

Interview with Oleh Skrypka (OS). Interviewer: Iryna Miniailo (IM). Place of record: Kyiv.

IM: Our research is dedicated to three revolutions in Ukraine. I will ask you about your experience, about that period, and about your involvement in all these events. But in the beginning I would like to put such an introductory question: please, describe how your family came to Kyiv (or how you came by yourself), because it's important in the context of your civic development.

OS: My father is Ukrainian, and my mother is Russian. I lived in Murmansk oblast, I went to school there, and in summer I was travelling between Russia and Ukraine: I was taken to the village, to my grandmother. As a child I perceived that village from an absolutely "blank page". And it happened when I got my ID, I went to the ID officer and I asked to write there that I'm Ukrainian. Thus, at the age of 16, the unconscious choice of Ukraine had already happen. It was just based on the village: as there are people, as here are...

Influences
The
Ukrainian
village

IM: Thus, was there a comparison?

OS: Yes, this was such a choice of a child. Then I was graduating from school, I wanted to become a scientist, I had pretty nice predispositions towards math and physics. And I have chosen the most prestigious university – the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, which was located near Moscow, in Dolgoprudny, and I went there for the entrance exams. But there were such informational leaflets of higher education institutions of the entire Soviet Union, I was checking these leaflets, and I had kind of a "plan B" – Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. And in the Moscow Institute there was competition of 24 people per one place. And I got the passing score, I wrote everything correct, and when I had an interview or a kind of a consultation (I don't remember how it was called), it was very hot, and they asked me: "Well, you have the passing score... (well as I realized they anyway had to get rid of someone, since there were still too many applicants)... but do you know what kind of day is today?" I answered: "Well, it's a hot day, July". And he said: "It's a pity you don't know... Today is the day of the Storming of the

Bastille”. And thus, because of this “storming of the Bastille” I didn’t enter the Institute in Moscow... And what is interesting, I lived at the Place de la Bastille for 2-3 years later, and many concerts I played exactly for this holiday.

IM: So now you already know when is this day?

OS: Either 14th or 17th of July, I don’t remember. I still don’t know. And I didn’t notify my parents (and they brought me to Dolgoprudny and went to Murmansk Oblast, to Kirovsk), I took my documents and I went to Kyiv Polytechnics. I came here to Kyiv, I chose the most prestigious faculty (I just checked where they had the highest number of candidates per place), and they had only 4 or 5 people per one place. After 24 people per place this was a piece of cake for me. And so I got immediately the highest grade (5) in math at the very first exam, and there were only 2 people at the whole faculty who got such a score. Everyone got so much surprised. There were some losers –the 4th year students at the dormitory who had to retake their exams, so they said to me: “A-a, are you some trump? So, buy the alcohol!” They went and bought the alcohol, we got completely drunk, I went to the next exam and with the largest difficulty I passed it with a 4, because I “felt no pain”. But according to the 9-point system which they had back then, I didn’t need to pass any more exams because I already had the passing score. Thus, Kyiv accepted me very easily.

IM: And how did your parents react?

OS: Well, my parents knew that I had the “plan B”, but I didn’t notify them. Once as a child they took me to Kyiv and it impressed me. I was impressed by two things. One of my relatives lived at the Tupolev street, and in order to get there you were supposed to pass Brest-Litovsk Avenue (now it’s the Victory Avenue). And the trams were circulating there, and the whole avenue was planted with apple-trees. And when I came from Murmansk and I saw those apples... They were still green, but I ate them and they were so tasty for me! And then we went to my aunt, she lived on Vidradny. And there was such a Chubarev boulevard, where people used to graze goats and cows. And I had such warm memories from Ukrainian village... And my aunt had (and still has)

Influences
City (Kyiv)

a private home and cucumbers-tomatoes there... And then, maybe, it remained like this, that I wanted to move to Kyiv. To tell the truth, I was happy that I went to Kyiv. I passed the exams, and my parents had already figured me out, they came and they found me because I was accepted (because such people were not many and everyone knew about them).

IM: Can you describe the circle of contacts which you had in the school period? You say that a part of your family was from Poltava oblast. You used to have some family circle there, didn't you?

OS: My grandparents and my aunt were there.

IM: And in the Murmansk oblast, what was the sort of the circle that your parents belonged to? What did they speak about? Did they discuss the situation which was taking place back then?

OS: My father belong to technical intelligentsia, and the town was very small – population of 40 thousand. My father had a very specific profession. He graduated from the Medical Institute in Kyiv, he was a doctor-radiologist. He had 3 jobs: the first one I don't remember, in the second one he was teaching at the medical technical college, and also he had a medical laboratory. And I understood from what he was saying that they had there some nuclear explosions, some experiments. There were some sort of mining camps, and somewhere next to these mining camps they used to do some experiments during the Soviet Union. And my father, as a doctor, was researching all this. The town is small, and people spoke to each other. And when something interesting happened, people gathered together (at our home or somewhere else) and were singing Ukrainian songs. So, as I understood, all this elite was Ukrainian. I made the same observation when I went to Urengoy. The tip of Gazprom is there working specifically on these wells – all them are Ukrainians, which is interesting.

Influences
Ukrainian
songs

IM: And this touch of Ukrainian culture –were there only Ukrainian songs, or some ideas were discussed as well, history...?

OS: Nothing more, just Ukrainian songs. And food – varenyky, borscht...

IM: Books?

OS: Books? They were taking me to the village in Poltavshchyna, and in principal, a lot of the ideas which are in my song – they all are exactly from that period... This is this the children's age – from 7 to 13 years old. And according to the program, I was supposed to read some books... It's the Chornukhy district, and the bookstore was in Chornukhy, the homeland of Hryhorii Skovoroda. Surprisingly, they didn't have any books in Russian language and for example I was reading Chernyshevsky "What is to be done?" in the Ukrainian language, without learning the literary language at school. That is, I was reading some literature in Ukrainian by myself. Now you cannot buy books in Ukrainian, but back then in the Soviet Union it was for some reason possible.

IM: And as of the books which you had at home? Which books influenced you?

OS: My parents used to have a complete collection of Gogol's writings. It was only possible to get the books as an exchange for the recycled paper or thanks to the useful contacts back then. My father was a part of this town's elite, and that's why he had some books... And this collection of Gogol really "tore" me. I used to read a lot when I was a child, I used to be a book lover. Now I'm not such anymore. I used to read everything which was coming to my hands, and I really liked Gogol. So, this Ukrainian village, this diaspora with Ukrainian songs, and this Gogol – these three factors came together.

IM: Do I understand correct that you didn't have any contacts with the dissident circles before the diaspora?

OS: Yes, no contacts at all. For the first time I went abroad I think in 1988, we went to Poland, to Warsaw. The Association of Ukrainians in Poland, there is such a great person – Volodymyr Nakonieczny. He used to be a musical promoter back then, and he is still very active, working in

Influences
Gogol's
writings

Influences
Association
of
Ukrainians
in Poland
Volodymyr
Nakonieczny

Ukrainian
diaspora

the diaspora. And back then he brought VV for a new year concert, and they placed us at a bed and breakfast in the suburbs of Warsaw, and then it appeared that the representatives of Ukrainian diasporas from all over the world came there. And we were invited for these gatherings, parties. They were speaking, reporting what their community was doing: children circles, embroidered shirts, eggs are colored, borscht is cooked... It's now that I know that it is just a normal state of diaspora, but back then I was sitting and revealing to myself: "Aha, so that's what they are like – the banderivtsi! This is what they look like!" And they appeared to be totally different from what was painted in the journal "The Pepper". In the journal, they were with traditional hats and with blooded knives in their teeth, and in reality they were such ordinary, very nice, even "velvet" people, very soft. We (people from the Soviet Union and from contemporary Ukraine) in comparison with them are much more charismatic: some are aggressive, and some are just more energetic. And they were very soft, totally mismatching with the bloody image of banderivtsi. So that was my first contact with the diaspora. And then, in late 1980s, they started to invite us here in Kyiv to the circles of Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia: poets, writers, literary men, painters...

Influences
Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia

IM: Can you say that someone from this circle influenced you?

OS: No, as we were punks after all, and cynics, to tell the truth. It's the punk-music, and we were approaching everything very sceptically.

IM: And could you say that at a certain moment you stopped to have such a sceptical approach to everything?

OS: Well, I stopped the cynical approach, but still continue the sceptical. I am still a punk, or at least have distance and critical approach to everything... And if to speak about my identification of myself as Ukrainian, even a patriot, it happened in France. When I moved to France, I firstly learned the French language, and then after French I learned Ukrainian. In France I started to speak Ukrainian, even though I was very, very rarely in touch with Ukrainians and Russians.

Influences
France
French language
Ukrainian language

IM: But why?

OS I was such a West-oriented person, because I grew up on Western rock-n-roll, on western music, and through the music I didn't perceive the Soviet Union at all. I was such a soft, velvet anti-Soviet person. For me all these kobzons were like Kirkorov today – it was just a different world, which...

IM: That is to learn the language for you was a certain way to oppose yourself to the Soviet mass culture?

OS: In France? No, no! That was because I realized what a country is, what the culture is, what civilization is, and what the human being in this civilization is. In order to be a personality, you need to know your roots, to know your purpose: where are you come from and where you go. For the French it's very easy, for them it's just basic culture, while we didn't have it, and we still almost don't have it.

IM: Well, I think there are different environments...

OS: Of course, there are different environments, but in general... That is, the French language for the French people - it's a priori such a basis, a cornerstone, without which there is no France...

IM: You just said about reducing the level of cynicism - was it connected to France and to the understanding of the importance of language?

OS: This was connected to three things: I got the French residency card, I got married, and two people left the band - the guitarist and the drummer. The life was just requiring from me some adult steps, I became more adult and I started to make decisions and to be responsible for myself. It's very simple to be a cynic: it's just like the bloggers who are sitting and pouring dirt over everyone. Because you don't do anything, you're not responsible for anything, and you can sit and very sweetly water everyone with the dung, and that's it. But when you need to do something and to take the responsibility, and then you understand that you might be mistaken. And when you

start to make mistakes, then you need to afford to be sometimes wrong and to apologize for the mistakes because we are not perfect, we are not robots. And when you are forgiving the mistakes to yourself, then you can forgive them to other people as well... And so, with such a way the cynicism has disappeared, but the distance remains anyways.

IM: The year 1990 – this year you were on tour in France and Switzerland, weren't you? Do you remember how you learned about the events at the Maidan?

OS: My inner transformation didn't yet take place by then. And when the Putsch took place, I was in St Petersburg, we had a concert. The concert was just finished, and the next day in the morning I'm waking up in my friends' flat, and there is a Swan Lake on TV. We watched it many times when Brezhnevs and Chernenkos were dying, and we realized that something serious had happened. Radio and television did not work, and someone said that in Kiyv there are tanks on Khreshchatyk. Whether they were there or not – I still do not know, and I didn't try to find it out. We've spent a few days in St Petersburg and then we came to Ukraine as to an independent country although there were certainly no boundaries, yet. And then all this had started: the crisis, the coupons, the vouchers for sugar and sour cream.

History

The Putsch
in Moscow

History

Economic
crisis

IM: But this was later. And in 1990 you were there and these events were not too bright for you in the informational field, as I understand? Do you remember anything about this period?

OS: I was such an apolitical person! My attitude to the Soviet Union was kind of skeptical, but... Especially since I wasn't Ukrainian speaking at the time. I was engaged in music and I was indeed very busy: it was the very peak, we toured a lot, we had about 2-3 tours a year abroad. We were going, coming back, preparing the documents and going again.

IM: OK. As I remember, in 1997 you finally returned to Ukraine, didn't you? Such events as the action "Ukraine without Kuchma" were already taking place here. Did they leave any trace in your memory?

History

Presidential
election
1999

OS: No, no trace. Already at that time I was perfectly understanding all the manipulations and how Kuchma came to power, this whole cynicism... That is, Symonenko was another candidate... Then, it is interesting that I observed a very similar thing in France: there's the same scheme, there were Chirac and Le Pen, and they came out to the second round. And when at first in Le Monde (quasi independent press) on the spread there is firstly the advertising of fascist ideas so that Le Pen could go to the second round, and then during the second round in the same Le Monde there is just huge criticism of Le Pen. And so I told them then: "Don't you see that they "push" this Chirac to you?" The whole country voted for the socialists, all voted for Leroy, and he failed. But they were saying: "No, no, we have everything so democratic here!"

IM: But this does not mean that you were apolitical? This actually means that you did not trust the system?

OS: Well, I wasn't like "let's all gather and start to shoot there, to run there, to beat these, and to love these". Somehow I was distancing myself from all this.

IM: But how did you feel in 2003, as a citizen?

OS: I was just personally insulted by the old power. Maybe that's why I got so actively "involved" in 2004, because the actors from the old government (I mean from that time's prosecutor's office and various MPs) had organized the structure in order to work with the Ukrainian show-business. I've always had the idea-fixe – Ukrainian rock, Ukrainian music, the support of it. And here I got an offer of what I was expecting. We wrote the statute that we will support and develop Ukrainian music and we were supposed to have funds. But the money was before the elections, and then it turned out that this was Kuchma's money. And then they started to "twist the tail" in such a way that they wanted to make me play for Kuchma in the election campaign. People may not remember but all the artists who were on the Ukrainian "horizon", in the first echelon, they all played for Kuchma back then. We were the only ones who did not play. And I actually paid low cost then: it is exactly the time when all these stories with Gongadze were taking place. Exactly at

History
Presidential
election
1999

that time they were taking my apartment away, they were intimidating me with the police and with the prosecutor's office.

IM: And the purpose of all this was to draw you into Kuchma's election campaign?

OS: Well, from what I understood, yes. I had only one property - an apartment, and it was arrested and they were trying to take it away from me. And then somehow the public got involved, there were courts, people were coming to courts to support me, and strangely enough I won the case. And they wanted, in some way, through the court, to take the right for all the songs, the right of property, and then to turn it in such a way as to make me work as a slave. They had such a crazy idea. But nothing like this worked, I won the case by some miracle, and that's it. I don't remember which years these were: the beginning of the 2000s, or maybe the end of the 1990s. And so I entered into 2004 already with this "sludge".

**Internal
Policy**
Confiscation of the
apartment

IM: OK. How did you see these events of 2004? How did you see the protesting people? Who they were? Why did it happen?

OS: I will say sincerely. You know, I'm engaged into festivals, I know how to make events. And you make a mass event when you feel the mood of the people and you give the right impetus to these people, and then a great event is taking place. And there is no revolution without a catalyst, without the first impulse. And certainly, there was a first impulse, there were people who came up with it, and they rightly guessed the mood of the people: the people got involved.

**Orange
revolution**

IM: And what was the mood back then, in your opinion?

OS: It was exactly the same as it is now. There were people who were not happy with the leadership, people who wanted freedom, they wanted material prosperity and so on... And here is also such a moment that when people are uniting around a great idea (but this in principal are the ideas of a hippie, ideas of the paradise, which are very powerful in the Ukrainian society), when you are in this community, you are experiencing the catharsis, you are opening up, you are

Motivations
Desire for
leadership
Freedom
Prosperity

experiencing social orgasm, which lasts pretty long. You find your soul mates and you are just opening up to these people.

IM: Back then many were speaking about the faces of people, weren't they?

OS: People's faces are changing, people are changing, many things are changing. But things outside of this territory are appearing to you to be impossible, and a lot of other things become possible.

IM: You said that people are getting involved... But how do you think, how did they formulate to themselves why they were getting involved exactly in such a form?

OS: Everyone is getting involved in a different way, people have different motives. Of course, the first impulse comes from charismatic people, such eternal, "professional" revolutionaries. There are such people in the society, and it is exactly during the revolution when such people manifest themselves as we don't see them in peaceful times. And why afterwards, after the victory or the defeat of a revolution, these people disappear? Because they are effective only in the situation of a revolution. And then there are people who are also potential revolutionaries... For example I am such a potential revolutionary. We are opening up and going away (and there are many like that). And there are such people who are "well, everybody has gone away, so I will go as well". And there are people who after the revolution use its results, trying to catch a fish in muddy water. These people are connecting to the revolution: sometimes they can be the provokers of a revolution, and sometimes they are dropping into the last bandwagon, and exactly they are those who are getting out of the revolution "on a white horse".

IM: You mentioned charismatic people... Can you give me some specific names as who they were?

OS: Well, it's difficult for me to tell about the political leaders: I wasn't getting too much into it and I didn't follow. Well, all these – Bezsmertnyi, who else was in the field commanders there...

Actors

Roman
Bezsmertnyi
Mykola
Tomenko
Yuriy
Lutsenko

Tomenkos, Lutsenkos... I didn't go too deep into this, I still was in the musical circles. I know who our fellow musicians were. Who got involved, who didn't get involved, who was looking how to drop into the last wagon and so on...

IM: But what was motivating the musicians, artists who supported this movement? What was their role?

Actors
Musicians
Artists

OS: First of all, this oppression which still exists in regards to the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian music, culture. That is, this „tap" that still doesn't let us on the air. And nothing has changed: we went through three revolutions, but almost nothing has changed here. Apart from this brouhaha around quotas, but things didn't change so far. And, secondly, still, there are brothers-rockers, and the rockers are the potential revolutionaries. Rock-music is the music of charismatic people, it's the music of romantics who want the reality to be different, to be not as it is now. They are the disobedient people. They are utopists, idealists, hippies... And that's why they are getting involved. It is clear that the pop-music is the music of people who are satisfied with life, everything suits to them. That's why they are never getting involved in revolutions, only rarely an exception can happen. Everything satisfies them: Kuchma is cool, dirty streets – cool, destroyed roads – also ok.

Motivations
Oppression

IM: In your opinion which role the oligarchs played in these events?

OS: A fundamental role: they were financing.

IM: So they organized “the festival”?

Actors
The
oligarchs
Activity
Obtaining
financial
support

OS: Well, I don't know to which extent they organized it, on what stage, but they were financing. You must be naive not to understand that the scene – it costs... However, later the scene was given for free, and performance was for free, but the scene, the sound, the light, transport, fuel and so on...

IM: Do you think did the goals of the oligarchs and the protesters overlap? And the goals of the artists?

OS: The society, the oligarchs and the artists? Well, there are charismatic people, there are ordinary people, there are artists, and there are the oligarchs. And among the charismatic people there are also the idealists, and there are just the provocateurs of the society, for them most important thing is to make noise.

IM: But if we speak of the protestors as the main community?

OS: And the main community, of course, had the building of an ideal society as the main goal. Everyone has their own vision of the ideal society, and very often these visions are completely opposite, but while we didn't start to build something new, we just bring down the old. And here we all are like-minded, since this 'old' doesn't suit us.

IM: Do I understand you correctly that there was no goal to build but to destroy?

OS: Yes, yes. The goal of all revolutions is to destroy.

IM: Thus, do you believe that this goal was shared by both the oligarchs and the community?

OS: The oligarchs – no. The oligarchs, since they have earned milliards, it means that they are smart people. And maybe even they are not as smart as they are less manipulative, on the contrary they are the manipulators. And every oligarch, perhaps, had his own goal, but the old authorities were preventing them from earning more money, and so on. I don't think that the oligarchs are such romantics as ordinary people. There are, perhaps, not many romantics among them.

Actors

Oligarchs

IM: Does it mean that the ordinary people were mostly romantics and they had been manipulated?

OS: Well, we live in the information society, all of us are manipulated.

IM: OK. So, were the ordinary people manipulated at that time?

OS: But we are manipulated now as well, we are always manipulated.

IM: Good. Can we speak then about the whole communities of protesters? We speak about an utopist society, but what is it? Were there any goals, or just having fun?

OS: First of all, such a thing did its job: in 2004 they hung Yanukovych everywhere. And so this not very attractive face of him was hanging everywhere and then people began to speak among themselves that so Yanukovych will come – and that's it. And this was the impulse. I think that people, including me, were driven by this fear. There was a real fear of the future. That is, there was Kuchma, we didn't like him. There was an option of Yushchenko: so Yushchenko will come, and there will be paradise. And so if Yanukovych will come – there will be "that's it". And so everyone was wandering between these three things.

IM: That is Yushchenko was more attractive?

OS: Yushchenko was very much attractive for that time!

IM: OK. We came to the moment of achievements and disappointments with that revolution. What are your disappointments?

OS: I went through the election campaign of Yushchenko, I supported him in the election campaign. And this campaign was held just during the revolution. People maybe don't remember but all these scenes, all these trains came to Kyiv, they placed them, and they stayed. Thus, this was already a pre-election scene of the Maidan. And the election campaign of Yushchenko – he was the forerunner of the Maidan. And all these artists who came for Yushchenko automatically became the singers of the Maidan.

**Orange
revolution
Actors**
Victor
Yanukovych
Victor
Yushchenko

History
Presidential
election
2004

**Orange
revolution
Actors**
Singers
Emotions
Disappointment
Euphoria
Motivations
Falsification of
elections
results
Actors
The
Constitutional
court
Mykola Azarov
Artists

IM: And automatically became disappointed?

OS: I didn't get disappointed. I got disappointed, but I sobered up, let's say. Even, I didn't sober up... That is, this state of euphoria which I had since the Maidan, it didn't disappear, and I understood the nature of this euphoria: that there is a reality, this true state, and this state can be repeated in some ideal society... And when the decision of the Constitutional Court came that the elections were falsified, and it became gradually clear that we will win, the faces of the Maidan started to quickly change. And even then Azarov came to the Maidan beautifully "on a white horse". Well, I wasn't really bothered about the politicians, but I saw the same among the artists: how those artists who were at the beginning of the Maidan got pushed aside, and other artists came. And I saw this parallel, how it happened around Yushchenko, and I was in touch with people who travelled with us during Yushchenko's election campaign - they were pushed aside. I know businessmen who supported Yushchenko - they were pushed aside as well. And when in 2005 the inauguration of Yushchenko took place, I already went to Switzerland to rest from this entire "masquerade", to be somewhere away because I understood already that there will be a circus and clownery.

IM: But at the time you did not yet realize this? What kind of changes in the society did you expect?

OS: I am a musician, and in the first place I need audio-comfort. Now we are sitting here, in "The Couch", and Ukrainian music is being played and I feel comfortable. I travel abroad and almost in every country I feel like a human being. As soon as I arrive in Ukraine I enter a supermarket or a restaurant I am very uncomfortable. So I fought exactly for the audio comfort, and that's why it's one of the main tonalities in my activity - the Ukrainian music. This is my private thing and I believe that when the Ukrainian music will enter people's ears, our roads will become normal and everything will be better: well, it's my own utopia. I understand that it is a utopia, but it has its right to life.

**Orange
revolution
Outcomes**

IM: And if talking about the achievements of the revolution of 2004 do you see them?

OS: The achievements of the revolution for me... During Kuchma's time 8 % of the air was Ukrainian-language, and during Yushchenko – only 4 %. That's all for the achievements. For me this is the indicator. Everything else: the monument to the Holodomor – cool, Art Arsenal – very cool, Kamyana Mohyla is cool, I don't know what else has been done. Well, the foundation of democracy was laid out: the Maidan-2 could not be possible without Yushchenko, of course. And that's positive.

IM: And did any changes take place for the society? In people's consciousness?

OS: Only on the level of consciousness. That is one victory gives an inspiration and confidence that you are able to do something. And, in fact, the victory of 2004 was a serious crack in the body of the social "Soviet" in Ukraine, which didn't happen for a long time. But the crack was serious.

**Orange
revolution
Outcomes**

IM: But why do you say that the revolution of 2012-2014 could not happen without the victory of 2004?

OS: Because if there were not the victory of the revolution of 2004, then people would not come to Maidan so bravely. Everyone was always talking about Maidan-2: talking-talking, and then it happened.

IM: So you have expressed two thoughts: about the fact that the community at the Maidan, at least partially, was manipulated, and on the other hand, that it was a victory. Then whose victory was it: of the community or of the manipulators?

OS: It was the football team winning. That is, there is a trainer, there are the rules of the game, there are players, there is a field, and there is the viewer who helps. Actually I still have to get back to this topic – sports passion, because then they split Ukraine in two parts (as it is divided

now as well). There was no such terminology as "quilted jacket" back then, but the quilted jackets and the progressive people were "orange" and "blue" back then. They did not divide them into two camps, and there is sport here as well: yours and the aliens'... I don't know if it was thought up... Well, partially invented, and partly it happened so...

IM: And if to speak of the oligarchs... This system, which evolved during Kuchma and continued then..?

OS: Well, as I understood, there were some "pocket" oligarchs who were supporting the "blue" camp and there were the disgraced oligarchs. And we shall not forget of the Russian influence. I believe that Russian oligarchs have also helped considerably.

Russia's Policy
Financial support of the "blue" camp

IM: Did the events of 2004 lead to the strengthening of the oligarchs?

OS: Yes, yes. Because the monopolization of Ukraine by Kuchma (partial, it has not been 100 percent) ceased to exist... Then Yanukovych tried again to build his own monopoly, and so it developed again... And we live in a feudal society now because the oligarchs possess not territories but sectors of the economy. And, in principle, both 2004 and 2012, this is the war of oligarchs, I mean, the feudal war in Ukraine.

Actors
Victor Yanukovych
Oligarchs

IM: That is, one clan was replaced by another one? The disgraced oligarchs came in place of the pocket ones?

OS: Well, there are also a lot of such smart ones... As they say: to put eggs in different baskets... The main totemic oligarchs took part both here and there. That is, you place your bets both for red and for black, and in any case you win.

IM: And was there any result for the civil society? Did it have any consequences for public relations, for their identity as citizens?

Actors
People

OS: Well, for the people this was the initiation, the exorcism... When people are in a trance, then they go out and they are getting cured, or the enlightenment is taking place... If a person can achieve enlightenment with the help of meditation, self-advancing, education and so on then this person can go through a trance very quickly. For example, you can get something through pain but you also can get something through pleasure – it's the person's choice. And Ukrainians, in principle, have a very strong tendency to masochism: to cry, to grieve for the difficult fate and so forth... Well, this is how it has developed historically. And so that's why Ukrainians prefer to do things through catharsis. I'm for an evolution, I'm not for a revolution. I realized over time that perhaps you can reach something with a revolution, but not in our case. Because every time some crooks come into power. And maybe they always come, maybe it is such a law of civilization.

IM: Meaning a revolution does not give a sustainable positive result?

OS: The crooks are penetrating. That is the system becomes unstable and there are such leaders who are becoming effective in an unstable system: and so here they come to power. In any case, the system (either by itself or someone helps it) is getting stabilized and then these leaders are becoming already ineffective and they either disappear or are hide abroad.

IM: I understand that you are now talking about both revolutions, about this whole mechanism. But I would like to actually move to the events of 2013-2014... Do you remember your situation at that moment?

OS: Well, I'll say six months before the 2013 Maidan I totally lost my job. The Ukrainian economy stood still. And there was already a sense that something very not nice, unkind is getting prepared.

IM: And who was perceived as the subject of this preparation?

**Revolution
of Dignity**

OS: I don't know. Just the economy had stopped. As I'm holding my hand on the pulse of the Ukrainian economy, I know where the expenses are. I know where the sponsors are and I am

invited, there are some events... I know which areas are effective in Ukraine and at what time. And in 2013 everything fell, and that's how I realized that there were people who knew it, they actually were withdrawing the money from Ukraine, most likely. And not to grieve, we went to the tour to compensate all this depression, which was escalating. We called the tour "The wonderful world", in accordance to the name of our album. It was in full antagonism with what happened with Ukraine afterwards, in full. Simply, we had love, and there were the Maidans... And so we went through Ukraine, from west to east, and the Maidans were rolling down from Western Ukraine to the East. In Lviv the Maidan was actually standing, I came there, but I didn't manage on time. A Maidan was held in Chernivtsi, and there was a sense of anxiety and danger, of great danger. I went out to the square, I supported the people, we sang, and then I said: "Careful, people, it's dangerous. Very, very dangerous!" People listened to me, I left the square, and right as I was leaving some people (I do not know whether it was provoked or organized) went on to capture the Regional State Administration (RSA). And by the way in Western Ukraine these administrations had always been pro-Ukrainian. Whether they took RSA or they didn't - I don't remember, but they broke in there. In Ivano-Frankivsk the same thing took place. That is; I warned that it was extremely dangerous, let's hold on somehow... They went to take the RSA ... And we arrived in Kyiv - and there the Maidan had already begun in its active form. My fellow musicians said: "Let's go to the Maidan to sing". And I went to the Maidan and felt just a horrible danger. And they were shouting there "Away with the gang", and I am a bit interested in these various spells and so forth... And I realized what this "Away with the gang" was... But there, at the top, the administration, it reads very easily. They do not decode what we have in mind by the "gang". Well, this is how I interpreted the situation... Well, I am telling the nature of my feelings.

IM: So who in this case, in your perception, was the "gang"?

OS: Well, for the nature it was the Maidan. And they began to shoot at the Maidan... That is, the "mantra" sounded "away with the gang", and they began to shoot at the Madian. Well, the one who tracks the rituals (and concerts – they are, in fact, rituals), then it can be explained... Well, some people talk about the special forces: someone say about American ones and someone say about the Russian, about Georgian special forces... But I read a link that there would be real

Events
Shooting of
protesters

deaths there. Because the Maidan of 2004 chanted "Yushchenko, Yushchenko!", and the second Maidan chanted "away with the gang".

IM: I see. But if you say that the work disappeared six months before and there was a feeling of danger... Can you describe the dynamics? The dynamics of your attitude you're your understanding of these events?

OS: It was really scary.

IM: Was it equally scary all the time?

OS: Equally scary, insanely scary! I will say now what I was specifically scary... Scary was the fact that the electricity will be turned off and the marauding will start... This is what was scary... Everyone already thought that it was necessary to search for weapons, to sit at home and to defend. And, in fact, right now I estimate that this could have easily happened. Same as in Donetsk, there might occur looting. Even in such wealthy countries as America, in New Orleans, terrible things happened... So there was the fear that there will be no fuel, that there will be no electricity, and that such things will happen. And then the war began, and I honestly confess that it has become easier, really. Because the war - this is already understandable. It is clear where is the enemy and where there is no enemy, and there is already much less manipulation. It's already an obvious story, that it's necessary to defend your homeland, this is already a simpler situation. When the war had just started, it was scary that they will bombard Kyiv... That the Russian planes will come and will bombard Kyiv. As of today there still is such a possibility, but it's already much smaller, and back then it was very much possible... Or at least that they will go with tanks through Kyiv until Rivne or Lviv region.

IM: You say: "the war began"... For you personally, what was that point, which date?

OS: Well, it's hard for me to remember. This is where the open battles began in Luhansk and Donetsk regions. It was, I believe, in June... Because there were captures of RSA and so on, of

Emotions

Fear

Russia's Policy
War

Place

Luhansk region
Donetsk region

what is called "the hybrid war". But the military actions began when at first the army was stopped by our Ukrainian local quilted jackets, and they, like calves, were standing there on the road and didn't know what to do. And when the volunteers already went to fight, when finally these volunteer battalions were organized (I don't remember when exactly it was), but then we realized that that's it: the volunteer battalions started to fight, and we started to help them. There were some of my acquaintances, and some friends among them. And, of course, as a man, I had a thought: "to go or not to go to the front". I believe that every Ukrainian asked this question came in a certain way. I decided for myself not to go to the front. The first argument was the family, and the second argument was that my business is still musical. Sure, internally I had the idea that I'm a dweeb, that I got frightened, that I must go, I must take weapons, shoot... But I found in myself the power of wisdom to decide that I was not the person who was born to shoot. And when the possibility of volunteering emerged: just to help with money, with things... And then we began to perform, to play. And when I managed to organize a performance in Debaltseve, this was very important for me indeed. And I got much more relaxed. This performance in Debaltseve, and when I also got under a mortar fire – this was sort of my baptism by fire... And when I came out of Debaltseve, and almost immediately after that this pot took place... Well, of good or of bad quality, but some help to our military was taking place and I saw that my colleagues felt the same. That is, if we think alike, this moment of unity, such as on the Maidan, took place on the basis of this creative musical volunteerism as well.

IM: Such as on the Maidan...? Are you referring to 2004 or to 2013?

OS: Well to 2013 as well.

IM: From what you said I understood that in your perception Maidan is associated with the war, that one implies the other. Did I understand it correctly?

OS: In my perception, yes.

IM: Why is it so?

OS: If there were no Maidan of 2013 then Putin would not wage the war in such a manner as it is now. It was a provocation. He might have started this, but I think he counted that Yanukovych will hand over the territories in some soft way. He was hoping... My opinion is that this would not happen, if Yanukovych would have remained in power (this is my kind of a forecast of a parallel reality), if Maidan would somehow fade out, then Putin would have a war with Yanukovych. And this would have been a different configuration, but the fact that they would take Crimea I realised that about seven years ago. Before I was suspecting that they would take it, but seven years ago I clearly saw this happen.

Revolution of Dignity
Actors
Vladimir Putin
Victor Yanukovych
Russia's policy
Provocation
Place
Crimea

IM: You said in one of the interviews that since 2004 the Crimea has been closed for you, has it been? Was one of the indicators the fact that you cannot conduct a tour?

OS: Yes, this story was already getting prepared at that time; Crimea and the East of Ukraine were already closed.

IM: But what made you have this feeling that Crimea will be taken?

OS: There was a TV program in Moscow called the “Musical ring”; myself and the Marshall had a “battle” there: we were playing songs and there was a distinguished jury and in general it was a very positive programme, apart from the fact that all was done so that we would lose. Well, it was obvious, I knew that we would lose, because they took the odious Marshall, who is a supporter of Putin, of the Kremlin, and they had this idea “let’s let these Ukrainians down” and so forth.... already back then. But I believe that I managed to put everything into such a way as to have “friendship” so that everything would look nice. The only thing is that then Boyarsky, with his hat, blathered: “And when will you give us back our Crimea?” And I understood that this phrase was written into the scenario. And I have read about Boyarsky afterwards, that he was such “kooky” so, it’s understandable, that the “voices” of this propaganda, type of Zadornov and Zhirinovsky, had to voice such things.

Russia's Policy
Propaganda

IM: Good and coming back to the protests, how did you then see the people who came to protest? Who took the side of the authorities? Who took the side of the Maidan?

OS: Well, in Kyiv everybody took the side of the Maidan, even among the artists. Anti-M **Places** was very, very sluggish, and it was fully and unprofessionally organized. And in general **Kyiv** interesting, that when there was an opposition of “blue” and “orange”, all the creativity and initiative was from the orange ones, and then the other ones were taking, copying, using, and with the help of money they were squeezing this in, and here even this didn’t work. The Anti-Maidan was such very dwarfish and caricature-like.

IM: And from the side of the Maidan, what kind of people protested, in your opinion?

OS: The foundation was the intelligentsia and the middle class. Intelligentsia meant the charismatic leaders, and the middle class was the main mass. And Anti-Maidan was specifically the asocial types: alcoholics and so on. I saw how they were taken there and back with columns, sometimes with flags they were walking. Such people are called “orgs” sometimes because of how they look like, they are such marginal people.

Actors

The middle class
Anti-Maidan
(Alcohol-lovers
Marginal people)

IM: But why did the unification of this middle class take place? Around which ideas? Did they have any goals, did they have a positive program? Or only “Away with the gang”?

OS: Only “away with the gang” and this has been the problem of all Maidans and their leaders, because it’s very cool to say that let’s take everything away, and then to propose some sort of very populists tuff. Only Yulia, I believe, was proposing something there both during the first and the second Maidan.

Actors

Yulia
Tymoshenko

IM: But was there any unifying idea among these people who went out to the streets?

OS: Well, there is such a Soviet revolutionary song “The hostile whirlwinds are blowing over us”, and there are the words: “We will destroy the old world and then...”, and these three points – this is the idea of revolution.

IM: Does it apply, in fact, to the Maidan of 2013 as well?

OS: Yes, yes.

IM: That is, you say that you do not see any goals that united the community of the Maidan at this time? Values, motivations?

OS: Well, the motivations are emotional. When there is no intellectual motivation, most likely you cannot make a prognosis of the result.

IM: Is it possible to say that the Maidan was well organized? Or the moment of manipulations took place there? What do you think?

OS: Yes, it was well organized, because Ukrainians have a strong feature of self-organization. That is, we are unable, for some reason, to choose the leaders and to work with the leaders, but we have a wonderful ability of self-organization. The Maidan was like an anthill, both the first and the second Maidans were perfectly organized, just perfectly. People were appearing in their places, organizing everything, and all this worked.

Activity
Self-
organization

IM: And what do you remember of the forms of cooperation, of the forms of organization in the Madian?

OS: Protection, the entrance, food, heating, construction, some sort of internal leaders, tents. You are coming to help, and you are accepted immediately, they find a place for you, and you already see that you are giving your contribution. Such a matrix, which is organizing itself from the inside.

IM: OK. Can you say that this Maidan was less romantic, less controlled than in 2004?

OS: Well, the great mass of people, in any case, is always both manipulated and independent. Simply there was more aggression and then, when the deaths had started, there was already just some "trash". The first Maidan was just romantic, it was generally such a "fairy-tale fantasy", and this one was really such a "trash-action movie" with elements of horror. And then, the way Khreshchatyk looked, and Hrushevsky - all burned, blackened. It resembled a post-apocalyptic film-catastrophe...

Events

Deaths of participants

Emotions

Horror

Place

Khreshchatyk
Hrushevskoho
street

IM: OK. And if to talk about the artists on this and of that Maidans?

OS: The artists became radicalized. That is, the more radical stuff was already voiced, but for myself I anyway understood this as maturing of the nation. People became more mature, and the situation became much scarier, but, perhaps, because of the fact that there was nothing to lose, people were behaving already less naive. If the Maidan of 2004 can be called the Maidan of the naive in 2013 it was not that naive any more.

IM: Was there nothing to lose?

Emotions

Fear

OS: It's just a scary, a really terrible thing.

IM: Do you think that this naive was not present in the initial period either, before the dispersal of students?

Events

Shooting the
protesters
Yanukovych's
escape

Actors

Hromadske TV

OS: No, at the beginning... The Chinese say that you cannot enter same water twice... People were coming with the same feeling: now we all will raise our flags and these wretches will run away from us. And when they started to shoot... But, in fact, they shot the Maidan, but no one has figured out until now why Yanukovych fled. What did he get scared of? We still don't know. I, frankly speaking, on the day of the shootings (I don't remember whether it was the 23rd or the

Places

The Square of
Glory in Kyiv

24th of February) was at the Hromadske TV, and it is located on the Square of Glory. I was on air, and every 15 minutes the information was coming to the live broadcast that one was killed, another one was killed, the third one... It was a very scary day. On that day they said that on the following day the state of emergency would be announced, the electricity would be cut off and there would be no gas at the gas stations. Before that, I closed the door of my home, my family let me go to this broadcast, I filled the full tank of my car, I believe, and I even filled the canister as well. And the next day it was already impossible to get gas because of the huge queues at the gas stations... I came to this broadcast, and they were shooting the Maidan, and the "orgs" with columns were departing from the Maidan, that's what is interesting... Although, my friends said that they have already squeezed them almost until the stage, but then, for some reason, at some point, the "orgs" went away. This was also a kind of a miracle... Certainly, there is some kind of explanation to this, which we might never find. But at the Maidan there were some shamans who tried to cast spells, I have seen them. I've seen the shamans, I saw the Krishnaites, the Buddhists: they were all staying and spelling casts to "Berkut".

IM: And what about the priests?

OS: Well, the priests, not so much. Because there were the priests both on the other side - the Moscow Patriarchate, and on the Maidan's side.

Actors
Priests

IM: And how do you, in general, evaluate the role of the priests and of the representatives of other religious denominations at the Maidan?

OS: Ukrainian churches: the Greek Catholics, the Kyiv Patriarchate - they were on the Maidan in the front lines, their role was very, very important.

IM: And if they were not there..?

OS: It would be the same, but the priests were acting very charismatically. This gives us the understanding that there really are people who were ready to give their lives for the sake of

people and they serve for the sake of people. I know some priests, they are very strong, dedicated people.

IM: And how the media were acting during the Madian? What was the role of the media?

OS: The role? Same as during the first Maidan: either they were ignoring, distorting the information, because the media (except channel 5 and Hromadske TV, undoubtedly), and TV were conducting an anti-Ukrainian campaign, as some channels are conducting it even now... But there was a very serious role, Hromadske TV arose, and there was some other stream... well, TV, our friends...

Actors

Hromadske TV
The 5th channel

IM: Espresso TV?

OS: Yes, Espresso TV! This was number one. We can say that if there were no Espresso TV and Hromadske TV, then maybe there would also be no Maidan. And, in fact, Maidan-2 was also the Internet-Maidan. The Internet was very important. And the fact that they were unable to suppress the Internet, they did not know how to, they weren't able to.

Actors

Espresso TV

IM: OK. And the role of foreign politicians, of foreign governments? The European Union, the United States, Canada?

OS: At first they were very concerned, and this was really inspiring for us, and when this degree of concern was constantly rising: they are very concerned, they are extremely concerned, they are endlessly concerned, and so this just became ridiculous...

Western Policy
"deep concern"

IM: Do you think they had any influence on the situation?

OS: I don't know. I can fantasize something about it, but I don't know. I've heard that someone there called Yanukovych, tried telling him something, but...

IM: OK. If to summarize that period, still, what are the achievements and the disappointments of the 2013-2014 Maidan?

OS: The achievements are the war. This is the achievement of the Maidan.

**Revolution
of Dignity
Outcomes**

IM: This is such a contradictory statement...

OS: Well, that is the fact.

IM: Does it mean that in your opinion Maidan was the immediate cause?

OS: Yes.

IM: And what else?

OS: That's it.

IM: But for the society? For the state of consciousness? We just talked about the crack in the Soviet world view which was brought by the Maidan of 2004... And did any further shifts occur in people's minds?

OS: The shift will occur when we will win this war. And at the moment there is a war...

IM: And in which state is the society now?

**Revolution of
Dignity
Outcomes
Emotions**
Despair
Fatigue of war
Distrust to
politicians

OS: The society is in despair. That is, it's in desperation and fatigue of war. Distrust to the politicians is continuing, and so forth... Until a charismatic effective politician will appear in Ukraine, we would be in such a state.

IM: Well, I tried here to ask a question in a positive way – about the achievements, and there is still a negative one, about the disappointments...

OS: This is not a negative one, because the war is a continuation of the Maidan. It's not over, it continues, and it is necessary to end the war...

IM: That is, it's not yet possible to sum up, as I see?

OS: Well, what kind of results? There is a war... For example, if you understand the war as the second act of the Maidan, then the fact that we have created an army, an efficient, very strong, to which if not to interfere, it will provide the Russians with such kicks... This I can say authoritatively because I have seen it and I know how they fight. We were in Avdiivka, and as soon as we left Avdiivka, it happened, so that one of the cars which was leading us got spoiled and the military remained there. And they fell under fire. And when the fire from Donetsk territory had just started, ours fought them in such a way that just half of Donetsk was in fire... This is the achievement, because the army is the achievement of the war, not of the Maidan. But when this army wins, when in some magic way this military comes back and makes these changes, which we are dreaming about here already for the third decade, then it will be a real result.

IM: And do you see any losses for the society? Any disappointments?

OS: Well, we became the poorest country in Europe. This is an obvious fact. If during all their crying which I have heard when I was traveling in Europe, Ukraine was not the poorest country. Looking like people were buying packs of jeeps for themselves, going to restaurants and concerts, we were richer than Belarus, we were richer than Lithuania, than Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia even ... Not to mention Albania ... And now we are poorer than them all, really poorer.

IM: Can we see some sort of continuity in all these events?

OS: This is just the ongoing process of destroying the Soviet Union, and that's it. "The Soviet" fades from our brains: to someone through pain, to someone through some sort of understanding...

IM: Can we say that in the 20th century there were some events that have affected the form in which the protests were held?

OS: Today, the modern society does not function in a totalitarian mode, nor in feudal, imperial, and so on. It works through the Internet, through new technologies, through new consciousness, which is still being distributed across the planet. And these societies are collapsing... Maybe, in some countries it is happening in a bloodless, gently way, but we have it in such a harsh manner. And we turn to the new world view, all will work in a different way. For example, there are countries with societies open to the whole world, but this archaic – Russia, Belarus or Ukraine used to be - it's a closed society, and this society does not work anymore... It is a paradox: to watch American movies, to drink coke and at the same time to build such a very archaic world. For many people, for the middle class it is absurd. And maybe unconsciously these people realize that this is a big lie, and they go to the Maidan, go to the revolution. Therefore this is happening not only in Ukraine, not only in the a real Russia – it's happening all around the world. That is, the old world view has cracks.

**Revolution of
Dignity**

**Motivations
Lie**

IM: Does it mean that all these are the parts of the one process of the "fading of the Soviet", aren't they?

OS: Absolutely, sure!

IM: Can we say then that these processes are nurtured by the motivation of people who do them? That is, "we will do this until the entire Soviet will disappear"?

OS: Well, the society is in unstable form, then some movements are taking place, and it moves to another stable form.

IM: I understand. But does the participation in previous processes motivate people to take part in the protests?

OS: The victory motivates. As it is that it is difficult for Belarussians to get out for some sort of a revolution because all their protests were brutally crashed, as well as in Russia. In Russia, I think, a revolution in such a form as we had is impossible. They can only have an uncontrolled riot. Everyone writes about it, and I think it will happen. Russia is famous for its rebels. Although there was some intelligent December revolution, but the October revolution – this, as I understand, was just a rebellion, which was cleverly directed by Bolshevik crooks into its course.

Motivations
Desire for
victory

IM: OK. Do you see any connection between the "Soviet" world view and the corruption of the society?

OS: Well, I'm looking from my own "bell tower"... It is very important. Corruption is not the prime cause, it is already the result. It's the result of a bad-quality management in the Ukrainian society. For me the problem is the quality of management.

IM: So do you see the connection between the "Soviet" and corruption?

OS: Well... There might be a connection, and there might not be a connection... I don't know...

IM: OK. What then distinguishes the bad-quality management from the good-quality one at the level of a state?

OS: The quality management – there must be personalities with some moral qualities in the first place, and secondly, the effective ones. So, when we have the inefficient and morally poor management, people without professional and moral qualities are greedily falling to power, they use such primitive tools as we see... If the official is not interested how to do something good for the district, for the city, for the country, then he definitely has a "riveting" how to fill his own

pockets. This is called an "ochlocratic society", when the people of low quality and of low IQ govern the state, and the people with a high IQ are the outcasts of the society, and then they find the internal strength and they go out to the Maidan.

IM: Are you talking about the lack of social elevators?

OS: Yes, yes. In principle, this is how "the Soviet" was built.

IM: And if to talk about all these protests: what changes in total do they bring to the society?

OS: If to make a parallel between a society and a person: a person who does not cultivate a healthy way of life, who does not take care of his/her health, does not take care of himself or herself, sometimes is getting ill. The disease is accumulating, and then the active phase of the disease is taking place – and this is a revolution. Then the microbes come and clean the organism, and after a disease we always feel the flow of vitality, of inspiration and we are moving on... But this disease still slows down a person, and can even kill it. So, it is the same about society: if a society is unhealthy, it has the phases of this disease. If a society is healthy, then we don't need revolutions.

IM: And how did the revolutions affect culture?

OS: Maybe, every time in such periods we need such public movements, because some creative impulse is taking place...

IM: Do you see the realization of this impulse now?

OS: Yes, yes: new names, new artists, new movement, new thinking, new music.

IM: Do you think the quotas are affecting this?

**Revolution of
Dignity
Outcomes**

OS: Well, in the Ukrainian society there has long been such a need, and if there was an effective management, then, as in the famous movie, we had to do it "without noise and dust". And in this case: the sound wave was made, which may have no effect at all. As it's always at Schuster: a clowning is made of the problem, and then it already remains a clowning. It will maybe have some effect, but, in principle, this should have been done without the "circus", but effectively, calmly. There were so many debates, and when we learn about the figures, it turns out that they are very funny: after half a year the introduction of only 10% quota, because for today's moment we have only 2 or 3% of Ukrainian music... After one year - 20%... That is, we take the dog, we take a table knife and we begin to nag the dog's tail. The outraged people come, "why do you torture the dog", etc.

IM: But after the events of 2004 did you feel that some kind of revival, an inspiration is going on in the cultural field?

OS: There was something. But why are we talking about the quotas? Because we are very dependent on what flows from the broadcast. If there is no Ukrainian language on air (and with every revolution the «tape» is getting closed tighter and tighter), then the Ukrainian state doesn't exist. The Ukrainian state is a society that creates and controls the informational space: if the informational space is controlled by another state, this means that the existence of our state is under a large question mark. And maybe we had both the energy and the inspiration, but if you write the songs "into the table", then your inspiration quickly ends.

IM: Do you see that after the revolution of 2012-2014 the state is somehow strengthened in this informational field?

OS: No, no.

IM: OK. Thank you very much for the interview.

OS: Thanks, I got very tired.

IM: Sorry. But I tried to make it so that you would express yourself. Did I manage to achieve this?

OS: Yes, yes.

IM: Good, thank you.