expand. Come on!” I did not understand what that was, but I decided I should help my companion. I started organizing a political party. Afterwards we started organizing People’s Democratic Party in the town of Kostyantynivka. Later we went to some big meeting in Kyiv, and I got to know more people. As I was already a deputy at that time, that’s where it all started. Then we started organizing the Union of Young Deputies, an association of the young deputies. This was almost in 1999. The year of 1999 started. It was a year of presidential election. Kuchma

Influences

Election campaign
for a deputy

Actors

Vladyslav
Lukyanov

People’s
Democratic
Party of Ukraine

History

Presidential
election in the
1999

needed more associations, anyone who would support Kuchma. We did not know why we were gathered. We were told they needed an association. I was a bit older than others, active and smart, although I had only one university degree at that time, as it was later on when I got more. Then we created the Union of Young Deputies.

VO: What are the most important stages in your life?

OM: The first one was when I got elected as a deputy of city council. This is in regards to political life. In general, it is the same as for everyone. I graduated from school, graduated from the medical training school, enrolled at the institute, and was not sent to the army. I had a draft exemption at that time to enter the university. I had a diploma with distinction, so I was admitted after one exam only. Later I graduated from the institute. By that time I started doing business a bit. I had to get home, to the city, and work. I managed to do all that, even though it was quite difficult in 1995. I was assigned to work in the town of Pervomaysk, which is in the occupied territory now. I don't know what I would be doing there. It was like a punishment for me. However, we solved all the issues. Somebody noticed my activity. I was even invited to the regional administration back in 1995. I was told to leave everything behind and join the team, but I could not understand what regional administration was. I had my own business in foreign currency at that time.

Influences

Anti-communist family

VO: What topics were discussed at your home? What did your family talk about during Soviet times?

Voice of America, BBC

OM: We had an anti-communist family. We listened to Voice of America and BBC. I did not have a single communist at home. No one was a member of the *[Communist]* Party. My family was the family of the repressed. My grandmother was deported to Kazakhstan as she was a wife

Repressions in the family

of a Polish military serviceman. My grandfather was deported as someone plotting an assassination of Kirov in the Donetsk region, although he was from Iran. He was an Assyrian and a member of the English intelligence. He was deported to Kazakhstan and that was where he met my grandmother. Everyone was repressed, so communism was not for us. We had strong anti-communist opinions and underground opinions. Even though I was the best Komsomol member and so on, we had anti-communism in our family.

VO: What examples in the history of Ukraine inspired you the most?

Influences

Yushchenko

OM: I have always been inspired by [Viktor] Yushchenko. I always followed him. In 1996 there was monetary non-confiscatory reform and then he became prime minister. He did his best to get Ukraine out of the abyss into which it was falling. For me he was an example of decency, honesty, diligence and had the right skills to do his work well.

History

Monetary reform in 1996

VO: Was there a discrepancy between an official history of Ukraine that you were taught and conversations at home and among your friends? If there were any differences, what were they?

History

Novocherkassk Massacre

OM: Well, as you understand, if we listened to Voice of America, Radio Liberty and BBC, the differences were huge. There were differences between what we studied and what I heard at home, about my repressed grandfather and my uncle on mother's side who almost found himself in Novocherkassk. However, they were lucky. A couple of days before the uprising they were transferred and he did not participate in the shooting of the workers in Novocherkassk, though he knew that story. He served in the army at that time and accidentally he was not sent to Novocherkassk. Maybe it was because they were too young. Later he was transferred to the Far East. However, at least he knew about it, even though history did not tell about the uprising of the workers in Novocherkassk. I could not find out about this from history. It was only from what my

Influences

Free media, Voice of America, Radio Liberty, BBC

Repressions and deportations of family members

relatives said. For a long time I could not understand why my grandfather was repressed. I was given explanations about Stalinism and big problems. Even though when I studied it, that era was described in a much milder way and it was not as intense as it was in Khrushchev times. They tried to make Stalinism seem milder. They tried to forget it a little.

VO: You said your grandmother was the wife of a Polish officer. Tell us more about it.

OM: My grandmother was from Lublin. Her father was a medical officer. That was why I became a medical worker. She wanted me to be a medical worker too. Then he was reassigned to Brest. It was there where she met and married a security officer, as she used to say. She was married to him and suddenly the war began. They were fighting Nazis at first, but then the Soviet Army appeared and he was captured. Most probably he died in Katyń, like all the Polish officers. She does not know what happened to him. She only knows he was captured by the Russians. As a wife of a Polish officer, she was deported to Kazakhstan. They were transported in cattle trucks. Those who survived, survived. They were taken to Kazakhstan and let out in the bleak steppe. They were told, "That's it, get out. You arrived." That was where she met my grandfather. She married him. He was deported to Kazakhstan earlier. We learned in history that the wild land was ploughed by Komsomol members, but she would always say, "No, it was us, those who were deported there, who ploughed the wild lands. The Komsomol members arrived after we did it."

History

Katyn massacre

History

Deportations of Polish people to Kazakhstan

VO: In what kind of environment did your family live in Soviet times? What people did they communicate with? What were they interested in?

Influences

Family's history

Assyrian roots

OM: Family, work, home. All my close relatives. On one side, they were Assyrians, since my grandfather was Assyrian. My mother was more communicative. My uncle, her native brother, was less communicative. However, in general it was home and work. We did some small jobs at

that time. My uncle was repairing footwear. We all had to get involved in this small business of shoe repair. You had to, in order to live well. I had been helping since I was seven. That was what helped us to live. But it was impossible to live in wealth in the Soviet Union. Even if we earned good money, good money by Soviet measures, we were not able to use it properly.

VO: Did you communicate with priests during Soviet times? How would you assess their role in that period?

Influences

Attitude towards religion in the family

OM: We did not communicate with priests. Our family was not religious. My grandmother was Catholic. We attended church only for Easter. In general, the family I remember consisted of my grandmother (my grandfather died when I was three years old), my uncle (my mother's brother), my mother and I. So it was the four of us. Since my uncle was anti-communist, he believed that the priests were KGB and they were not worth anything. That was why we had mostly atheistic attitudes.

VO: Why did people unite into independent organizations during Soviet times?

OM: It was mostly the elite that united into organizations like that. The workers united mostly because they had less information. At least, I did not see those independent organizations. I lived in a small town in Donbas. My uncle was a worker. My mother was a staff scientist. This was not at a factory. It was not a common thing there. They were hiding and saying all the time that the communists would persecute them. They were so frightened by the 1940s when my grandparents were deported that even when Perestroika started they were saying it was a special communist invention aimed at finding those who were dissatisfied and then sending everyone to jail. There was this fear in the family, the fear that they will be punished. They returned to Donbas. My grandmother could not go to Poland. My grandfather could not return to the town of Donbas he

Influences

Constant fear of repressions and deportations in the family

was deported from. He was deported from Yenakiyevo, but he returned to Kostyantynivka. He was even scared to return to his town. That was how big the fear of Soviet repressions was.

VO: Could you please say what books, or maybe brochures, you remembered from the latest Communist times? What books, or maybe newspapers, impressed you the most?

Influences

OM: First, my family wanted me to read smart books. No matter how many sci-fi books I chose, I still got “100 Questions and Answers about the Ocean”. I was encouraged to develop my brain. However, we did not read any dissident literature. We did not have it. There was no such opportunity. Books were a rare commodity in the Soviet Union. Any literature was a rare commodity, even safe one. When it was all over, then, of course, we had *The White Clothes* and *The Master and Margarita*. We got the Perestroika literature, of course, like Solzhenitsyn. In general I was most impressed by Goethe’s *Faust*. It was almost the latest book I’ve read. For some reason I decided that no one can write anything better than Goethe’s *Faust*, and all books lost their appeal to me. They were just a poor mimicry of Goethe’s *Faust*, although I used to read so much, in huge quantities. Since 1985 when all that literature poured on us, I read almost everything. Then when I was about 22 years old, I got Goethe’s *Faust*. Moreover, in 1992-1993 I had to work hard, in order to survive. The family was rich, but it became poor in the blink of an eye. I had to study and work in the emergency room. I managed to work for one and a half salary and study at the medical institute. Then I went into business. When I became a deputy and started doing politics a bit, I was introduced to “Dzerkalo Tyzhnya” (“*Mirror Weekly*”) newspaper, and I became addicted to it. I immersed myself into newspapers at that point.

Literature

Influences

“Dzerkalo Tyzhnya”
 (“*Mirror Weekly*”)

Revolution on the Granite

VO: Have you heard anything about the Revolution on Granite?

OM: Of course, I have. It was the beginning of the 1990s. We followed the news on the Revolution on Granite. It was not clear to me at that time. I was studying in the Luhansk region. The medical institute was always far from that. It was a conservative institution. However, I started writing articles at that time. By the way, writing articles for newspapers was one of the elements of survival. Being a student, I accidentally wrote an article about a concert in Donetsk. It was about one of the last concerts of [Viktor] Tsoy. I described that concert. The editor of the medical institute newspaper liked it and she published it. I was impressed. It was rock music, and I covered it for the first time in my life. Then she started asking me to write articles. I met with Voznesensky and other poets. I wrote articles, but writing articles was business for me. I was trying to think up something interesting, such as a meeting with a racketeer or a meeting with a prostitute. Those were the times when people were addicted to newspapers. It was the end of 1989, the beginning of 1990. People purchased many newspapers. They were cheap. I started writing for several newspapers. In general, it gave me a good income, in my opinion. Then in 1992 it got difficult. People stopped buying newspapers. They did not have money for that. So we stopped writing. My first article was published in 1988 in "Komsomolskoye Znamya". I was 18, and I wrote a long letter to "Komsomolskoye Znamya". Suddenly, on May 14, 1988, it was published. It was an all-Ukrainian newspaper and I had my article published on the first page there. It happened precisely on my birthday. That is how I remember the date.

Influences

Medical
Institute

Influences

Economic collapse
in the 1991

Revolution on the Granite

Actors

Students

V. Kyrylenko

O. Len

P. Rozenko

Y. Zubko

Emotion

Fear

VO: What did people say about the Revolution on Granite in your university? How did you learn about it in general?

OM: It was mostly from TV. It was a turning point: the Soviet Union, Ukraine. It was in 1990-1991. We could not understand whether we lived in the Soviet Union or in Ukraine. It was a big surprise for me, when students succeeded. It was the Soviet Union, the power, the might. And suddenly some students appeared there with their demands. Later I met Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, Olga Len, Pavlo Rozenko, and Yuriy Zubko. They became my friends later on. I learned about that situation from them later. I know all of them personally today, and I regret that I was

apolitical in the 1990s. As I've mentioned, we were scared. We knew we should not do politics. My family insisted on that. Otherwise the provokers would expose people, and everyone would be sent to Kazakhstan. My family had a significant trauma after Kazakhstan. They were afraid, and they warned me to stay away, even though I could easily become a deputy at that time, riding that wave and emotions. Still, they told me to keep quiet. Moreover, it was Luhansk. It was not my native town. At that time I liked Shchekochoyhin very much. He was nominated for our constituency. I read articles and I wanted to help him somehow. I even voted for him. For democracy, for Sakharov. I was brought up on BBC and on Voice of America. I knew that it was our thing and I differentiated our thing, but Ukrainian politics was unknown to me at that time. It had to be a breaking point: from the Soviet politics to Ukrainian politics. Then there was a lack of money and everyone was busy with something else.

VO: Have you heard about "Ukraine without Kuchma" campaign? Did you, maybe, participate in the protests?

OM: At that time I was more interested in politics. I have not participated in "Ukraine without Kuchma" yet, but I supported those guys fully, because Kuchma was not interesting for me. It seemed to me that Kuchma turned Ukraine to completely different direction. I wanted changes and some other achievements. That was why I was against Kuchma too. In 1999, when I was already in the People's Democratic Party (NDP), in NDP, some people wanted to nominate Kuchma, and others wanted to nominate Yushchenko. Matviyenko came there and he said he supported Yushchenko and he expected to be nominated by one of the most powerful political parties (NDP was one of the most powerful parties in Ukraine). Then I decided that Kostyantynivka organization would support Yushchenko, but Yushchenko did not dare at that time. We voted for Yushchenko at the regional conference even though Serhiy Larin, who was one of the leaders of the regional organization at that time, asked me not to. I will never forget his famous words. I told him, "Serhiy, I am acting in accordance with my conscience", and he said, "Do you think I don't have a conscience? However, we have to support Kuchma. Do you

History

"Ukraine without Kuchma"

People's Democratic Party

Actors

L. Kuchma

V. Yushchenko

A. Matviyenko

understand? These are the schemes. We should do it, trust me. I would also like to support Yushchenko, but we have to support Kuchma”. However, I could not raise my hand for Kuchma at that time. So in order not to participate in politics at that time, not to promote anyone, I moved to the election commission. I wanted to hide there, to be independent.

VO: Did “Ukraine without Kuchma” have any impact on later revolutionary events in 2004-2005?

OM: Yes, of course, it had. It was the start that showed that it was possible. “Ukraine without Kuchma” demonstrated that Ukrainians were ready for that. “Ukraine without Kuchma” just did not manage to accomplish it. The first provocations and the first clashes started at that time. Ukrainians were not ready yet to fight each other. We are a peaceful nation. We were horrified that we were capable of fighting each other. We were horrified about civil war even then. We always tried to avoid any civil clashes. “Ukraine without Kuchma” repulsed us so much that it took 3-4 years to start some details there, and the Orange Revolution happened. On the one hand, “Ukraine without Kuchma” showed that Ukrainians were ready to protest, and on the other hand, it showed that Ukrainians were not ready for any civil war, meaning that we were not ready for domestic civil war.

VO: What can you say about the forms and the processes of the Orange Revolution?

OM: By the end of election campaign we knew that we would not be able to win in an honest way. We knew that the fraud would take place for sure, and in the second round we were getting ready for the Orange Revolution. We could sense it. No one ever talked about it, because no one knew how it would end. “Ukraine without Kuchma” scared us with the civil war so much that we did not know whether we would be able to hold another huge protest campaign like that. We knew that and there were attempts to encourage people to come to the streets somewhere, to talk to

History

“Ukraine without Kuchma”

Orange Revolution

Actors

Victor Yushchenko

Events

Poisoning of V. Yushchenko

Motivations

Fighting for honest elections

Actors

„Nasha Ukrayina”

V. Yushchenko

V. Yanukovych

G. Kyrpa

people. The poisoning of Yushchenko was pushing us towards it in some way. The personality of Yushchenko provided us with some advantage as well. When we understood that nothing was going to work after the first round, the leaders of “Our Ukraine” (“Nasha Ukrayina”) began preparations for the Orange Revolution. They knew that issue would not be solved at the polling stations. During the second round we were simply present at the polling stations, while our thoughts to a greater extent were about how to get more people to Kyiv and show our protest in some way. No one believed in a victory of the Orange Revolution at that point. We just did not know how it would end, but we had to show that we existed, that we were the power, that we were united and that maybe in the future at elections to the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) we would get a better result.

Actors

“Nasha Ukrayina”

Activity

Preparations for Orange Revolution

In 2002 we got quite a significant result. No, we did not get to the parliament, but “Our Ukraine” (“Nasha Ukrayina”) party was the first. So we were thinking more about expressing our opinion and being heard. That was why we talked more about the Orange Revolution. We knew exactly that there was an advantage about the fact that Kuchma chose the wrong contestant for Yushchenko. If it was Kyrpa, maybe it would be more difficult to organize the Orange Revolution, but such a fringe figure for contestant against Yushchenko as Yanukovych was... Ukraine was not ready to have a thief and a bandit as its leader.

VO: What was the most important and special about the Orange Revolution?

OM: It was special that the same Kuchma, while recalling the clashes during the time of “Ukraine without Kuchma”, was afraid of the civil war in the same way. He knew well that he would be able to remain president of Ukraine without civil war, and he did everything right. We can see that no matter how strongly we would be against Kuchma, there is no idiosyncrasy towards him. In fact, he made the right decision. He saw the real numbers for Yushchenko. He knew well that Yushchenko would win, that people were for Yushchenko, and he did his best to avoid the

Actors

L. Kuchma

V. Yushchenko

V. Yanukovich

clashes, even though the Donetsk people and Yanukovych asked him to repeat the experience of “Ukraine without Kuchma”, when there were the clashes leading to the first blood and “Ukraine without Kuchma”, in fact, he choked. Kuchma was afraid of that, of the civil clashes, and he did his best to avoid it.

VO: What was the main motivation for citizens of Ukraine to participate in the Orange Revolution protests? Why did they go out to protest?

OM: As I’ve already said, if it was not Yanukovych but Kyrpa, there would be no mass protests like this, in my opinion. Kuchma placed the wrong bet on a leader here. In my opinion, Medvedchuk had more influence. He needed a civil war and he needed any turmoil in Ukraine, up to occupation of Ukraine, to set Ukraine on fire. He managed to push for Yanukovych as a candidate, not Kyrpa. It seems to me that all the events that are taking place now were prepared by Russia at that time, in 2004, like the clashes and so on.

VO: Who was responsible for the political decisions during the Orange Revolution, from the side of the opposition and the government?

OM: From the side of the opposition it was Yushchenko’s headquarters, of course. Everyone says it was “PORA” that organized all those demonstrations, but it is nonsense. “PORA” was necessary in order to cover up. “Who is organizing those demonstrations?” – “Oh, it’s “PORA”, some kids.” However, we understand well that some kids cannot organize large-scale things like that. Yushchenko had a big group, including old politicians, such as Matviyenko who went through a big political school even at the communist party. There were also new politicians, such as Martynenko’s group. There were politicians such as Bezsmertnyy. Yushchenko himself, even though he was poisoned, had impact and influence. His wife was also among people who made

Actors

V. Medveschuk

V. Yanukovych

G. Kvrpa

Russia’s Policy

Giving support for social clashes

Actors

“PORA”

O. Matvienko

N. Martynenko

R. Bezsmertnyy

K. Yushchenko

O. Moroz

Y. Lutsenko

D. Zhvaniya

J. Lutsenko

V. Kaskiv

„PORA

Revolution of Dignity

Actors

“The Right Sector”

D. Yarosh

History

“Union of the Young Deputies” in 1999

Internal Policy

Yanukovych bandit clan

the decisions. Zhvaniya was there at that time too. He was emotional, and his emotions added power too. Lutsenko was part of it too, as one of the helpful pillars for Yushchenko. Moroz helped. Each one added his share of influence. It was not Kaskiv's "PORA". If the Orange Revolution failed, "Our Ukraine" ("Nasha Ukrayina") and others should have been spared of failure. The invented "PORA" should have failed, if, God forbid, the revolution or those demonstrations failed. However, the revolution succeeded, and "PORA" became great, even though nothing was based on it. It was the same as it was during the latest revolution, when "The Right Sector" was invented, which did not exist. However, if the revolution of 2014 failed, they would say that "The Right Sector" failed, even though it also wasn't really... Well, there was Yarosh... On the other side, of course, it was Kuchma who played a big role, because he was surrounded by oligarchs, even family oligarchs and other oligarchs. Yanukovich made decisions too, but he was more prone to falling under the influence. He was a coward, acting under the influence, and he was unable to argue with Kuchma, because he was scared. When we created the "Union of the Young Deputies" association still in 1999, and later in 2002, the bandit clan of Yanukovich was already strong. So, before the elections of 2002, I suggested for us, for the Union of the Young Deputies, to run in the elections and take some party, and young deputies from all over Ukraine were ready to cave in to Donetsk guys and their funds. We were ready to run in the elections on a par, those from Donetsk and those outside of Donetsk. Not as a part of "Our Ukraine" ("Nasha Ukrayina"), but even running independently. Then through some people I was told that Yanukovich said it was the wrong time and that we should not stand out. There is Kuchma, and what he says will be. Then the Donetsk guys became the members of "For United Ukraine" ("Za Yedynu Ukrayinu"), which was alien to them. The Donetsk guys were not the owners there. Here, in 2004, the Donetsk guys did not have any big impact on politics. Medvedchuk had more impact, and he pushed for the war. Yanukovich repeated his words. There was also Kuchma, Kyrpa, and some oligarchs, as well as that policeman Kravchenko who shot himself for some reason. They refrained from military actions. They were afraid of civil war in Ukraine. They knew a war would bring losses to them personally. Any war means losses.

Actors

Donetsk "guys"

"For United Ukraine"

G. Kyrpa

Y. Kravchenko

Emotions

Fear of civil war

VO: What did you do during the Orange Revolution, during the first, the second and the third round?

Orange Revolution

Activity

“Our Ukraine” in Donetsk region

Events

Secret meeting of Yushchenko’s supporters in Svitlodarsk

Actors

A. Klymenko

A. Morozov

D. Zhvaniya

N. Martynenko

P. Ihnatenko

Y. Pavlenko

M. Yermeyev

OM: During the first round of elections I was in the Donetsk region. Of course, we helped “Our Ukraine” (“Nasha Ukrayina”). We had a huge mess with the campaign chiefs. The last one was Anton Klymenko. Yushchenko and the company believed his promises about a huge number of votes. I remember a secret meeting in Svitlodarsk. There were many young people there, sort of Yushchenko’s supporters, including Anton Klymenko. The members of Parliament Morozov, Zhvaniya, Martynenko, and Ihnatenko came along. Yuriy Pavlenko was there. I was the first one to speak, and I said, “Dear folks, whatever you do here, you can bang your head against the wall, but Yushchenko in Donetsk region will receive 7% maximum”. I knew back then that the campaign was presenting Yushchenko as a fascist and that we were not able to get more than 7%. We could immerse everything in money there, but it would make no difference. Of course, who would like to hear such words? Then Anton Klymenko and his ward heelers came forward and claimed that they can get 20% or 30%. Just give them more money. As it turned out, Anton used those funds, but they did not reach the people and the election campaign. Since I was critical about that, they tried to move me aside. However, at that time I had Misha Yermeyev, as we managed to include him into our constituency electoral commission from “Our Ukraine” (“Nasha Ukrayina”). So I was engaged more with his matters and kept in touch with Yuriy Pavlenko.

I won’t forget an interesting episode, when I received a call from the Party of Regions (they knew my number!), and they said, “Listen, they will offer you now a position as campaign chief in ‘Our Ukraine’. Don’t refuse it, we’ll explain you later”, and they hung up. I think, “What kind of nonsense is this?” Then I get a call and they say, “We are thinking here, maybe we should appoint you as campaign chief in Kostyantynivka?” I was even in a bigger shock after that. It looked like people from the Party of Regions knew everything we did. Then that person, who was the campaign chief in “Our Ukraine”, because he had already received the funds from the Party of Regions, shouted that he would kill me if I got any position. In the second round we saved Misha

Yeremeyev and hid him. Yuriy Pavlenko was here in the first round and we went around my constituencies together, and I helped him as he was a Member of Parliament and he was in the Donetsk region. Later in the first round we helped Misha Yeremeyev to get away after he stole the protocol. If you remember, in 2004 the results from Donetsk constituencies were delayed, in order to make up the results. Misha Yeremeyev, while they were drinking there, got all the signatures. It was the first version of the protocol, basically the original, which was not sent to Kyiv. He took it with all the signatures and ran away. Poor people from the Party of Regions, running around... They were looking for him, but they could not find him. They blocked all the roads. The Pravex Bank took him in as Chernovetsky (*mayor of Kyiv, owner of Pravex Bank*) supported Yushchenko at that time. He did not even come home. He ran there right away. He did not know what he was doing, acting instinctively. By the way, people from the Party of Regions thought he was their man because he was a 20 year old kid and the deputies thought that was some kind of their fraud, but then it turned out they were mistaken. They tried to take him out of the electoral commission several times, and then they put him back, and so on. It was a big war going on for him. So he ran away with that protocol after the first round. At first, Pravex Bank took him to Donetsk, where we met him. We did not know it at that time, but it turned out that people from the Party of Regions blocked the train station and the airport. The bus transportation has only been recently introduced at that time. No one knew that the buses can travel that far, from Donetsk to Kyiv. So we put him on a Turkish bus. We could put him on the train, but all the trains left. The airplanes were way too expensive for us. But then we learned that there was a bus. I spent my money. The nearest bus was scheduled for early morning. So, accidentally, we put him on a bus and he made it to Kyiv with that protocol. That protocol helped so much. They did not falsify results in our Kostyantynivka constituency. They were not able to make a fraud there because we would be able to see there was a fraud still in the first round. However, in other constituencies in the Donetsk region I guess they changed the results a bit by means of the transit server.

Actors

"Pravex Bank"
L. Chernovetski
M. Yeremeyev
Y. Pavlenko

Party of Regions

Events

Blockade of transportation by Party of Regions in Donetsk during elections

VO: What about the second round?

OM: Then we were told clearly: that's it, guys. The game is over. The war will be till the last drop of blood. People from the Party of Regions came to me and said, "Relax. It will be 97/3." They knew it was only my people and I who resisted. I joked, telling them, "Guys, why 97/3? What if they tell you a day before to have 90/10 for Yushchenko, will you make it too?" I will never forget their sacramental answer: "Why 90/10? He doesn't care what it is for Yushchenko. Why 90/10, if everything is ready to have 97/3?" That is in percentage. The only trouble was Misha, who was, of course, a big obstacle for the constituency commission. He was an obstacle in general. They said that either Misha behaves, or they would close him somewhere in the apartment". They told us out of respect: "The most important is not to resist, because it will be the bandits who will be taking him". They told him not to resist as there would be food, drink, and anything he wants there, but the important thing for him was not to go around the constituency and intervene. I called to Kyiv at that point and Yuriy Pavlenko said, "Leave everything behind, and come here. The second round is over. Come here. We need people here. Forget about the election results."

So we tried to gather people, and I tried to explain that we needed to go to Kyiv. It was difficult to explain, because we still had the second round and there were still some small pockets of resistance somewhere. However, we had to take Misha to Luhansk, because I could not let the bandits get him and take him somewhere. He wanted to fight. I sent him to my relatives in Luhansk. He, of course, made some noise in the second round. Meanwhile, we were getting ready to go to Kyiv. I was in Kyiv on the second or on the third day. I had to stay here a bit longer. In the second round I was at the polling station. I was allowed to come in and take a look, after I promised that I would not write any personal opinion or complaints. Otherwise, they would not let me in. They would have said it was a violation of the law and they would not let me in. I got that already, when they said, "We will not let you in, because you will go to the court and then it will be too late, we will finish everything by that time." So I said, "I want to take a look how you can really make 97/3, because it's impossible. I know my people. I know that Yanukovych is not much respected here. Yes, more people will vote for him, but 97/3 is impossible. I know what people think." So they made me promise and they let me in at that polling station. When I saw

Events

Second round of elections

Actors

Party of Regions

M. Yermeyev

Activity

Going to Kiev after the second round of elections

Gathering people

Events

Court actions

Activity

Polling station observer

Internal Policy

how they did it, I knew that if they did that at all the polling stations, then they would certainly win. By the way, this helped me when between the second and the third round, when the court actions started and our legal group suggested to take a package, open it and recount the votes. Everyone thought there was shredded paper there instead of ballots. At that point I said, “I personally was at the polling station, and I saw that there was no shredded paper there. There are the real ballots, the ballots marked for Yanukovych. They were taken out and they put them back in with the marks.” I had an impression that people were not voting by ballots. There were double kits. The real ones had been marked already, and people voted by some strange papers. I told them that recounting should not be done, as we were going to see the real ballots there. I told that to Yuriy Pavlenko. Through him we had communication with some central masterminds. On the grounds of my testimony, he insisted that we should not recount the votes and we discarded the idea about recounting. That idea did not resurface again, even though people from the Party of Regions suggested recounting. Later, when Anton Klymenko promoted himself as a big fighter, he said they found some magazines or newspapers there. That was nonsense, I don’t believe it. It was the support of the people from the Party of Regions for Klymenko, so that it would be true that he was such a fighter in order to find that when the packages were opened. It was all nonsense. I saw they put the real ballots there. No one counted them. It was a whole batch. The batch was taken out and put back in, blatantly.

Electoral fraud

Actors

Y. Pavlenko

A. Klymenko

Party of Regions

VO: What about the third round?

Activity

Electoral
commission
during the third
round of elections

OM: During the third round I was in the electoral commission. We had a parity of 50 by 50. When it is 50 by 50, it is very difficult to conduct an election campaign. There were many frame-ups and many problems. They were getting people all worked up. People were steamed up so much that they would support Yanukovych only. I believed the results at that time. People were poised against Yushchenko. They were obsessed, big time. Later guys from Kherson came to help us in the third round. In our electoral commission we had a man and a woman from Ivano-Frankivsk helping us. There was a positional struggle, and Donetsk gang basically had given up already. At

least in my constituency they fought the way they knew, with the help of the local government. They were all tangled up. I saw that they were doing it on their own. They were basically not getting any order from Donetsk, but they continued to falsify. So when the third round was going on, they told me two days in advance that they would start drinking at 2pm. I asked them how it was possible to party when the third round was going on. "We know this already. Central Ukraine refuses to do anything." They negotiated with someone to pay them money in order to make them falsify. Donbas alone was not enough to falsify in favor of Yanukovich. They knew that. They told us that they lack the quantity, whatever they did. That was why the Donetsk gang stopped doing anything, but the locals kept on resisting. This was surprising to me. When the acting city mayor still reported that Melanchenko intervened, some bandits or half-bandits came to rumble. I told them, "Guys, in what way do I disturb you? There's not that many of us, and we aren't that strong". During the third round it was easier for us. There were strong guys from Kherson with us. They were called "strong-built journalists". It was easier for us. We were more liberated, and it was easier to hold the elections. The locals tried to falsify on some primitive level. They tried to change the commissions. In fact, we stole the list of commission members and it turned out there were two lists of the commission members. For a while it was unclear which one was the right one. People from the Party of Regions kept the list they submitted, but we stole it by trickery. I told them we had the list and nothing would work for them. We hid it, with the signatures and the stamps. It sounds funny now, but it was difficult at that time. When we stole it, it went to normal around 9-10 o'clock. Those false commissions were invented in Druzhkivka. That was to invent additional commissions, discard the ones we created, bring in the new ones, and claim that that list of the commission members was correct. Nothing like that happened in Kostyantynivka. It was clearly an idea from Druzhkivka.

Actors

Wealthy Ukrainians from "Our Ukraine"

Oligarchs

VO: What was the role of the wealthiest Ukrainians in Orange Revolution?

Activity

OM: First of all, the role of the wealthiest Ukrainians from "Our Ukraine" was as active as possible. Those from Kuchma's side did their best to avoid the civil war. We understood well that

Preserving civil war or clashes

any war needs funding. They had people. They did not provide people at some point. They did not allow for the possibility to have clashes. They did not let that happen. From the two sides, wealthy people did not let the civil war or any clashes between Ukrainians happen. They were afraid of it.

VO: What were the main goals of the Orange Revolution? What was so special about it?

OM: Our main goal was our messiah, Yushchenko. We had to make him the President, so that he would lead the politics in the right direction. It was our goal. We believed in him. We saw his work in the National Bank and what he did when he was Prime Minister. We saw all of that and we realized that we thought we would all move forward in the European direction, when such a smart person was the head of the country. I can say for myself. I believed that the rich people have already robbed the country enough and that they needed some peace, so there would be some work, investments, business and so on, it would be possible to earn money. Enough of the rich people have appeared already to have some kind of stability and the road to Europe.

VO: How would you assess the involvement of the foreign politicians in the conflict regulation in Ukraine? Whose role is to be respected and why?

OM: We understand well that we needed moderators. As far as I remember, in 2004 *Kwaśniewski from Poland came here. We understand well that he came here not as a Polish person but as a representative of the European Union. Some person from Germany or France could not come, but someone close to our mentality, close as a neighbour, came. In my opinion, he arrived with recommendations both from Europe and the US. We know that Poland is under double influence. The US has never let Poland out of its orbit because Poland had their border with Russia, which started becoming slightly aggressive and the US started paying more attention to the countries that had their borders with Russia. Kuchma needed Kwaśniewski in order to justify that peaceful*

Motivations

To Make
Yushchenko the
President

Western Policy

A.Kwaśniewski
mission in Kiev in
2004

UE and US
recommendations

Actors

A. Kwaśniewski
L. Kuchma
V. Medvedchuk

Western Policy

A.Kwaśniewski as a
mediator

disposition. As far as I noticed, Kuchma did not want the civil war. Kuchma did not want the clashes. Those big businessmen surrounding him knew that clashes would devalue their businesses. It was also necessary to mitigate the influence of Medvedchuk who was pulling Putin over here. Independent Kwaśniewski was the peacemaker who brought everyone to the negotiating table, and the compromise solution was found. I also understand that Kuchma was looking for the ways to retreat, in order not to be punished. He got some guarantees, and it all became fine. Hence, the mediator was required.

Orange Revolution

Outcomes

Disability to create the coalition

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

OM: My disappointment came in 2006, when we did not manage to create a coalition. When because of the ambitions of some certain politicians, it was not possible to make a step back. The Orange coalition was destroyed. That was the main disappointment, and then the mess followed.

VO: Have the events of the Orange Revolution led to the changes in the political system in Ukraine, or they have not? Also, has the Orange Revolution reinforced the oligarchy or not?

Orange Revolution

Outcomes

Yushchenko's failures

OM: Not everything was accomplished in this regard. Yushchenko did not make it work, for two reasons. The first reason was him giving a chance to act to all of his companions. Unfortunately, the companions, when they were doing one thing, were declaring something else. To put it crudely, they fell greedily upon some power. The second issue was that Yushchenko, with his emotions and his brains, was excluded from the political process after his poisoning. It is not known to everyone that nearly every weekend he went for treatment, and all those meetings and the rest of it were very hard for him. The late governor of Lviv region said, "You just can't understand it that he went to the meeting and his white shirt was all covered in blood". We did not see it, under his suit jacket. The shirt was just thrown away. All his [wounds] were bleeding. You

Events

Yushchenko's poisoning and its consequences for his health

know, when you bleed in any place, when it hurts... Yushchenko's mistake was in overestimating his abilities. He thought that he would be able to do everything right as he was overcoming the pain. But that pain... I'm saying this as a psychiatrist. He was looking for some comfort, tried to escape that pain, and maybe did some mistakes. Someone tried to make him a warm bath, and he chose the warm bath, preferring it to the pain. He did not sacrifice himself, like Jesus. Later in 2006 he lost the reins of power due to the ambitions of certain Orange politicians. Those ambitions did not let him unite into coalition, and then when it went all whirling down, it was impossible to stop it.

Was the oligarchy reinforced? Well, it was not possible for the oligarch neither to be reinforced, nor strengthened. It just existed, that's all. As a matter of fact, no one was really going to destroy it. Yushchenko had to provide fair rules of the game, and then they had to play according to those fair rules of the game. But, unfortunately... In 2006, at first, it was Yanukovych, and the struggle started. Everyone had more important things to think about, and it was not about how to build Europe in Ukraine.

VO: What were the reasons for the outbreak of the Euromaidan protests?

OM: There was only one reason. People felt resentment that Yanukovych was preparing them for one thing, but then there was a sudden turn and we would not have Europe and the European choice. At first intellectuals such as Nanyem went to the Euromaidan. And when the Euromaidan was being closed down, Russia entered the game. They needed the clashes. Russians decided to beat up the children. They beat up the children and they started to get people all worked up. I have an opinion that it was not us who were one of the organizers and ideologists of Euromaidan. We were just blindly used by Russia to have clashes, to start the war, and capture Ukraine in that war. This is what they did not manage to do in 2004. Do you remember when the internal forces were on the way to Kyiv, when the Minister of Internal Affairs broke the doors in the Prosecutor's

Revolution of Dignity

Motivations

Refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement by Yanukovych

Russia's Policy

Direct control and impact on the events (beating of students)

Euromaidan as a Kremlin project

Kremlin's will to cause a war in Ukraine

Office and burst in there with his “Berkut”? Then again, at that point Ukrainians had more sense than to start the war. That was when Russia understood that without sending their people in, without sending their secret subversive groups, they would not be able to do anything. By the way, I doubt very much that it all happened without some unit of Russians disguised as “Berkut”. They say there is some evidence that the disguised Russians were the notorious “Berkut” causing the bloodshed.

Motivations

Fight for European choice for Ukraine

VO: Was it possible to solve the political crisis in a way different than the protests on Maidan? Was it possible for the protests on Maidan to come to an end in a different way, without the bloodshed?

Activity

Preparing for elections in 2015

OM: Of course, this was how it should have ended. In fact, we, the opposition people, were getting ready for 2015, when the elections were to be held. We were getting ready for elections. We remember that on May 18th we had a warm-up, “Rise, Ukraine!” That was the regular warm-up for Ukraine, in order to get ready for 2015. It was the mobilization of our voters for the election and we did not have an idea about a Euromaidan. We, the political parties, supported it. On that day when the students were beaten up at night, we thought that it was done, that people were shaken up a bit and mobilized. Even though it was still on May 18, when Danylyuk and “Spilna Sprava” (“Common Goal”) attempted to start Euromaidans or some Maidans. He tried to provoke people to make them stay, when “Rise, Ukraine!” was coming to an end. He tried to leave his people on the squares still at that time and to start some clashes, but the politicians said, “No, we have 2015. We cannot do those things. There is no reason. Yes, we are protesting. Yes, we are angry.” By the way, that sudden turn of Yanukovych that led to some rallies decreased his chances to win elections in 2015. I told even at that time that if Yanukovych led us towards Europe, he would easily have won the election in 2015. The opposition would not be able to do anything to him. There was Donbas and there was additional advantage for the direction towards the European Union, so he would get additional votes in Central Ukraine, as well as in Western Ukraine. He would easily have stayed for a second term. That sudden turn of his, in fact, was

Events

Beating of students

Actors

“Common Goal”
 (“Spilna Sprava”)

Events

Refusal to sign
 the EU
 Association
 Agreement by
 Yanukovych

Emotions

Anger

purchased. Yanukovych did not really want to rule the country. When a person is given 3 billion US dollars for his needs... They explained to him that he would not be able to earn that much in his life ever. We do not know how much money the Russians gave him additionally in order to make such a sudden turn. It was a stupid turn that made him lose the presidency. He lost his life. He lost his money. He lost his chances. How much did they have to pay him for that? Then it was the beating up of the students. There was Sivkovych, who was close to Medvedchuk and the rest of them. I consider them more the agents of the Kremlin. The politicians stopped their activity that night and cleared the stage away. The students who remained there... It was something like a disco. Everyone left even though our politicians are accused that they knew that the beating up was planned and that was why they left. No. They simply left. Even "Svoboda" ("Freedom") took their security guards away. The other parties took their guards protecting the Euromaidan away too. Besides the students, it was also protected. This is what remained behind the scenes. The strong guys to avoid any provocations. When everyone took their security posts away, there remained the students who were just having a disco party, just the last evening of the beautiful feast of the Euromaidan.

Actors

„Freedom”
(„Svoboda”)

Events

Pulling security
guards of
Euromaidan away

Beating of
students

Then suddenly the beating came. Really, no one needed it, it was over. The Maidan was over. But it was against the rules for the Russians. The Russians needed clashes. First, they beat up the students. It is clear they planned that our politicians would call on people to hit the streets for some resistance campaigns. Then later, as I understand, they helped in some way to have more people on the streets. Afterwards it was all those provokers near the President's Administration, where the politicians did not plan to bring people. There were the provokers who organized the first battle there, which caused proceeding to some dynamic actions, and people stayed on the Maidan. The politicians thought: "That's fine. if we have a second wave of Maidan, so be it. We'll work a bit more, as it is the mobilization of people". Those first clashes, the first images, the bulldozer, hitting with the chains. At night "Berkut" stood against people in helmets, with shields and batons. Those guys did not have any shields or anything. They were standing and they were just beaten. They were placed there to be beaten. The other part of Ukraine that maybe did not support Maidan had to see that Maidan was beaten, that the defenceless people are beaten.

Russia's policy

Encouragement
for domestic
clashes

Actors

Berkut

VO: What did you do during Euromaidan?

OM: During the Euromaidan I was in the Donetsk region. We promoted the Euromaidan in our way. I knew and everyone knew that it was necessary to show that the Euromaidan was not Kyiv only. The Euromaidan was also Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv. Each city had mini-Euromaidans. In Donetsk we had our mini-Euromaidan that was active all the time. We were there all the time till January 18, I guess, when it was forcefully dispersed. They started beating us up too.

Activity

Organization of rallies in the regions

Place

Donetsk

Luhansk

Kharkiv

VO: Did you go to Kyiv afterwards?

Activity

Participant of Euromaidan in Kiev

OM: I was in Kyiv a few times. I was there during the first attempts to disperse the Euromaidan. It just turned out that way. I was in Kyiv on January (*December?*) 11. It was the first attempt to disperse the Euromaidan. Then we tried to work on some issues here. We were also working. Besides doing politics, I also work, you know. However, at the first opportunity I tried to get to Kyiv, of course. We were there for about 3-4 days. It was kind of a duty shift. We came there, while someone left. Many people were not able to be present there all the time. So I tried to come for 3-4 days and stay at the Euromaidan. I had to go to work and to organize some protest campaigns here too. We had them. On February 6 or 8, we were near the Prosecutor's Office. Someone had to stay here too. On February 13, when Solontay and me were arrested. Some work had to be done here in order to have some actions, to show that all of Ukraine was there, so that they would withdraw some forces and not have all the forces focused on Kyiv.

Events

Provocations

Activity

Fishing out provokers

Actors

"Freedom" ("Svoboda")

Situation

Euromaidan as a money-free zone

I remember when I was in Kyiv at the Euromaidan, I was close to "Freedom" ("Svoboda"), they had many fighters. We were fishing out the provokers a bit. That was my job. A lot of money was

being collected at that time. There were three cubes, as I remember, and it was intended that Kyiv residents and everyone who wanted to support Maidan donated money to those three cubes only. However, there were so many people who would take small cubes and collected money, saying it was for Euromaidan, even though Euromaidan was money-free zone. Anything you needed was given there for free. It was completely prohibited to collect money. You could collect it outside the Euromaidan, as much as you wanted, but on the Euromaidan - there are the three huge cubes and it is all honest and transparent, so that the people could see where the money went to. We would catch those scumbags, take those small cubes and write whose cube it was, place it and at 9pm we told him to come and tell what he collected donations for. To be honest, no one ever came. It turned out they all were the thugs. Really, just come and say! Do you collect money for your child? Prove it and show it. That money was confiscated for Euromaidan needs. We considered them scumbags. If they were not the scumbags, it would be welcomed. It was forbidden to get rich at the Euromaidan.

VO: Was the Euromaidan really so well organized, as everyone believes?

OM: Yes, at some point it was. It was when the members of parliament got involved too. We know well that there was a representative from every opposition party dealing with organization issues regarding Euromaidan. Many people did not see the work going on behind the scenes. We understand that Euromaidan was not only about talking on the stage. It was not only about a big number of people. It was also about a huge amount of garbage, a huge amount of food, a huge number of places where people could sleep where there was water available. All the life necessities. Serious work was required for this. I also helped in that regard, in the work behind the scenes. I remember we had an issue about the sleeping pads. Where to get them? We received some offers. "No, it is expensive. It is retail price. If they give it as a wholesale, we'll take them." Some regular life provisions. I remember when some person who stole something was caught, nothing happened to him. He was just kicked out. He did not purchase the butter. As I remember, he overrated its cost on purpose. He was immediately kicked out. We bid him farewell. He was

Situation

Organization of
Euromaidan

Activity

Learning by doing
Supply

told: “We did not place you there for this. We placed you here in order to have everything in an honest way, and we do not collect so much money to be able to afford some kickbacks.” I witnessed it, and it was harsh. He was kicked out on the first violation. He apologized, but they told him, “No, we don’t have time to forgive. No. You were caught. Good bye now.”

VO: How did your family react to your involvement?

Activity

Support from family and friends

OM: It was fine. They were used to it. They got used that we were in the opposition all the time, and it was fine for them. No one thought the war and the massacre would start. They knew I was fighting for the truth and my family supported me. My close ones supported me. All of my friends were against that Yanukovych’s gang. People around me supported me, and I felt fine.

VO: Who was your enemy and opponent during the protests?

Motivations

Yanukovych and his gang turning Ukraine into their own milking cow

OM: We did not have the personalities. Yanukovych and his gang, who turned Ukraine into their own milking cow, were the enemy and the opponent. Those were the prodigies of Yanukovych, such as Arbuzov, Klymenko and others. We see that those guys fell greedily upon Ukraine as it was their own property.

External solidarity/Actors

Clergy

Greek Catholics

Kiev Patriarchate

VO: What role at Euromaidan did religion have?

Events

St. Micheal’s Cathedral hiding protesters within its walls

OM: I believe it had a very big role here. We understand that it was 26 years after the Soviet Union and that religion has gained some weight. It had earlier too, especially in the West of Ukraine. Greek Catholics carried weight. At that time the Kyiv Patriarchate received many

benefits in particular. That famous episode, when St. Sophia's Cathedral (*it was St. Michael's Cathedral*) helped. It was very emotional and very powerful, when they were hiding Euromaidan supporters behind their walls. People ran there, when "Berkut" was beating them up, and they hid them there. This had a big impact. They were not afraid. In my opinion, it was the first time when the church stood out on someone's side. Their support was very strong. To put it crudely, they were the first prototypes of the chaplains who are on the frontlines today.

VO: What role did art have on the Euromaidan?

External solidarity

Crucial role of the art

OM: It was the same about art. We understand clearly that it was impossible to have speeches of the politicians all the time. It was necessary to make people stay in some way, to entertain them. However, it was not entertaining them with Natasha Korolyova (*popular singer*) that was needed. There was a lot of political art there, as well as any other kind of art. We know well that not only some politicians came there, but also people who supported Euromaidan dearly. They wanted to speak or to show something. The artist can just stand in the crowd, but he can also give energy to those people. Many artists preferred to give energy to people, and people got their energy recharged from the stage.

Actors

Singers and artists on the Euromaidan stage

VO: What was the role of Ukrainian history on the Euromaidan?

Events

"Euromaidan University"

OM: The history of Ukraine is small, unfortunately. We understand that the Euromaidan was not a homogenous creature. There was the so-called "Euromaidan University", where this history was discussed, where people were told about Ukraine, that it has the possibilities, that it has a future, that it had the past. Ukraine had its history. What history did we learn? We learned that there was a history of some in the Soviet Union, within the boundaries of Russian Tzardom, but in fact it was still the Soviet Union. Here they tried to say that we have a history too. They told many

discussing the history of Ukraine

secrets about Ukraine, which we did not study in school and which are not taught everywhere in Ukraine even now. The road from the truth to the history textbooks is long, way too long, unfortunately. During the Euromaidan it was short.

VO: What was the role of the media and internet during the Euromaidan?

External Solidarity

Western media

CNN

OM: It is clear that it would be difficult without the media. There is a rule: if CNN did not show it, it didn't happen. It was here the same way. If the media did not talk about the Euromaidan, perhaps it would not happen. However, the Ukrainian media were telling about the Euromaidan all the time and the people saw and knew what was going on there. It was a small platform, but it was full of life and the media reported about that life. It would be difficult without the media. It was later when the Russians started their distortions.

Actors

Ukrainian
journalists

Russia's Policy

Euromaidan in
Russian media

VO: How would you assess the policy of other countries in regards to Ukraine before and during the Euromaidan?

Russia's Policy

Provocations

OM: We understand well that other countries supported the seedlings of democracy. However, there was Russia which instigated everyone against each other. In my opinion, the beating of the students was a Russian provocation. The Maidan was close to coming to an end several times. December 1, November 30. On November 9 (29?) it was coming to an end and then provocations, beatings of the students. If the Maidan took place in 2015, that Maidan would have more legitimacy. The transfer of power and so on. At that moment it was premature. So Russia, remembering the mistakes of Maidan in 2004, when it lost Ukraine, as they thought, decided that if Maidan happened in 2015 ... It would happen in 2015 anyway, after those words of Yanukovich. Euromaidan would have more chances for victory, I guess, and I am not sure if anyone would use a weapon. Russia knew that the legitimate power was attacked. Not when the

power becomes a lame duck, but when it was still legitimate. So Russia needed clashes. We remember that on January 16 suddenly those stupid laws were adopted, about not wearing helmets and the like. Then there were clashes near the Dynamo stadium. Someone led people somewhere. Why were those clashes needed? For a few times the politicians tried to end Maidan, when they understood it was not the right time for it, that changing the government would not happen, that the government was not negotiating. They tried to stop it in order to avoid clashes, but there were provokers, even from our side, who were at the Euromaidan and who tried to fight with “Berkut” and others, in order to show an image full of blood. The main provokers start it and then it is impossible to stop.

VO: How did you imagine the results of the protests, and what was your biggest disappointment and what were the positive things that happened after the Euromaidan?

OM: The first disappointment was the shooting of the people. The politicians with the help of the mediators basically agreed to have elections in the autumn and that everything would be alright, that in an honest electoral way... They agreed that elections would happen and we would meet there. The agreement was almost ready. Everything was fine. Then suddenly the shootings started, which no one needed, the shooting, the massacre. It was a huge disappointment. We did Russia’s bidding. In fact, it was what Russia needed. Russia needed blood. Russia knew well that if elections take place, legitimate elections, then the government would become a lame duck again. As for the change of the government... Once again, you can falsify the results as much as you want, but the protests will happen nonetheless. So the Russians resorted to their main leverage, which was the shooting. The shooting on the Maidan started and it was not the disappointment but the tragedy of Ukraine, and then the war started.

VO: Was there a disappointment after the Euromaidan?

Internal Policy

Yanukovich
adopting the law
of January 16th

Events

Clashes with
Berkut

Place

Territories near
the Dynamo
Stadium

Actors

Protesters

Berkut

Revolution of Dignity

Outcomes

Death of
participants

Russia’s Policy

Provocations

Trying not to
allow elections

Shooting of
people on the
Maidan

Outcomes

War in East
Ukraine

Poroshenko’s
failures

Corruption

OM: Once again, as for disappointment after the Maidan, it was only the war. We do not have other disappointments besides the war. We can talk in length, about Poroshenko or anyone else, about all those details, but until we stop the war, the rest of the disappointments... There exists some shaking up as such. We don't do something well enough. We can talk a lot about corruption. However, there is no bigger disappointment than the war.

VO: What moment in the protests of 2013-2014 do you consider to be the turning point?

OM: The politicians wanted to end it and leave, while the biggest turning point was the shooting on the Maidan. That became the breaking point and as we understand, there were not so many people at the Maidan at that time. Of course, the reinforcement from the West of Ukraine was on the way. However, we remember how that shooting happened. They just spilled the blood and left. They could immerse the Maidan in blood, like in China, but it was not immersed in blood completely. The shooting on the Maidan was the trigger. If the Maidan was filled with blood, I don't know what would happen, but for the Russians there was probably no need to capture Kyiv. They needed to create a Novorossiia, at the first stage, or to occupy more, if possible. The Russians did not want to come here with their army and troops. They thought they have one round in the south of the country. They just occupied Crimea. The Russians needed to invent something. To return Crimea, to have some victories. The other thing had to be Novorossiia. The Russians were creating some range of friendly stupid states, like Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and this Novorossiia. They were not interested in the destinies of those people. The main thing was to have a quasi-state, which would separate Russia from the NATO bloc in some way, so that they would not stand next to some borders.

They believed that their agents in the south of the country, Novorossiia, were enough to not have the troops here. If they did not know it at that time, maybe they would immerse the Maidan in blood. If they knew their agents would fail so much, in fact, sinking in the corruption schemes...

Events

Shootings of people on the Maidan as turning point

Actors

Reinforcement

Russia's Policy

Russia's preparation for occupation of Ukraine

Russian agents

The idea of Novorossiia

They were taking money from Russia, but did nothing here. Nothing was ready to occupy the country, unlike they cheerfully reported in Moscow. In that case, I guess, the Maidan would be covered in blood and the war would be taking place now across the Dnipro river, somewhere near Vinnytsia. The frontline would be closer to Western Ukraine now.

VO: Were the early revolutionary events of the 20th century or other meaningful events in the history of Ukraine important for Ukrainians during the protests that happened in waves?

OM: Certainly so. Ukrainians knew that they can achieve something by means of protest. They knew that they can have peaceful protests. They were not going to start a war or start shooting. Ukrainians have proved that they have the possibility of peaceful protests. If the Russians did not intervene, this protest would be also peaceful. It would end in a peaceful way and everything would be more or less fine.

Russia's Policy

Intervention in the protest on the Maidan

VO: What events that happened in the last period of the Soviet Union had an impact on the protests that broke out in Ukraine after 1991?

History

Revolution on the Granite

Time of Gorbachev's Perestroika

OM: It was Perestroika. However, we remember that when those protests happened in Russia, in 1991, 1993, there were none of them in Ukraine. Ukraine was not trying to jump somewhere in leaps, but this slow motion was perhaps an obstacle, that we managed to keep our country away from some large-scale protests in the 1990s. The students hit the streets and their demands were met in order not to have a massacre. "Students don't want Fokin? Ok, we'll change him for someone else". There were no big changes, but those gradual changes were happening in Ukraine. There was an evolutionary process. It was not only Russia that had an impact, but the mentality of Ukrainians, that they were people who work hard, people who earn money. For them the most important thing was not to fight, but to move towards something good in the evolutionary way

History

and not to have some sudden leaps. That is why to say that something was going on in the Soviet Union... No, we never had Novochoerkassk, ever.

Novochoerkassk
massacre

VO: What was the main purpose of the Ukrainian protests, starting from 1991?

OM: Well, the main purpose was to have a better life, to tell those people in power that they went too far. "You went too far, change it in yourself."

VO: What were the attitudes of the protesters and the authorities to the Soviet heritage and their attitudes to the imperial role of Russia?

History

OM: Well, the attitude of the protesters and the others was the following: this is our country. All that heritage, Lenin, etc., was not needed anymore. This is the past. Its time is over. That was what resulted in the fallings of Lenin statues and the de-communization. If people were not shaken up, it would pass quietly. We did not have de-communization in the 1990s. We wanted to go through it in a revolutionary way. We thought that everything was fine, that there was no war here and that we were slowly moving towards democratization. We did not gone through this in the 1990s. We had our own way in the CIS. We and Belarus were basically the only countries where there was no war, at all, as in the Baltic States. We had a European evolutionary way.

Attitude towards
Soviet past

Internal Policy

De-communization

History

People's
Movement of
Ukraine („Rukh”)

“PORA”

“The Right
Sector”

VO: What organizations in the history of Ukraine, for example the People's Movement (*Rukh*) had a special impact on the development of the civil protests?

OM: Of course. All the political parties and movements surely had an impact, each one in its own way. Let's take the People's Movement (*Rukh*). While it was the People's Movement (*Rukh*), until some odd people became its members and started using it for their own good and not as an idea, *Rukh* was a meaningful force. However, when *Rukh* divided into two and then into the third part as well, the idea ceased to exist. *Rukh* did not belong to the whole of Ukraine anymore, but belonged to someone. The same thing happened to the parties. We can see it: as soon as "PORA" became the party, it died. As soon as the "Right Sector" became a party, the very idea of the "Right Sector" died. I am scared of the fact that "Azov" became a party. I think the idea of "Azov" will die, and Biletskyy, as one of its leaders, might turn into a politician who will compete with himself and with his comrades for the leadership. The idea gets lost in this.

Internal Policy

Absence of strong political party

Actors

"Azov"

A.Biletskyy

VO: Does the oligarchy exist in Ukraine now?

Actors

Oligarchs

OM: Of course, it does. It exists everywhere. It exists all over the world, no matter what we say. However, the question is how much it influences the country. They can be modest and overbearing. This is the only difference. If an oligarch is a rich man who owns TV stations and politics, because we understand that rich people have two types of resources: human resource and financial resource. You should own either a human resource, or a financial resource, in order to do something or to change something. However, the oligarchy has both, their workers and their finances. This is why they have a big influence. One issue is when they are the guarantor of some stability and evolutionary movement, and the other issue is when they try to influence politics just for their own good. As soon as they try to do that not for the rules of the game but for the sake of their own interests, anything they created tumbles down. It will collapse in any way, because as soon as fair competition starts, they simply lose. They spend huge funds on politics, instead of investing those funds into business development. They cannot understand why they lost. If an oligarch spends money on investments, and not on politics to buy huge number of the Members of Parliament... Because another oligarch buys them in a similar fashion too. There is an auction going on and the purchase nearly loses its sense after time. It was easier to spend these funds to

Internal policy

Influence of oligarchy

Russia's Policy

War

buy a factory without buying some member of parliament in an honest way. That was what Russia did not do. Russia decided to start a war against us and spent more money on the war than it could merely invest into the development of a pro-Russian party that could come to power and vote in the Parliament to join Russia.

VO: What role had corruption in the outbreak of the protests, and what is the core of corruption in Ukraine?

Internal Policy

Corruption

OM: The core of corruption in Ukraine is to get rich fast. Many people who came to power still want to get rich fast. They believe that coming to power, to any power... For example, if a person becomes a deputy or a low-level official, for some reason he believes that he will become a second Arbuzov or second Oleksandr Yanukovych or that he suddenly becomes Surkis or Pinchuk. This won't happen, of course. We trained them this way. There is the notion of a "guilt complex". We pay the officials and the rest of them, doctors and teachers, a small wage intentionally. We hook them on small-scale corruption, and then when a person speaks about justice, we tell him, "Hey, what justice are you talking about? You are involved in corruption!" But only on a small scale. Some do it on a large scale, others on a small scale. The "Diamond prosecutors" own the diamonds, while a teacher at his work place, for example, owns zirconium. By the way, corruption is one of the elements of the forms of state government. Sometimes redistribution in a normal country happens by means of taxes, but in our country this redistribution happens simply by means of corruption. We come and pay money to the doctor, to the teacher, to the policeman, etc. Someone on a high level pays money to the prosecutor who is supposed to judge him in the correct way. Someone pays the judge. I paid the judge too. He asked us for a certain amount of money. I asked him, "Why did you take money from us? Why did not you take money from the other side?" The judge replied clearly, "Well, you got an honest decision. I would better take money from you and make an honest decision, rather than taking ten times more money from them and make a dishonest decision. My dishonest decision would be noticed, and inspection officers would be coming here all the time, they would dig that dishonest

decision out and blackmail me, and I would gradually give them all the money. I'd better take it from you, as you are interested in winning too." I told him, "What if we did not give it to you?" – "Well, maybe in that case I would take a risk and take money from the other side. Then at some point people would come to inspect my work, and I would stop doing it, but I would have enough money to live on. So far I am ready to take money to make an honest decision." In this way we sort of paid for the work of a judge, that's it. He received money for being honest.

VO: How did people in Ukraine know how to protest, and what forms of the protests are the most effective?

Forms of protest

Rallies

OM: They did not know it at all. They just protested. Everybody knows that you can come to the rallies or any protest. They knew it and they did it. As a matter of fact, they did not invent anything new. These forms of protest existed since the old times. They expressed their opinion. In fact, if the government was smarter, they could simply ignore all those protests on the Maidan. It was not that many people there. "You want to protest? Protest as long as you wish."

Protests

Old forms of protests

VO: Did the participation in the previous protests motivate people to participate in the following protests?

OM: Of course, it did. If you stand on those grounds, then you stick to them. You continue to participate in the protests, if those protests express an idea that appealed to you, of course. I did not attend the "Tax Maidan", because it was not an idea that appealed to me. The European choice was an idea that appealed to me, and that was why I was there.

VO: What was the motivation to participate in the protests, and why didn't some people participate in the protests?

Motivations

Desire to have better life

OM: I believed that the ideas expressed at the protests were right. I believed that if we can achieve the European choice, then my life and the life of my children will be better, that we will take the right path and will gradually start living a better life. Why did other people not participate? Well, they believed that it was none of their business, that it will not make their life better, that someone else will make it instead of them, and what will be will be, as long as it does not get worse.

VO: How did the protesters view the society and the authorities? What was the main division between those who supported the government and those who supported the protesters? Whom did protesters and government supporters rely on? Whom did the government rely on?

Actors

Law enforcement

Berkut

Police

OM: We understand well that only people from the law enforcement supported the government. The government was supported by the police, the "Berkut" and so on, those who were bound by oath. "I am the boss, and you are the fool. You are the boss, and I am the fool." The people did not support the government. Anti-Maidan was a fiction. They were gathered for money. They did not have any ideas. The idea to simply support, so that Yanukovich would not be ousted? That is not a real idea. At that time the idea of the "Russian World" had not been formed yet. Later, when they saw there that people did not want to support Yanukovich and did not want to support the government, the Russians changed the tactics and invented the "Russian World". They did well there, because their troops were stationed and everything was ready. They thought it would work, but it did not. We stood for an idea, and they stood for money. There is no comparison. The government created a fiction that someone supported them. I remember those derisive attempts so well. Unfortunately, people did not like the government, because it did not do anything good. I am sure that I will not see the pro-government protests today. If it happens, than it will be some very close people and also those who are bound by the oath, no one more.

Events

Anti-Maidan as a fiction

Russia's Policy

The idea of the "Russian World"

VO: Who were those people who protested during that period? What were their main goals?

Motivations

European choice

Fight against corruption and for fair rules

OM: They were various people. They were united by the wish of a European choice. They knew that the European choice meant democracy with fair rules of the game. The equality, equal opportunities... People were tired of taking the risk, “who looked nicer”, “who lied better”, “who accepted bigger bribes”, “who accepted bribes better”. They wanted to live and work in an honest way. What is a corrupted government? It is the government, when the corruption solves the issues, not the taxes – a corruption tax. It meant that not someone who is the best wins, but someone who is more skilful and knows how to swim in that corruption tax. When there are fair taxes, when you pay fair taxes and get some services, then someone who is the best wins. So those people who were self-confident and who were sure that they would not get lost in that world came out to protest. They knew they were moving towards a better life.

Internal Policy

Corruption

Revolution on the Granite

Orange Revolution

Revolution of Dignity

VO: What role did the protests play in the evolution of Ukrainian society?

Outcomes

Ukraine abandoning the Soviet legacy

Distance from Russia

OM: We drift further and further away from the Soviet Union. We become Ukraine more and more. If it was not the war, maybe we would need a dozen of protests more until we turned into a European society. Today we became Ukraine. I cannot say if we became Europe or stepped on the path toward being European, but we are Ukraine now. We are not the Soviet Union anymore. We are certainly not Russia anymore, even though it was Kuchma who said, still back then, that we were not Russia, that we should think about ourselves, that Ukraine is not Russia. When Kuchma was saying that, it was 50/50, but nowadays we are 100% not Russia and 100% not the Soviet Union. Today it is Ukraine, which can embark on its way towards Europe and towards life that would be more or less normal.