

Interview with Zurab Alasania (ZA). Interview by Tatiana Kovtunovych (TK)

**TK: Please tell about yourself and the main stages in your life, which possibly influenced your personality development, and the most?**

ZA: My name is Zurab Alasania. I am a civil engineer by training. I was born in the town of Sukhumi. It is Georgia and former Abkhazia. I grew up there, graduated from school there, and then went to study in Kharkiv. It was all the Soviet Union at that time. I cannot remember why, but my father and us, there were four brothers of us, remained without a mother. One of the elder brothers studied here to become a constructor. So my father told me that it would be better, if I was to follow my brother and so I went here. I did not care that it was construction. But as I understand it now, an engineer's way of thinking gave me a lot in my further life, even though I did not use it.

So I graduated, and then went to the army, to the Soviet army at that time. It was my first army, but not my last one. As students we had protection from conscription being the university, but then it was taken away for the first time. This was 1983, the protection was taken away from us and we went to the army after the first year of studying. It was weird. When we returned, we found ourselves surrounded by kids. It always looks like this, even if you were two years older. It was very complicated, so they separated us from them, and we graduated doing evening classes. Studies lasted seven years instead of five.

Then I worked, of course. It was in the metro. It was not according to my education, but I just worked there in Kharkiv. It was close to Gorbachev's time and all those changes that we call Perestroika. One of the things that influenced me significantly were books, because it started at that time and it was the main thing that I missed for all of my life. They were with me since my earliest age, since I've been 4-5 years old. I read everything I could, literally everything. My parents reprimanded me for this very much. If you remember, at that time, in 1991-1992, there was such a mess in the country, but it opened up the gates and the literature flooded in here.

I was doing my post-graduate studies at that time, but I dropped out. I left everything behind, including my job. Many opportunities appeared at that time in the economy. Some cooperatives, if you remember, started doing business with some fashion jewellery. I don't really remember well, but the most important

thing was that they made it themselves. It was some women's stuff. I remember there was no such jewellery at that time. It just did not exist, you know it. So they were making it, and I had to give it to someone here. It was a huge business. It helped me to get on my feet. I was able to buy an apartment after one summer. They told me that if I went into business, I would like it, that when I got money, I would like it. I did it for three months, and I did not like it.

But I purchased an apartment, and it gave me an opportunity to settle down there, and then I started to paint, because the institute allowed it. Architecture teaches you to draw a bit. It was well appreciated outside of Ukraine, if you remember, as social realism. They would take anything. Even if it was some rubbish, they still bought it. It is still somewhere there at the exhibitions, museums and so on. It was a time of freedom, when I was able to... I was at home for few years. I lived alone. The paintings and the books. It was a coup d'état, it was beginning of the 1990s, quite a difficult time. It was the beginning of capitalism and racketeering, but it was an unheard freedom too. This freedom was everywhere. This is when those complicated things started: where is responsibility and where is freedom? When you receive something that humanity knew about for a long time, for thousands of years possibly and something for dozens of years and something for hundreds of years. Because it has never been possible to read Nietzsche here in the Soviet Union; it was only circulating in the lists, and that was it.

As for political events, Kharkiv was a calm place at that time. Someone did something somewhere on the square all the time, but I was far from it, because I did not even understand what Korotych (06.03) was about, if you remember him. Yevtushenko was there too at the same time. Those names seem strange to me now. We were here, and Russia was far away. But it was all happening here. I was not much interested in it, and it was when that Revolution on Granite happened. However, I still stayed away from the politics. At that time, war started in Georgia and I remember it in the way you certainly cannot remember, even though you are an adult. Such things were not happening in the other parts of the Soviet Union, then our big country, or rather they were happening, but nobody knew about it. It was 1986, I was a child, but old enough to remember it. The tanks appeared in the streets of my town in 1986. Abkhazians did not hold demonstrations at that time. It was not a demonstration, but the tanks. Such a character as Shevarnadze, who was the head of the Ministry of Health Care of the Soviet state at that time, was the first Secretary of the Communist Party in Georgia at that time. It was him who sent this convoy to Abkhazia, where people demanded autonomy. This is called 'separatism' nowadays.

What they gained then in 1986, was that they got their own Abkhazian university. An autonomous republic had already existed, but they constantly demanded more and at that point they calmed down when they got their own university, when the Abkhazian National University was founded. Ok, I was a child at that time, and I did not understand what was going on. It was so far from me. Then the real war started, after 1991, after the Revolution on Granite here which was something no one knew about in the Soviet Union either.

There were three wars, one after another, in Georgia. I was here already, but each time, like at home, I saw what was happening. Nothing is clear in the same way, but there are some wild people, wild in all senses. We did not know it at that time, but it was the first time when someone who would be called Basayev later showed his worth there. He was a horror for all of Russia. But okay, let's not talk about it. I felt those events being in Kharkiv already. My relatives left one by one. They did not go to fight, but they had to leave, because the Russian military won there, together with Abkhazians, to put it that way, and it was impossible to stay in Georgian Sukhumi.

**TK: Was it similar to what happened here in our Crimea?**

ZA: Of course, it happened many years earlier, and nobody... It did not reflect on the history of the country and other Soviet countries. Each of them had its own problems, which were not that huge or that militaristic, but [nobody was] paying attention to that experience. Furthermore, many years later, still in 2008, Ukraine did not pay attention to what happened in Georgia, and afterwards it happened in the same way here in Ukraine. However, experience is like this. No one pays attention ever, only paying attention to your own experience, and it still does not always help.

Then three brothers of mine, as 'damned Moscovites', went to Moscow and stayed there. They live and work somewhere there. I do not want to remind it to them and I do not go there, because they are not disturbed so far, but if I come there, even though I have not done anything, but you know, the name, National Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, blah blah blah, so they might start encountering some troubles. Later my parents went to live there. It was much later. Well, only the father remained. He has

been to Sukhumi once, because he was a much respected person, a football player. People in Georgia love football players, so he was well known and loved in the town. One of his students was even a city mayor at that time, and he protected him in some way and did not let others hurt him.

But when it got very bad, like, when you could not walk in the street, because they would spit into your eyes just because you were Georgian... It was purely a racial thing, an ethnic thing, to put it that way. We forced him, just tricked him. All the brothers gathered in the house and said that one of us was bringing a woman and he must come, because he is the father. He came here and then four of us stood there and said: "You can kill us and go home!" And so he stayed. We bought a small one room apartment in Kharkiv. All four of us chipped in together. He lived like that for six years. It did not end in a good way, because he was a sincere person, but he had no friends, nor children here. Once he begged the Sukhumi city mayor to protect him and went home and stayed there for few days. On his way back he died on the train, as if having fulfilled some last mission of his. My mother and his wife was buried there and so in this way he closed his accounts with the world.

My brothers are still in Moscow. I tried to convince them to come here many times, but I remember the times when they were harassed, like black people, you know. Then a few years later some strange things started. I teased them from here, "You, the darkeys, are spurned by all of those policemen, and all that. Why are you behind bars again?" Then after a little while they started mocking me, saying, "Hey, no, the blacks aren't harassed here anymore, now they grab the light-skinned and here they grab you, the Ukrainians, more." I could not understand what was going on, and it was happening still at that time. It was the end of the 1990s / beginning of the 2000s. They started treating Ukrainians very badly. It was happening right in front of people's eyes, in the streets. It was noticeable.

Later I lived in Kharkiv, and my cousin came from there with two children. I lived alone at that time and read all the time, and I was in such a discontent state. I had a total disdain in my head, because what I read in my books did not correspond to what I saw outside. I was in despair. It was 1993-1994, something around that time, when I decided to give the apartment to my cousin and left, thinking that it was forever. I went to the French Legion, and I cannot talk much about it. So it was not quite legal, but it was an important thing. I thought my head would just explode from all of the things I shovelled in there. It

was too much. I thought that I would get rid of that, because I knew what the army was like, because in a year or two you have a huge emptiness in your head.

**TK: Is this some kind of Nirvana?**

ZA: It is close to it, because you don't even think what to do. You are told what you should do every day, every minute. The army also has a huge melancholy, such a huge melancholy. You don't understand where you are, what you are, why you are, but you don't think.

I thought the same. There was no Soviet Army anymore, so I didn't want it. There was no Ukrainian Army at that time, and it was not here yet for many years afterwards. However, the French legion seemed such a simple way to forget all of this, so I got there very easily. I went through everything I had to. The training started and I had to stay there for five years. Afterwards during the third year you get the citizenship, and then you stay there. In five years, if you want to leave the contract, you can leave and the pension stays for the rest of your life. It is quite a huge pension. There were still francs at that time, but you would have about 2000 Euro for the rest of your life. So at such a young age you did not have to think how to live. However, when I got there I got a different understanding of everything. Yes, it was exactly what I expected. Around us there were people, who were completely empty, to put it that way, completely tattooed, muscled, masculine, brutal guys, who did not have anything. Even up to the point that as for one person, a sergeant who was there, it was only during the third month that we learned he spoke Ukrainian. He never said a word to us, because the main principle there was that you do not have a homeland, your homeland is the Legion.

You do not have a homeland, because, well, you don't have your surname, they change everything there. It really goes that way. Our home is our Legion. That is why they behaved that way. There were no friends. There was nothing. There was just your service that you had to serve, and in five years you are done and you are completely empty. It was kind of what I wanted, but I understood that it was the wrong path eventually and that I had to come back to live a life, a real life as it was, rather than imagine something.

**TK: No running away...**

ZA: No running away. You cannot run away. I came back. It was a strange way of returning, because there you cannot leave, but I did not earn any criminal cases, no military criminal cases. It was possible to do it. It was in Yugoslavia and it all happened there. At that time I thought that if I did not even kill Abkhazians here, I did not participate in that war, then why would I kill some people who haven't ever done anything to me? I left. I ran away, to be honest. But they did not prosecute me because there were no criminal cases for me. My friends there just stole my documents and gave them to me, because they take all of that away.

Then I returned and got married for the first time for real, for the first time in my life. I am still married to the same woman and have children with her, two children. It was such a big breaking point, but when I returned at that time, I saw that there are so many things going on in the country and there is some misunderstanding, also about that Legion. There were many ads saying that they could help you get there, but it would cost some certain amount. I knew for sure that it did not cost anything at all. I thought that I should just write it, so that people would not be tricked. I would write how it was, starting from the first step, where you had to go, what bus to take, where to cross the border and so on, whom to turn to and what happens afterwards. I described what was happening in the Legion, about myself, how much it was. It was quite a big article already. I did not care. I did not know any of our professions. I have never been in this profession. I was just walking along the street and saw some sign next to my house, which said 'Some newspaper'. I went in there and told them, "If you need it, you can take it", and left. They started calling me after that, and engaged me to their work. Then it became clear that was it. You describe life and then you give people a chance to choose what they want. You provide facts and people provide the conclusions. You just have to describe the facts in a correct way. This is what journalism really is.

I worked with them for some time. Then the local TV appeared the same way, then the news, and it involved me big time. By that time the Revolution on Granite was a thing of the past. I learned details about it only when I was a journalist already. But it was strange that if you were a journalist, you had access everywhere. Now I know all of those people who did it, and for me they still stay like gods. Well, it's just impossible, like, "Have you really made this Revolution on Granite?" They changed very much. Nowadays some of them are lost to all sense of honour to the point that I just cannot stand it. It is again

the schizophrenia, like it was at that time. How is it possible, you did such a huge thing and turned into a person that you are now? Politicians, they are like that...

Then there was the Orange Revolution. We will talk more about this, but since that time I had always been in journalism and all the time it was half of that: a media manager or a journalist. I always stay between those two things. Well, I do both things well.

[00.20.18]

During the latest events I worked for the owner and knew, after 20 years in this business, that there is no pure journalism, because it had never been a business in our country, and all those media outlets are either a way to protect or to attack someone who owns them. Even if he swears that he will not touch you, you know, in few years, when no one needs you anymore, nobody reads it, they don't disturb you, but when it becomes influential, the owner says: "Do this, and don't do that". It is especially true for the time of elections. There was one owner, there was another owner, but, well, I know now that all of them sooner or later... There are no good owners, because their main business was not media, but something else.

Ok, that was the first experience in a state position. It was not a public service, but it was close. I was the head of the Kharkiv State Broadcasting Company. It was such a long term. I thought there was a different scale there. There were about 300 people there and it was huge.

I tried it out there. I was there for a few years and it also was a very powerful experience for me. Well, firstly, what was it possible to change? Then when I was leaving, I was almost sure that it could not turn back to what it was. But it returned easily. It turned back completely, just in a few months. And it hit me badly. Whatever you do, it looks like anything can be returned to what it was.

However, we did so much there. There was a small team there, but we made such a force majeure management. You know, we were able to make all those changes at that level. Then we clearly understood that at some level... It hits the ceiling, and you cannot change it until the system changes. So a few years later it brought me here, because I understood that the system was right here. It was my chance to change it, to get that closure. You can come here and make it. You are the system now. It really

looks this way now, as it was for me at that time. We changed many things here and I am again convinced that you cannot turn it back, even though I remember that experience. However, the mind remembers, but the heart believes.

**TK: You see how many times we get disappointed, and then believe in it again. It must be our nature...**

ZA: Even the appointment to this position was strange too, because it coincided this way, I don't know. I know those times well as a journalist, and I know that there was no government at all. Those were scary times. I don't understand how Ukraine just managed to survive at all. Nothing worked at all, really. Some guys came, nobody listened to them. Avakov, Yatsenyuk, Parubiy. Who are those people? Who had to listen to them? Nobody. I still don't understand how it all worked out.

**TK: Are you talking about the times after the Maidan now?**

ZA: Yes, it's the recent times after the Maidan. But thank you for reminding me. It was during the Orange Revolution when I had already been a journalist, and not a simple journalist. I had 70 people working for me. It was not my company yet, it belonged to the owner, but I had already been playing a role in protecting my people. I did not let anyone break them, including the owner who was a businessman from Kharkiv and had completely different interests. Media was a cover for him too, but he did not know whom to choose, Yanukovych or Yushchenko. It was good to be with us, because we were objective journalists already at that time. I mean, I did not let my guys... Even though deep inside all of us did not support Yushchenko but the values of Orange Revolution, it was not allowed [to show it] with any single word or any marks. They just did not have the right to do it. This was how it used to be at our place. After work, please. Because they argued among themselves there and we kept it that way. The owner was more or less satisfied with this, because he did not know himself which way to go and who was going to win.

We took a huge risk. We hosted Yushchenko himself at the time when it was simply forbidden. No one in a city with the population of over one million people could do it. But we hosted him at our place. We did not have access to the broadcast, but at that time I gathered all those people at my editorial office in the newsroom. It sounds just funny now. Yushchenko was sitting next to Moroz, they were together at that



time, if you remember, and there was also a person who is forgotten now. I don't remember his name. They travelled around the regions at that time, and I gathered all the Kharkiv journalists, telling them to just come and ask questions. No one was able to broadcast it later, it was not possible, but at least you as a journalist should know. Those were the things that happened at that time.

After the Orange Revolution won, to put it that way, he became president. Changes still happened at that time and then I was offered another task on another scale. I was told, "Well, listen, if you want something to change, well, there was the Orange Revolution, go and develop it. Here is the state television for you." Arsen Avakov was there at that time, who is the Minister of Internal Affairs now. He became the governor there and he used to be just a businessman before.

At first, we agreed that "If you don't touch me, because you know me, I will not be fulfilling your whims. I don't care, if you are a governor, then you are a governor, the head of administration, and you don't intervene." He says, "OK, I won't". I was doing my thing there at that time and that was it. And he stayed out of it completely. It was both bad and good, because if they intervene, and I know it now from our branches, then they give money and then you can somehow exist on those companies and feed people in some way. If you don't do it, then it's good bye. You don't help him, and he doesn't help you.

At that time at the Kharkiv branch, for example, (it is a branch now, but it used to be a regional broadcasting company at that time), in five years I did not get a single lamp either from anyone, or from the centre. There was nothing like this. But on the other hand, they did not touch us. The same story is happening here now. I did not get a single cent from the government, even though they offered from the very beginning, "Please, you can have any money... and we won't ask what you've done to it". But no. Then some horrible problems appear that no one knows about. The whole country lives this way. The whole country lives this way, in an envelope. But if you need to buy coffee, then you yourself [take it] from that money that you can get from TV, selling advertisement, for example. The government gives a blind eye to it. They just kind of don't notice it, if you help them. It's not the worst thing. OK, I will pay for this. It's worse when [you have] the employees, and it's about 1500 people here, well, 1240 now. When it's the New Year, or the Journalist Day, they say, "Where is our greeting?", or something like "Where are the chocolates?" And you do the counting and understand that if 1500 people get a bottle each, you're

done. No salary will be enough. It's true, and it's only about one channel. But now it's 26 channels across Ukraine.

**TK: This is a very wide topic, because here we can start talking about public television. Maybe you are doing something in this area too, but this topic is very overarching.**

AZ: The latest moment that had an impact; it was still in Kharkiv, but already in 2014. Until then I lived there for over 30 years. I never heard 'you are the Georgian', or 'you are a wog'. I have never heard anyone saying it to me in Ukraine. I considered the city to be great. Yes, I have never spoken Ukrainian, but it's a different thing. And then those, who came here, came here. Then it was 2014, March of 2014. I had a small independent company. 15 people, it is like a family, and they all think the same way, mainly kids. And then it starts: Russian buses, all those people, but I know for sure that I am a journalist, we monitored the number plates, how many people were brought in and how many were locals. And then I suddenly see on March 1st, 2014, on Freedom Square in Kharkiv, the biggest square in the country, over about 10,000 people. About 1,000 of them were from Russia, and the rest of them were our people. It did not just break me, but I was thinking at that time that this city cheated me for 30 years. Where have all of you been? Where did you live? I am the local in this city, and I have never seen you. My kids ran around there and filmed it, without understanding where they were filming and that they could have been killed there. I took them away from the square at that time. You remember that video too. We filmed them. Everyone saw that video from Kharkiv, where there was [Serhiy] Zhadan covered in blood. Then I dismissed them and said, "That's it, get out of here anyone who can". And I left and I have very hard feeling towards Kharkiv. I don't want to go back there. It doesn't scare me, it just tricks me. And I don't know any more what people and what city are going to trick you next.

[00.30.58]

**TK: You see, we live in such a very small bubble that we create ourselves for us, for our friends and close ones, but what is the big community like? Sometimes moments like that happen.**

ZA: It is more difficult for me than it is for you, because of being a journalist, and it is a wider circle. It is like you know a thousand people, and then they turn into, like those people who made Revolution on Granite, who are now complete, - well, I don't know - traitors of everything in the world, of the ideals, of

the values, of everything. The same way the city that used to be so friendly turned out to be so hostile. Well...

**TK: In general, our history of the latest 25 years is developing in an interesting way, and those three revolutions that are combined in this project, I believe that they differ from each other. They are different, even though they can be combined too, of course. I would like to come back to your personal path and ask more about Soviet times. Your childhood and secondary school happened in the Soviet times, and there was probably some certain influence of that environment that was still Soviet. As you remember, was the atmosphere in the family in discord because of what was happening in reality, or you didn't feel it as a child? You told me that in Kharkiv, after the institute, you started an internal search for meaning, when a lot of literature appeared. As a child, did you feel something non-harmonic regarding truth or lies about what was happening and what was discussed in the family and outside of the family?**

ZA: It happened. Those fragments stayed, and one of those fragments was this strange. "The Godfather" by Mario Puzo in the Soviet Union in the 1980s was something impossible. But I definitely remember that I have a lighter, a golden lighter, which was given to me by my godfather, for something reprinted during one night. I'll tell you how it's called now, that blue copy, do you remember? The blueprint copy. You don't remember?

**TK: No, I don't remember.**

ZA: There was no Xerox in the Soviet Union. There were huge copy machines. They were located in the institutes. People copied all that there at that time. It was done illegally, of course. The notorious first department, if they caught it, it would be very bad. The KGB worked well at that time. I got a manuscript like that for one night, and I read it. Another thing was that I once found something, handwritten on one sheet of paper in the same way, at my father's. 40 years later I learned that it was complete nonsense, but that is the thing that you know too, that Churchill allegedly said about Stalin, "Stalin received Russia with a plough, but he gave it back with a nuclear weapon." It's a complete nonsense, but that thing was handwritten and was passed from hand to hand. You were not allowed to even mention Stalin. For the first time I saw the newspaper where one face was crossed out, and it was not Stalin, it was Khrushchev

who was crossed out. And then I was not allowed to say the word “Khrushchev”. When I asked my father who Khrushchev was, he looked around and said, “Quiet, it is none of your business, you will find out it later, one day.” That was the way it was. Such things happened. But people did not live with it. Sukhumi was a port city, and maybe that explains it. The police were more attentive to the ships that arrived from all over the world, so that they would not influence us. But it had its influence, both with the magazines and the newspapers. From time to time a ship arrived from Italy and they monitored it.

It was at that time already, and I did not know why, that you could hear the following, “Three people cannot stand together, go away, because it’s a crowd, we will take you away now.” What did the crowd have to do with anything? People in the Caucasus crowd all the time, they gather and drink coffee, but the militia men did not allow it at that time already. I could not understand why.

I am not a fan of Soviet things, I hate all that, but I know one thing for sure – maybe it’s not about the Soviet times. There was a small house. It was a five-storey building where we lived in an apartment. For me there was no difference. There were about 100 apartments, and I could go to any of them on my way home from school. All holidays were celebrated in the yard where everyone knew each other. But it was the city there, a five-storey building. Not only did people know each other, but they also treated each other as their relatives. I remember all that, because when my mother died, all of it happened in the yard. There was a tent there, and people were on duty, and it continued for a week. People kept on coming over, because of my father. As I said, he was very well-known. But the neighbours stayed together with us. They did something all the time. They cooked and gave food. All people were like one family. It became strange later when I came to Kharkiv. You live in a house for few years, and you don’t even know who lives next to you. Those were the things that united us somehow. There is nothing like that anymore. I am not saying this is Ukraine, or that the Soviet Union was better, no, it’s just a different time. I am still taken aback by it, by the lack of trust towards each other. It is horrible, it shouldn’t be this way.

**TK: Could you please tell me, what were the relations with the church in your family? Did you have an upbringing in this area?**

AZ: There was no religiousness. There were some traditions; we had to be baptized. I certainly remember that each one of us brothers, and there were four of us, had a godfather. I was baptized when I was eight

years old. I remember when I was baptized. It was at night, it was with the policemen outside. It was not allowed to go into the church at night, but we still went there. Parents had such an attitude, how to put it ... My father once showed me in town, "Do you see, the black 'Volga' drive by, and it has a cross, a huge golden cross at its rear?" He said, "It is a KGB employee and he is the head of our church." He smiled this way, he treated it with sarcasm, but he had no doubts, he just mocked himself. This was not a secret to anyone. However, we were baptized, and no one was imprisoned for this, and I was not even kicked off the Komsomol. For me being a pioneer, a member of Komsomol, it was, well, just... the water was wet, and that was it. It did not matter whether there was Komsomol was or there wasn't. It was not important. Everyone went there, and it did not matter. It had no impact on me, and that was it.

**TK: Moving to our revolutions now, you've talked about the 1990s, how your personal life developed and how you were not involved in political life at that time, but when you appeared in Kharkiv in the end of the 1980s, did you imagine at that time, or maybe in the 90s, when you had a period of upheaval, which coincided with those political and revolutionary events in Ukraine, that the Soviet Union would collapse, that Ukraine would be independent, same as Georgia?**

ZA: Absolutely. There was a feeling that something unclear was coming up, but it was a bit earlier. Again, you don't remember it, but I remember when Brezhnev died. I remember that day. He was so lurid, because he spent many years in that armchair... It was something very constant, those walls could not fall, they were eternal. I was born with it, with this Brezhnev, and then he suddenly dies, and the whole country freezes. Well, of course, I don't remember 1953, because I was born in 1954, but I read a lot about that day, when the whole country did not know what was going to happen next.

[00.40.48]

The world was over. Stalin died. The same way Brezhnev died in my time. Well, it's not that I cried, of course I didn't, but during the day, when everyone in the streets was just flabbergasted, there were some sounds, they switched on something like the automobile horns. And it was all fine, but you don't understand what happens tomorrow and how we are going to live. Something up there, at the top broke down. It was the first acknowledged shock. I knew something was wrong, but I did not know what exactly it was. And the mess started. Someone knew what to do at that time already, and then the guys went to

that... The students, but it was Kharkiv. There was no Revolution on Granite in Kharkiv. Then history repeated itself during the Orange Revolution, and then the same thing happened again during the latest revolution.

**TK: When the referendum was held and Ukraine legally became an independent state, and you realized that you were not in the Soviet Union anymore, but in independent Ukraine now, did you have an understanding that you stay to live in this country? Did you think that it was not the Soviet Union anymore, and if you take Russia, then you return there or back to Georgia? Was there a moment when you were choosing whether to stay in this country?**

ZA: Yes. There was such a moment. It was just impossible to return to Georgia, because Sukhumi was not Georgia, first of all. To Russia? But excuse me, I simply hated Moscow as such, always. It has nothing to do with what the Russians are now. I have a very bad attitude towards them. It was just a black city, simply a black city that sucked out your energy in two days. Well, it is impossible to live like that. It's in everything, in the energy, in anything. I say this now not because they fight with Ukraine, but yes, it was the same at that time, it's true, I could not stay there longer than two or three days. I went to visit my relatives and left immediately, because it was horrible. It exhausted me. That was why I did not go there.

As for how it happened with Ukraine... In Kharkiv you could not really feel Ukraine, really, not much. Well, Kharkiv was just a Cossack city itself, and that's it. Language did not matter. Nothing mattered. We just live there, and that's it. The Kharkiv phenomenon, it still stays the same. The recent events changed it a bit. There are less activists, there are much less of them than indifferent people, but they are more influential, but at that time it was just a city. Later when I became a journalist, I saw that environment there too and knew it as a journalist. I knew everyone, well, I mean, so great, cool, merely unbelievable people, the musicians, the architects, the painters, but their orbits never touched. And I was so surprised by this. There were good scientists, including the young ones, and again, they did not know each other even partially, and the painters, also young, did not know each other at all. It was surprising for me. It was such a phenomenon, maybe, the only one in Ukraine.

And Kharkiv did not really know its history. There was the "Executed Renaissance", and Kharkiv had that building and the names of the people who were executed were written there. The Ukrainian language

was so authentic. It was treated seriously here, for example, Shevelyov, that agent of yours, was rooted in Kharkiv as a traitor who lived here during occupation and served the Germans. This was how strange the city was. But there was no such feeling there.

**TK: Meaning, you [did not have] such an identification, because such events as revolutions make people think over their identity?**

ZA: Which one of them? You remember three of them, don't you? You remember three of them, as we talk today. No, first Ukrainianness came to me automatically. Do you remember the time when the government changed the passports in 1996? For me it was the first sign. Bang! And I automatically received a passport as a Ukrainian citizen. I shrugged my shoulders at that time and thought that they did not even ask me. Well, OK, fine. Because my other friends had problems with passports. I was surprised at that time why I did not have such problems. Because they did not even ask, I was just given a passport and that was it. I understand it was decided that those who were in the country at that moment received a passport. A year later, when my father became an emigrant, I did not manage to get a passport for him, not even a residence permit. For many years they did not give it, but I just got it automatically, and that was it.

**TK: Now the next revolution is the Orange Revolution. We understand, after talking that way and surviving so many revolutions that at that time Ukraine just formally separated from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, some slow processes were happening, but if we even talk about identity, then, as you say, some things happened automatically. In general, many people did not even ask themselves if the Soviet Union was over or had independence started, if there were some national moments like these. The national establishment did not become clear in the minds of many people, and such questions would not be even asked. But the Orange Revolution raised those questions in some way, because again, there was Russia which showed itself in a negative way during those events and accentuated the moment on the Ukrainianness, and Yushchenko too, who got to lead all that, he focused on national values, let's put it this way. But with Yanukovich, his election campaign was based on the map of Ukraine, which divided the country. The language issue was raised again, they speculated on it. So those issues, regarding which we cannot get the balance in society up till now, they were raised and**

speculated, and they played their negative role, but maybe a positive role in some way too, since they were at least updated in the information space.

I am getting to the point that in Kharkiv, watching the situation that was happening, in that period before, during and after the Orange Revolution (you say you saw the real Kharkiv now), how did you see Kharkiv at that time? You said that the owner of your media outlet could not understand how to behave because he did not know which force was going to come to power, but the local politics was taking place. Did you feel which side Kharkiv was on, whether it was revolutionary side or anti-revolutionary side?

It was on an indifferent side. You must surely remember Kuchma, it was for two terms, a long time. From the point of view of the media business, I remember that those were maybe the best times in terms of the economy. Those were the rich times, as people say. It was regarding both salary and earnings of all people in the country. That idiotic, foolish stability blurs the sight so much. But the longer Kuchma was here, the more the feeling of some grey, eternal feeling, as it was in Brezhnev times, enveloped, that this person would never leave. He built such a clan in the country. But well, listen, do your things and leave all that. And Kharkiv responded to that very much. It was always like that.

[00:50:07]

We did not care about those politics. Firstly, Russia is closer here. The connections in industry are very strong. Furthermore, I have to admit even now, this country is huge, this foolish neighbour of ours, and they have much more potential. It was true even about those things that I was interested in. I mean art and even journalism. They are stronger, and I realize it. But even at that time, I remember NTV, what they did in Russia, what it was like. I saw how strong TV and the media can be. It was the aim, to become like NTV. NTV used to be cooler. It is horrible now. I remember where Pavlo Sheremet was at that time and what he said about NTV and what he did.

Oh well, we are making idols out of everyone now. Fine. So Kharkiv at that time was more interested in what was happening in Russia. And even election to the Supreme Council (as it was called at that time), as I said, all those Korotych guys, they all gathered in Kharkiv. Well, it was still before the 1990s, but then



when we learned about those guys... You said if it was not negative, that language... No. I respect those guys, at least someone in my country... It took me 30 years to understand that Ukraine is my country.

I have to turn to Ukrainianness, exactly Ukrainianness, but they understood it in the 1990s. It was dragging on since the times of UNR [*Ukrainian National Republic*] probably. But there are people, the dissidents, who are still alive in the country. I learned about Stus when I was an adult already, while doing a project. My hands were shaking, when I learned what he went through. There are people still alive who were imprisoned next to him. Later I learned about the history of “Zhovten” cinema, which I pass by every day. How they could rise, announce the protest and leave in the Soviet times. The history is very rich. Kharkiv was very indifferent about this.

One of my articles, I still remember it. When the first Maidan was happening here, the Orange one, in Kharkiv I filmed it from the roof of the hotel that is located next to this huge Freedom Square. That bunch of people, it looked from the roof, like rubbish... And I was just back from Kyiv, where there was a huge march on Khreschatyk street, with thousands of people. And it was again from “Khreschatyk” hotel, from the balcony, that I filmed that huge, enormous line of people. I return to Kharkiv, and there is this rubbish here, and I was like, “How can you not do anything, when we have this happening in our country?”

But it was the same later on. It was the same during the latest Maidan. There was a small bunch of people, well, really every day. We can even say it was the Kharkiv Maidan, next to Shevchenko monument. About 30-40 people gathered there every day. How can this be compared to the Maidan that took place in Kyiv? I understand that the capital pulls in all the best people from all over the country, but still, compared to the whole country, even if there was a million here...

**TK: Can you please tell me, when you came to the Orange Revolution to Kyiv, what general impressions did you have, how did you perceive everything at that time?**

I was very happy, but it was against the profession, because we could not take sides, we could not take any side. But I was filled with happiness, because, firstly, I saw the history with my own eyes, and secondly, somebody revolted. It is in the history of the country, this honourable word, ‘the rebels’. And now I understand what real rebels are. This is what all Russians are afraid of, when they hear UPA

(Ukrainian Insurgent Army)), but I was filled with happiness because people who live next to me right now were able to revolt and were not afraid of anyone and anything.

In fact, I had a warning from that government (Kuchma), and those warnings were unpleasant. Armed men came to my father's home trying to kick him out of the country, because they could not do this to me. It was terrible. I understood at that time that the government was impotent, it was not able to do anything anymore. OK, I can tell it now, I went to the Security Service of Ukraine and told them, "You do this, and it will be your end, because many people listened to me in Kharkiv, thousands and then some. It was for the first time. Even that Maidan did not happen at that time. "OVIR" (*The Department of Visas and Registration*), which was expelling people out of the country, and the head of that "OVIR"... I went to him and said, "Here, in front of you, in front of this "OVIR", there is a square, and if I tell this today on air, it will be a nightmare tomorrow. Thousands of people will come here, trust me." He searched me then. He said, "What if you are recording?" I let him search me. He searched me and honestly told me, "I understand everything. I was just given an order. I promise you, as soon as the elections are over, I will return the passports to your father and your cousin, where I've just put a stamp that they are expelled from the country. I give you a personal promise, I will return all that."

I believed him, and by the way, he did it. They stamped the passports. He reported to Kyiv that they were expelled and that maybe that person would shut up now. And I did not do anything against Kuchma. They have such a panic all the time. Now our government has the same understanding, that if he is not with us, it means he is against us. But this is a disgrace, it's Soviet shit. And they behave in the same way. When Kuchma was the president, we simply told the truth, not being on anyone's side, but for them it meant we were the enemies. It was exactly between his first and second term. It became clear to me at that time that he was elected in an untruthful way. I knew that it was forever. That person has captured the whole country again, and it was all grey. It wasn't the fascists who would come and kill, like Russians do. They strengthened my nation, it's true. But that one was nothing, nothing at all. And it seems he does not kill anyone, does nothing like that at all, well, yes, he is bad, but there was no such motivation to rise against him. And that was why I was so happy in the Orange Revolution, that people rose up against the lies.

That passion, in my opinion, could be caused by... It is like how the Russians caused it now, with openly hostile actions, but it was not like that at that time. I was so happy, even though I contained myself as a

journalist. I did not do anything. I never appeared with Orange flags. I did not forbid anything to any of my people. We never appeared. We just recorded everything that was happening, recorded and let people know about it. It was our job.

**TK: Well, yes.**

ZA: I don't know, I am not so sure now. I am not so sure now, because, well, one of the latest issues of *The New York Times*, they just bluntly wrote, "Trump is the threat for America, and as journalists, our job is to avoid the threat." I think, well, if our *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya (Mirror Weekly)* wrote that, people would say, "Oh, they sold themselves!" But they believe it there. And this is the task of journalism.

**TK Yes, but in order to be subjective in politics, you should accumulate some professional level, a very powerful one, so that people would believe not to some financial reasons of what you do, but the power of authority. We, of course, need much more development to be like those media outlets, but let's hope for the best. Your professional activity develops in a way that after the Orange Revolution you got a similar position that you have now, just a bit lower, and now it kind of develops in identical stages.**

**Again, you reached such significant positions in the media. You have mentioned the passion, such an enthusiasm, trust, faith and hopes that were so huge. You had significant leverage to influence the situation that was developing, even if it was in Kharkiv (even though you say the city is special). Did you have a faith that you were able to change the situation there on the ground? How did you contribute to that, what was your further cooperation with the higher authorities in general? Did your hopes for changes in journalism, in society and in politics come true? And what was your disappointment with the Orange Revolution? Because everyone says that there was some stage when that disappointment came.**

[00:60:25]

ZA: I am not such a big fan of revolutions, because yes, being young and brutal and also Georgian in terms of emotions (I was born Georgian by blood, it has its toll), I am, of course, impulsive and explosive, but still as an engineer, with my mind I understand that evolution and changes are possible only in a gradual

way. Those explosive changes are not enduring. They have to be changed by some more grounded people. Revolution can break, and this is its task, to break that order, that system that people are not satisfied with anymore, but it is not the revolutionaries that should build it, they have never done it. Each one has his own task. I am not judging, just saying. It is now the time to build, not to break, and that was why it was the same way there.

As for disappointment... I did my job. I've told that after the Orange Revolution, when I left, they changed back all that in a month, just as it was before. But as a smart person I understand that it is possible to change back all my things here too. With my heart and my faith, I am asking myself, "Hey, you, smart guy, do you know how those five years and what you did at the regional Kharkiv TV influenced on the fact that seven years later the whole city was standing against those Russian scumbags who left later?" Yes, it was not many of them, but we stood our ground. It's not Donetsk here. What had an impact? Maybe, there was a crumble of your work too, that you let those people on TV, that you talked about anything you could. And it was true, they saw it, they were happy with having something at least. Those people were there near Shevchenko later. 30-100 people did not shield all of that with their bodies, but when truly horrible times came, those people were in the street, and there were no others, Kharkiv was dead, they did not come to the streets, until those 'Russian tourists' came. It was our people, those we worked with, who were in the streets.

So I was thinking, "It's not in vain, buddy, don't think it is in vain." And it is the same now. I see the vanity of this kind of work, well, there are no consequences, but I know, "No, it's not possible". Everything has its consequences. I don't know what impact it will have, for one child, maybe, but it will be enough. As for Yushchenko, and the Orange people, I will always respect him for what he did, and I will explain why. The same way as guys on granite. Nobody remembers them, but I know who those guys are. Some of them are mean scumbags right now, but I will still remember the good things they did at that time, because it was the beginning.

So, if it was not Yushchenko, there would be no "Holodomor" (*Famine*) word in the country. And this is such a huge monument to him for all the years ahead. That he was so in love with himself, slow, that he did not like to work, I know all of that. But a huge respect to him as a transitional period, and for Holodomor separately. Well, he was a humus for the next generations, as I am only a humus here as well.

And they will do what I haven't done here, but I lay the beginning. Yushchenko did this. Maybe he is not the way I want him to be, well, but he did his thing.

**TK: And now this latest revolution. As I understand, when Yushchenko's term was over you left?**

I left voluntarily right away, because I knew Yanukovych and all that team for many years. Because they rule in Kharkiv and still rule there. I know all those people. I know for sure that I will not be able to work with them even slightly. If that Avakov (he was Orange) can at least pretend he does not touch me and he does not care, even though he took a huge offence and is still offended, then those guys were like this: either you are with them, or against. Two months after the elections I left, which was not directly connected to being frightened or something. No, no, just in two months I made my choice: I will not work with you, good bye. They wanted to dismiss me for all those years I have been there, but they were in the opposition and could not do it. As soon as they came to power, I said good bye. They sent the envoys, of course, "Stay with us, with the winners, and you'll have everything." And that was it, I left at that time. I don't know how it is going to be now.

**There was this period when Yanukovych came to power, how was it for you? Did you have a feeling that this should come to an end in some way, that the next revolution might happen?**

There is no point to tell you, because you won't believe it, but Facebook remembers everything. In 2013, in 2013, in the darkest times, there was not a hint of it. I just remember it very well, because I made a bet at that time. It was the beginning of 2013, around January, and I made a bet that Yanukovych would not survive till the end of this year as a politician. My calculation was off by just two months. A person still cannot believe it, "What did you know at that time?" And there was not a hint of it. Why do I remember that? Because there was a good bottle of a good French cognac.

I don't know what gave me the clue. Things he was doing were just outside of my engineer thinking: "You are dumb, what are you doing with that Mezhyhirya, you can't take it out with you." I am cynical, as all journalists are. If you steal openly, then you have to take it out somewhere. It can be jewellery, or money, something you can take with you, even few tons. But when you build Mezhyhirya for yourself, you are stupid, in general. It is something impossible. And that was it, this was how it happened. That was why I did not believe he would last. He was very greedy and very dumb.

He managed to do some business. He managed to rule with the help of force. He could hit. There was a myth going rounds around us, the journalists, including even about Kushnaryov, that he beat him down. After his departure Kushnaryov really had bruises. Nobody knows if it's true or not. That's the way he was, Yanukovych. That's the way he managed to rule. But this dumb greediness of those people, it could only lead to such a mess, and it did. Then again, if it wasn't Yushchenko and those memories... On the one hand, it seemed to me that this passion is lost for many years ahead, but no, it just became an experience, which was like, "Do you remember, five years ago we also went to protest? Let's do it again." And it was done. It was simply amazing.

Of course, Mustafa, he is so modest, he always says, "What do I have to do with it? No, people were just ready." But he is great, someone has to say it first, he is just great, I love him dearly and still trust him. He is one of those few examples who did not sell out, even after he had a chance to do it.

**TK: But people went to protest. What was the main motivation for so many people, for such a powerful protest? Because sociologists say that the research for some period before it showed that people were very apathetic, meaning that they were not ready to go to such protest at that moment.**

I don't really believe in sociology. It is a great science, but people often hide what they really think. Maybe, often it is because it is very hidden and hidden deeply, and they do not know themselves what they do next. But then when someone goes to protest, well, one person, then the second one, the third one, then it becomes easier for many. It seemed there was a wall there and it was hopeless. I could compare it to Kuchma. There was a rubber wall there, and it made no sense even to butt it with your head. But during Yanukovych's time, the wall was made of concrete, well, the brick wall, if you want to put it that way. Then you could break it, even if you broke your head or neck. But there was a chance to break the wall as well. And people went there, and broke their heads (over 100 people died there), but the wall was broken. The wall was broken with their heads and their bodies.

[00:70:01]

And that is why when few people went to protest, it was easier for others. They went there, and I was ashamed to stay at home. I laugh when they say that people were paid. There is not so much money in

the world to pay those people to go to protest. No, really. It does not work. Only those people who fall for it and can do it themselves can say it. What they can do is just stand with 300-400 UAH with a little poster or a flag, that's it. It is not a revolution, it's rubbish. It is impossible to make Maidan for payment in general, that's it. They can talk about the cookies, about whatever they want. People made it, yes.

**TK: Did you stay in Kharkiv during all those events?**

ZA: Yes, I did.

**TK: Did you work as a journalist?**

ZA: Yes, I did.

**TK: Did you monitor what was happening in Kyiv, did you come here?**

ZA: Yes, many times.

**TK: Did you come to Maidan?**

ZA: Yes, I did.

**TK: Can you compare this Maidan and the one before it? What emotions filled you here?**

ZA: Thank you for the question. They were completely different. You can choose whatever you want, you can lie on the granite... If you remember the events in Czechoslovakia, five people who went to the Red Square, it was still such a deep Soviet Union. There were no options, but they went there. It was such a personal protest. You alone went to express your position. They stood there for two minutes, and it was like for your entire life, it was their personal choice. They knew what they were going for, they were captured there in three minutes. And the Revolution on Granite was almost similar. They knew that they could not change anything. And by the way, I was also sure that they did not expect that the Supreme Council, as it was called at that time, adopted that ruling, which satisfied nearly all the demands. I am

sure they did not expect that. Later, in Kuchma's times, there was the Orange Revolution, and it was fun and there was no feeling of danger. Well, I am definitely telling you, people went singing with the flags, just happy that we can do that being next to each other.

At the latest Maidan, after they did it to students and then the murders started, everything was completely different. There was a real feeling of danger. More than danger, even death. And everyone knew that, everyone knew about it. But it didn't matter. There was a feeling that you couldn't have it both ways, it was either they win, or we do. And it was all serious. Later it was confirmed. The Russians confirmed it very soon.

**TK: When you came to Maidan in the beginning, did you think that it will come to the point that this government will bring it to the bloodshed?**

ZA: I'm sorry, my opinion is different from the official Maidan opinion, to put it that way. If you remember, few guys went there, all of that was there from the very beginning, it was kind of peaceful, but then Korchynskyi was blamed for stirring up the situation. Listen, he is a cold pragmatist with a clear mind. He knew what he was doing. And if you remember not February of 2014 but earlier, it started to seem endless. They are standing, the guys are freezing there, yes, they change one another, but it does not have any consequences. It's some political procrastination, someone is using us. And all that had to be exploded, but not from outside. And it was Korchynskyi who did it, with that bulldozer. And then all hell broke loose. Well, whether you want it or not, few lives had to do it. It was a payment for making Ukraine as it was, as it became, free and independent. Yes, it still is not independent, but there had to be some push, excuse my cynicism. And Korchynskiy was smarter than many others at that time. Do you remember how he was condemned, there was even a police retrieval, he ran away from the country, but he knew what he was doing. It had to be ignited by someone. Not the US, not Nuland, not the cookies, it's gibberish.

And so Korchynskyi's guys did that. There had been no blood yet, but to push a situation to anywhere at least, because it was impossible to tolerate that horror with no end in sight or the horrible end. That horrible end had to come, and they did it. Well, it had its price. Some people say that if politicians supported that resistance at that time, then it would not be that many victims. There is a position that if



they captured the President's Administration at that time on December 1, when there was nearly a million in the streets...

Let's put it that way, the price is very high. And I don't know, if it's a movie, than it has to be long. What we discuss with you today can be evaluated ten years later. I am going to tell you, and such an opinion exists now, but it has kind of sarcasm. I am really thankful for Putin, because for how long else my country would be wandering around that pond, unable to move forward. The law enforcement did the same at that time, pushing the situation forward and uniting all those people who knew they were going to die, and they did not back off. Putin did the same to Ukraine. Minus Luhansk and Donetsk? Maybe, yes. But then those stay who know for sure what Ukraine is and know what to do with it.

**TK: Right now, after the latest revolution happened and the war in the East has started, even a common citizen understood what the Russian factor is, what Russia is like in this position, but Russia also existed during Orange Revolution and also when Ukraine was separating after announcing its independence. How do you see it, did this Russian factor show itself in all those three revolutions?**

ZA: It certainly did, and it still does too. Another thing is that I like even those hints. I heard now that for this damned Sberbank of Russia... I travel, I can't stand it, it exists in every city of Ukraine. I'm all shaking when I see it. And now they decided to make just Sberbank, take 'of Russia' away. For me it is... I am glad, these are some consequences of that "Hey, we aren't brothers, forget about it!" I am glad that business, which is indifferent to this ideology, does it, it just listens to business. It hurts business very much, when the sign says 'Russia'. And they could feel it, and it means that Ukraine started treating them in a different way.

I see all that. They used the most nostalgic Soviet things in a great way. Russia as it is, well, the 'Russian world'? I thumb my nose, excuse me. But there is so much of it here still. In Lviv, in every taxi bus "Radio Shanson" or "Russian Radio" is playing. Are you crazy, guys? Well, it seems it should be such a stronghold here and you listen to such rubbish. These are again very Soviet manifestations, not Russian, but Soviet. They can impose it so well, and they did it for many years. And how many, where you should rip that out, I don't even know, I catch myself at this at every step. Not in the language, I'm not talking about language, but in some other cultural things.

And most of all Russia annoys me because it exploited a huge culture. I grew up on it, because Abkhazia is like that – it's not Georgian language there, not Abkhazian, there are many, there were 96 languages. And they had to have something common, to understand each other, and it was Russian culture and Russian language. I grew up on it, and what should I do now? And I hate Russia now even more for doing this with what I had. I don't want to speak Russian, I don't want books in Russian, and it is the one to blame for this, they did it that way.

I want culture that exists to stay in my country, here in Ukraine, but I don't want it now. And it's again a kind of schizophrenia. When will we forgive them for this, when? The same with Georgia, the children there just don't understand Russian anymore, simply don't understand, they don't study it. And what should we say, "Thank God"? I don't know ... They speak English very well, but they don't know Russian anymore. Elderly people still speak it, but those kids don't know it anymore. So they want this to happen to Ukraine? There you go. And what is all of this for?

**TK: We call all those protests the 'Maidans', the revolutions. There are many debates about it. But this form of the protest, Maidan, such Ukrainian form of protest, do you feel it has Ukrainian specifics? Don't you think it is such a purely Ukrainian manner to come to the Maidan?**

[00:80:19]

ZA: Yes, very much, very much. There were many revolutions in Arab countries somewhere, which were kind of similar, and there were many more here, there was a revolution in Georgia earlier. There was violence everywhere. If it wasn't violence, it was non-violent in Georgia, but they smashed down everything. Here they didn't. And it was the most surprising, that it was possible. In regular times, my people, as Yushchenko says, are not so polite and well-mannered, you know, they can spit and throw and do anything. But at that time, it just shocked me so much, you were ready to love each and every one, because they did not do shit, maybe on purpose, maybe it became a tradition. But this was how this revolution was different. Now you can take a gun, well, okay, it was not like that there, but there were stones. At the Maidan no one was shy of throwing stones at policemen. But on Maidan they would say, "Please, give me your hand, we will help you to get up, and you can sit right there, we will lay down a newspaper for you. And please don't throw the stubs here, it's forbidden." I'm not even talking about

drinking. I still don't understand how it was connected. Maidan is purely a Ukrainian thing. Well, even if some aggression had to be there.

**TK: Even the very word, Maidan, as some territory, and this territory is what we call not the territory of dignity, it exists concretely in space. People go there and create such an environment that changes people who get there.**

ZA: It is like the icons, they can be sacred, and it really works for some reason. So much human energy is given to that piece of wood that it starts working. The same with Maidan, it has a very historical load, because it was called Maidan for a reason.

**TK: And it exists beyond time and space in its own reality and pulls all that behind. You had such a cycle, a revolution, then such an active period in your professional growth and changes in your private life, to put it that way. Then you moved again and took such a responsible and very powerful position. And we talked about having great expectations, and then having some disappointment. How are you now? Some time has passed already. Do you work? Are you trying to change something? What is prevailing now in your feelings, a hope or disappointment?**

ZA: No, no, there are no disappointments. I am an engineer, to remind you again, I should have a cold heart that always tells me, "Hey, well, these issues... You can't run away, there is a light side and there is a dark side." These are physical things, everything that exists in the world reaches for stability, then for stagnation, then death, or some energy appears on that way, which adds chaos to this, then chaos comes... And that swing works this way all the time, this is how it should be. It looks simply like a sine curve. It's the engineer in me speaking now. So I don't worry too much. A sine curve is somewhere down right now, then the rise will start. I see a hope again, as a journalist, that starting from next year people of Ukraine will feel a bit, but they will still feel it, of the consequences of what was done for two years. It seems to us that it's all a complete betrayal around. No, the changes, as we discussed, are not revolutionary. This is what intervenes with the expectations that tomorrow everything is going to be great. No, it won't. And those two years seem to many people as if "We took such a risk, and now nothing is happening." But everything that has happened during these two years is happening step by step. 10-15 percent of changes are already here. People are not interested in this because they are experiencing an

emotional uplift. But this will be noticeable from next year on. I cannot tell you now where they are going to feel it. I guess it is in the regulation, it has decreased significantly already, and then it will be reflected on the taxes and everything else.

Of course, the utility charges that have increased significantly will still be disturbing and it will still be obvious. The only thing that is hard to predict here is the neighbour, what it'll do at the worst times as it did in 2014. In our horrible time it stabbed us in our back. I don't know what will happen now. But if Russia will be busy with its own problems, even if it is in parity, as it is now, and not dozens or hundreds of guys die, but two or three. This is the country paying with its blood to keep that dumb stability for now. 2-4 years more and it is certainly going to rise. If it stays, then Ukraine has no chances, but surely huge prospects. And then fighting this with the help of the world, because we cannot cope with it alone, it's for sure.

**TK: As for the impact of international politicians during the Orange Revolution, how do you see the role of foreigners, ambassadors of good will, we can say, in Ukrainian revolutionary events?**

ZA: Maybe, it's not such a smart comparison, a metaphor, whatever you call it. As a journalist, I also don't know whose side we were on, because you kind of could not support the Orange people or this Maidan, because profession does not allow it to happen, but you know that you are right, and they know you are right. But the right people who stand on Maidan don't demand you to support them. Be nearby, record all the facts that happen, and that's enough. You are a journalist, and we know you are a journalist. But we were related in some way. The same way was with that international community. They could not say that they supported us, otherwise it would be a declaration of war against Russia. But they are on our side, like the journalists. They are here, they record the facts, they monitor everything and they understand everything. So this was enough for us. There's no need to teach us how to live, it seems to me, because I saw, excuse my not very correct words, but quite often they have something happening there, and now it happened to that German, who was not even a Muslim, but a German who shot people. And I watched how few hundreds of policemen could not cope with one person. And they are going to teach us how to behave at war?

I'm sorry, but my respect to their organization is lost, because some brutal things have to happen to you, and then you will be strong. I don't glorify this war at all, but it united us. Now they cannot preach us how to behave with the enemy, because they don't know what enemy means, they just don't know, they forgot about it. It's physics again, you cannot do anything, if you don't train your muscles every day, then you'll just be wobbly and not capable of doing anything. The same goes for Europe, it cannot preach us about this. Supporting us, being together, some democratic things, ideological things are great, fine. Teach us to be patient. We are still a very impatient nation.

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For example, Eurovision. It seemed I had six cities competing... And Lviv, I love it dearly, I won't be on their side, but I wish with all my heart to have it there. But I felt that Lviv doesn't want to. It could not stay on the sidelines. It expressed its wish, but there was no real wish there. It's all because it becomes clerical, so clerical that it understands well, that Eurovision is half homosexual, there will be many people with this orientation. Lviv does not want to tolerate it in its city. Well, let Europe teach us to be tolerant. Lviv is not ready yet. Ok, then it won't take place in Lviv. It's not that I promote this idea, but I don't tolerate phobias, because today they persecute them, tomorrow they persecute journalists. I know why, I know, maybe I don't look the same way they do. And in this case I am thankful to Europe, it can teach us something, but not everything. I'm afraid it's time for us to teach them.

**TK: You've mentioned before that there is a hope for positive development of events in Ukraine. Do you believe that Ukraine will take its special place in Europe?**

ZA: You would like me to create one more Institute of National Memory? The question is that... The same goes for me, it seems great when there is free press and anybody can say anything to the whole world, everyone has the right to. But still I understand that if a person has nothing to say, there is just an empty word. I don't know who he is, that person, who does not say anything but just gives the opportunity to speak to someone. It's the same way here. I don't think that Ukraine should look up to someone. You say when there will be own front, and when I will have my own Institute of National Memory. Is it necessary? Probably, you do your thing, you gather this experience and then implement it somehow. Same here, I don't want to think how we are going to be a front next to Russia or next to Poland, or what role we are

going to play in Europe. Let me rise as Ukraine first, and then towards neighbours. If we don't have Ukraine, I don't care about that neighbour.

Let's construct something of our own not against them, not for them, but just our own, and then let them turn their attention to us, and rate us where we are going to be. Let's become strong first, and then they will take us into consideration, I know. It's not them who are important. We are important for ourselves. Can we not grow stronger, but instead just hope for some union with Poland, for example, of with NATO that it will protect us? We can see already that it doesn't protect us. When the misery comes, everyone takes care of their own skin. We won't return the nuclear weapon to ourselves, there is no option here, but it should at least become a lesson.

**TK: As you see it, has the system of power changed during the latest revolution?**

ZA: No, it has not. It was impossible to change it, to be honest. I am a man born in the Soviet Union, I want to forget it and I can't. It is reflected in me somewhere, I don't know where exactly and I cannot catch it. Same goes for politicians. They were born there, they grew strong there. Poroshenko was a minister in Yanukovich's time, and we aren't talking about his business matters for all of those years. He is a person of that era, and such political traditions are from that time. I will repeat again the thesis about humus, not to say shit, excuse me. So this humus should become a basis for the future generations. Those politicians will not rule the country for long time. Their task is to be here now during the transitional stage.