Interview with Andrii Deshchytsia. Interviewers: Iwona Reichardt and Adam Reichardt. Place of record: Warsaw.

IR: OK. Let's start. First of all, I would like to ask you if you agree to this interview which we will conduct for academic purposes and it will be later used for academic purposes only.

AD: Yes, of course.

IR: Thank you very much. So our first question, a very basic one. A bit biographic: could you tell us, in a few sentences, a few things about yourself and what shaped you as a person who is engaged in political affairs, meaning in public life and what influenced you – whether it was the influence of your friends, or the church, or – to be more precise – the clergy – or your parents? What happened that you became who you are today?

AD: Well, the participation in social life, a more active one, started during perestroika times in the Soviet Union. The time of pierestroika and that is the time when I was finishing my studies at the Lviv Unioversity and the samizdat journals, non-governmental organizations, including: the Young Movement of Ukraine, or the Lev Society in Lviv or the Students'Association at a bit later stage. But there was also a discussion club, the Urban Discussion Club where they started to discuss all kinds of topics, which were not normally discussed in press or by the society. At that time I was finishing studies and I was in my last year of studies, 1988-1989, and I started to participate in these events, read, and I was more connected with my friends who were then establishing the Students'Association – a non-governmental student organisation and this is where it all began.

IR: And it was with this Students' Association, yes, that you got involved in Granit? Is this how you learned about it…

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AD: In the revolution?

IR: In the revolution, yes.

AD: Yes as at that time I was already a member of the Students' Association and it was the year 1989 and at that time my close friend from studies, Tymian Malarchu, who was the head, the chairman of this Students' Association, which was later led by Markiani Ivashchyshyn when the revolution started. And at that time I was a bit of a spokesman of this Student Association, explaining things to the outside world, as I spoke some English, less Polish, I knew Polish but I did not speak fluently. But in English I could explain to foreigners, who were then starting to arrive to Lviv at that time, what was at stake – what were our demands, what we were fighting for. And then, exactly, as a member of the Students'Association, I participated in, even I was not personally in Kyiv, but we gathered aid and the groups from Lviv, students, who were going to Kyiv, we also collected financial resources and I was such a treasurer in Lviv who was collecting resources. Not collecting, but accumulating. And it was in those… I was for a few days… I went twice to Kyiv but I did not directly participate in the hunger strike which was organised at that time. And it was then organised at those organisational meetings in which I also participated, on behalf of the Students'Association, together with… on the Kyiv side as it was said back then, there was the Ukrainian Student Union, which was led by Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, Vyacheslav Pichovashek, Oles Doniy. There were more of leaders at that time. On the Lviv side, in turn, there was Markianin Ivashchyshyn on the part of the Students' Association.

IR: You said that you were explaining things to foreigners, but which countries were they from?

AD: Overall, the United States, Canada, for sure.

IR: Were they journalists or diaspora?

AD: No, no…diaspora. The most was probably from diaspora – some of course knew the Ukrainian language, some young people, from the young generation, maybe not very well – academics, a few journalists.

IR: And did this information later go into the wider world?

AD: Yes, this information would go into the wider world. Yes.

AR: And you said that during the whole time of the revolution you were in Lviv, yes?

AD: This Revolution on Granite? I was for the whole time in Lviv, meaning maybe I went to Kyiv twice, but permanently I was in Lviv.

AR: Was there a communication line for the whole time?

AD: Yes there was, but there were no cell phones at that time.

AR: There were none, indeed.

AD: There were no cell phones, but…

IR: How did it work then?

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AD: It worked in such a way that there were landlines and we would use them to arrange to meet somewhere, as overall we were meeting in cafes and over coffee we would discuss different plans. And the communication was such that we were then waiting for someone to come back from Kyiv, as a messenger, not a messenger, but someone who arrives, participates, someone who went there, saw it, talked and returned and then passed the information and then, based on this information, they could build some kind of strategy or activity.

IR: But you were in this group which also led to this revolution, yes? Those conversations in these cafes, yes? Why did it erupt at all, what were these discussions at that time?

AD: I think that the thing that got the students irritated the most at that time was that this Treaty of the Soviet Union was to be signed. It was a new agreement on the existence of the Soviet Union, and this is what we did not want to agree with. Of course there were also other demands; that Ukrainians would serve in the army only on the territory of Ukraine, I do not know how to explain it in Polish….

IR: Yes, yes; we know.

AD: So they would station in military units only in Ukraine, conscripts, and later the change of Masol's government that was perceived as a person who wanted to sign this new agreement on the existence of the Soviet Union. And this is what was the most irritable. And but this the same like with the dispersing of students during the Revolution of Dignity: the fact that the Kyiv University students, they started this strike of the occupation of the University. And when things started, when the police then, when there were pressures and attempts were made to disperse them, then the discontent erupted as well as support towards these students. As it was in Kyiv, then of course also in Lviv. And the way… there was then quite a strong group of Ukrainian politicians who were organized around Rukh, the National Movement of Ukraine. Some of them were even members of the Parliament. And it was then that we were counting on them, that they… that it could be further moved to the political level.

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IR: But they had – as we have already learned in one of the interviews – a completely different vision, they were not such huge supporters of these student protests, right?

AD: They were not, but nobody expected that it could have any positive outcome, such a revolution, such protests, as at that time everybody was scared of the police, militia at that time, and the earlier mass protest actions were quite brutally dispersed by the police. So here they were scared that these students could be beaten up and it was unclear whether they would be able to protest or not, so there was some carefulness here. But Stephan Khmara who was very active.. (…) Chornovil maybe a bit less, but we were also counting on them. Or Pavlychko – he was also engaged, later… I forgot… our poet… Drach, Ivan Drach was also or even Vakarchuk who was then, at that time he was a member of the Highest Council of the Soviet Union, he supported us, but there were concerns, this is true indeed.

IR: Exactly, they were scared of these negative outcomes, but how do you assess the effects of this Revolution? Did it give anything to Ukraine? Can we even call it a revolution?

AD: I think, people speak a bit less about it, as it took place at that time when a lot of things were taking places, there were a lot of changes, and it was one of such events. For sure the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which took place a year later, dominated the public opinion in regards to what this revolution brought about or about this revolution…. I think that it was a revolution because it showed that it was possible, if they take place, it showed the effectiveness of protests… that you could put pressure on the authorities, on the government and that it could give in to the public pressure of the society. And this was quite, so to say, even for us, unexpected that the Parliament and the government would go, that the government would resign, or even the prime minister. And this increased the awareness that you could in a peaceful way, by means of a protest – change the government.

AR: Can we then say that this revolution created a formula for the subsequent revolutions in Ukraine?

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AD: I am convinced and I know my friends who grew up from this revolution and they in thier whole political and public life went through this Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity and they are active, always, and they have stayed in public life for ever. Everyone of them in a different way, but directly involved in politics, or dealing with politics, some more in social organisations, others through business, but in one way or another, they are all ready to continue this revolution. And this is somehow in the minds of the Ukrainians that students, as the most active group of the society, who maybe cannot be in charge of the whole revolutionary process, but they can start it and be this catalyser for change. And this is what actually happened also during the Orange Revolution, as it also started with the students of the Kyiv-Mohyla University who started to protest or this Revolution of Dignity it was actually started with the students who did not agree with the decision not to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. So the students were seen by the society as a promotor of changes.

IR: So maybe we could return to the Orange Revolution: was it a surprise for you at all or were you expecting that something was going in a direction of a ….?

AD: During the Orange Revolution I was in Poland at the Embassy. I worked here. And we felt then, at that time I was a Minister-Counsellor at the Embassy and we felt that the tension was near. You could see that the authorities were getting ready, at those times of President Kuchma and the Central Elections Commission, to transfer power to a selected candidate – Yanukovych. These were not preparations for democratic elections, but preparations for a transfer. The elections were of course a shylma… no, that is not a Polish word…

IR: A cover?

AD: Yes, a cover. So, there was….

IR: And at that time could you already feel Russia's influence? Could you feel it back then?

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AD: No. I would not say that. We could not feel it, at last here at the Embassy, I did not feel it. I felt that there was quite serious engagement of the government administration in the election process. But to say that we could see that it was Russia – I cannot say that.

AR: And who was the Ambassador at that time?

AD: It was Ihor Charchenko. And with him we had this kind of an agreement that he will be representing the government's side, while I will represent the opposition. Why it was needed: as Poland was deeply engaged in this revolution; at both the official and unofficial level. At the official level Kwaśniewski took part in the negotiations, he participated in the negotiations and if the Embassy completely cut off from that we would not have information on what was really going on and what the prognoses were. And for example Ambassador Charchenko was going to meetings with Kwaśniewski, he was with him, he did not go, did not fly, did not participate, did not fly to Kyiv, did not participate in these talks, as these were not bilateral talks in which Ambassadors normally participate, but he was always at the airport, there he always passed information from our government agencies, the Kuchma administration to Kwaśniewski. I, on the other hand, worked more with non-governmental organisations which organised a protest here, right next to the Embassy, at the Embassy, setting up a symbolic, setting up a symbolic tenst, a tent of solidarity with those tents in Kyiv. But also with those people who came from Kyiv, both the opposition but also, for example, members of Parliament, as then Boris Tarasiuk would come here very often. And he had meetings at the Parliament, he had a speech there, when the Polish members of parliament were all wearing orange scarves. Or for example with Ruslana who won the Eurovision and was coming here and coming here for concerts, and she came here to the Embassy and together with these people who were protesting, as the tent was there for the whole time, from the beginning of the revolution indeed, and she was in touch with them, so I was there all the time too, I was there maintaining contacts.

IR: And to what extent was Poland an inspiration for Ukraine, as a colleague of ours from *Tygodnik Powszechny* who was at the Maidan at that time told us that *Tygodnik* prepared such pins which said

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"1989-2004" and 1989 was in Polish national colours, while 2004 was in Ukrainian national colours but he said that with the exception of a few journalists not many people understood that.

AD: No, maybe not like that. But for sure, for sure the Solidarity Movement, for sure events in Poland in 1989 were an inspiration that a system can be changed. And the word "solidarity" was already then quite actively used. Of course much more broadly during the Revolution of Dignity, the word, the word "solidarity" itself. But then it was more about solidarity with Poland, while during the Revolution of Dignity it was solidarity with the world, solidarity with the European Union, with the world. And then Poland, of course, supported us and for example the marches that were organised in Warsaw when Lech Kaczyński was the city's president and permits to organise these marches were issued very quickly. I remember that we were feeling here quite a strong support and the Polish history, Polish symbols they were rather an inspiration for us as how to organise a social movement against the authorities, in defence of our rights.

IR: And how do you assess this revolution? What did it contribute to Ukraine, apart from these obviously direct changes?

AD: Are we talking about the Orange Revolution? The fact that we managed to defend our votes. We could show that the society does not agree to be manipulated by the government and at that time the most by the Central Election Commission. What also seems important to me was that we managed to solve the dispute, or conflict, in a more peaceful way, without the use of force, without the authorities using force, some kind of force. And at that time there was of course a lot of enthusiasm that we will manage to change the state, change the old schemes. Later there was disappointment as we did not manage to do that, but right away after the revolution there was such a large enthusiasm that we can change it.

AR: And after the revolution you still stayed in Poland?

AD: After the revolution I stayed in Poland only until 2006, even 2005 (the end of the year). And then Tarasiuk, with whom I made friends, offered me a job as a spokesman of the ministry of foreign affairs. So, after finishing my job here at the Embassy, I joined the MFA as a spokesman.

IR: And you stayed at the MFA for…

AD: I stayed there for two years, from 2006 to 2008, or the end of 2007 that I was the spokesman of the MFA. At that time I worked with Tarasiuk, later Yatseniuk as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, later with Okryzka. So, all in all, with three ministers. And later I left, meaning I was nominated, and I left at the end of 2007, beginning of 2008, I left for Finland where I was an Ambassador.

IR: But in the meantime there were a few protests, let us call them Maidans, between the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. Did the moment when the Revolution of Dignity broke out surprise you? Or did you expect this moment to be coming close and knew that it was it?

AD: No, it rather surprised me. I did not expect that such a large, such huge number of people, will protest. That so many people will show up on Kyiv's streets. I rather thought that there will be another Maidan like in the previous years, after the change of power following the Orange Revolution, there were all kinds of those smaller Maidans. And I also did not feel this support in Ukraine's regions, as this action was then organised by the National Front, even more, and also a bit by Svoboda and Udar, in the regions. Such demonstrations in regions… it did not seem to be of a large scale, marginal rather. OK, there was support, but no power. So it was a surprise for me, the number of people who came to the streets.

IR: And were you in Kyiv at that time?

AD: At that time I was in Kyiv. I was there by the end of 2013, until 2013 I was, let me say it in English – a special representative of the OSCE, a chair person in office, a special representative for conflict

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resolution. As in 2013 Ukraine chaired OSCE and I was a such a special envoy for conflict resolution on the OSCE space. I would most often go to Transnistria, later Georgia, Abkhazia, Ossetia, Armenia, Baku, even though I have never been to Nagorno-Karabakh, each side agreed to it. So I participated in all those talks on conflict resolution in Geneva and in Vienna – mostly in those two places.

AR: So you had a chance to see those conflicts directly before the conflict in Ukraine?

AD: Exectly, before the conflict in Ukraine, yes. At that time I was still this special envoy and in November, by the end of November, I was still in Chisinau when I received information from the head of the UE Mission in Chisinau, from the Embassy of the European Union in Chisinau, the European Commission as it is officially called the Head of the European Commission, who was my friend from my time in Finland Pirkka Tapiola, and he was an advisor to Solana during the Orange Revolution. He was then the Ambassador of the European Union in Chisinau, that – it was in November, in mid-November – that then probably the UE Commissioner responsible for Enlargement was coming… a Czech…

IR: Füle.

AD: Stefan Füle, yes. That he arrived and before the summit in Vilnius it was to be signed, and that there was a refusal and that Azarov said, or Kuchma, that Yanukovych said that he will refuse the proposal to sign and there will be no signing…

AR: And what was your reaction at that time?

AD: I was astonished because before we received, as at that time I was still with the MFA, formally I was an Ambassador-at-Large and all this information that were receiving that we will have to work hard, to catch up as we were signing, and then there was even the government's decision to accelerate the signing

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of this agreement and even before Vilnius discuss all these matters in this agreement, so that it could be, so it could be signed. So there was a huge surprise that we withdrew, that it won't happen.

AR: And this is what you found out from the representative….?

AD: No, no, from Stefan Füle. I learned from Pirkka Tapiola because Stefan Füle was in Kyiv and right away, through the diplomatic missions of the European Commission, they expanded their network, their information network, that it won't be signed. So I learned about it quicker from them than I learned from my own people. As I happened to be in Chisinau at that time, dealing with these Transnistrian matters, this conflict. And then I returned to Kyiv, at the time when the first demonstration happened, at the end of November, before the Vilnius Summit, this student demonstration, and this was on those days, if I am not mistaken it was November 25th, I do not remember, but it was a Sunday for sure. I remember this day very well, as it was on Sunday, it was right before the Vilnius Summit. There was such a faith that people will come out and pass their wishes that we want and then the delegations came to a meeting about Transnistria, delegations from those states that participated in the negotiations on Transnistria. We led them, as Ukraine, the chair of OSCE, but there were also representatives from Moldova, Transnistria, the European Union, the United States, Russia and Ukraine.

AR: This 5+2 format…

AD: - 5+2, yes, And they then arrived, we had, on Monday there was supposed to be a meeting, and on Sunday there was this large demonstration. At the European Square, not Maidan yet, but the European Square. And at that time I was still somehow greeting these delegations there, I was even with the Russians, I even went with a Russian delegation to dinner, there was this guy – Boryi and at that time I already was wearing this pin: Ukraine-European Union. And he said "Oh something is coming up". And then they saw how many people, at that time around 100 thousand people participated in this demonstration on Sunday. Also for me this was quite a surprise, but I still did not believe that for example one million could come to the street, there was already 100 thousand.

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IR: Did you expect that the Ukrainians would pay such a price in lives as during this revolution and in the name of such values?

AD: In the beginning of the revolution rather not. Rather not. And it seemed to me that this dispute could have been resolved and this conflict in a peaceful way, just like during the Orange Revolution or during the Revolution on Granite. But… and such a conviction got even stronger after December 10th. December 10th and 11th, when the first attempt to disperse the Maidan took place. However, when those divisions of special forces did not use weapons to disperse Maidan. I remember when then at night my friend, Serhii Fomenko, who is a leader of a ground called "Mandra" called me. "Mandra" is a music band. During the Orange Revolution he wrote the lyrics for one very famous song, which was then used as an anthem of the revolution "Ne spy moja ridna zemlia" ("Do not sleep my homeland"), such a song. And he called me on December 10th at night, around 1am, and said that there was information that Maidan would be dispersed and that we had to go there and defend this Maidan. So I went there and we were at this Maidan already at night, starting at 1am until the morning. And then it did not succeed. And then we believed that we could nonetheless successfully change things in a peaceful way, as we had endured this pressure. That there probably be some kind of change, that probably there was some decision to be made, that the government will resign, that there will be some staff changes… But nothing happened, so the people were standing and waiting for these changes to happen. And then, and it was still in December, then I did not believe that people could die. So there was such a faith that we will endure in these protests…

IR: And you did not think that Yanukovych could use force against people?

AD: No, rather not. Even though, in February, as it started, as on January 19th I was in Kyiv when everything started at Hrushchevskyi Street, when the tensions started….

IR: Tensions…

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AD: Tensions at Hrushchevskyi, I was in Kyiv then. And when it started, the shooting at Maidan, or at Instytucka, on that day I was not in Kyiv. I only arrived because I happened to, as I was still finishing these things with Transnistria. Or not with Transnistria but other conflicts too, I was somewhere, I do not remember where… in Vienna…or… I arrived on February 19th, but I was there already on the 20th because at home all neighbours gathered and were making sandwiches, I was delivering some stuff to Maidan, we wanted to take, somebody was wounded, here already…then we started to believe that indeed there could be victims, such an awareness appeared in January, at the end of January when those Zhyzneuski and Nigoyan were killed. And here too, in the awareness that there could be victims, and that this was nonetheless a revolution and that we had them. Even though nobody wanted to believe that there will be so many of them.

AR: And officially you were still holding a position?

AD: Officially, I was holding a position with the Ukrainian MFA. I was an ambassador-at-large and in January I was an initiator of a letter of diplomats, a kind of an appeal from the diplomats to the authorities to – this was at the end of January, after those first victims – to finish this conflict and in a peaceful way continue the line which was still in October, the line of getting closer to the European Union. And not to allow for a greater, a greater number of victims. And the support of Maidan, we supported Maidan…. That people who were protesting believing that the Association Agreement would be signed. So we signed, around 150 people signed this appeal, I was among those who initiated this appeal. This is an interesting fact that in two revolutions, the Orange one and this Revolution of Dignity, at the end of the revolution, close to the end of the revolution, the diplomats issued such an appeal. As a similar appeal was issued during the Orange Revolution. The appeal of diplomats, Ukrainian diplomats, supporting rather the opposition than the authorities.

AR: So a noticeable difference…

AD: Yes, a noticeable difference that among the diplomats, in governmnet structures, there is an opposition to this line that was being pushed forward.

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IR: And Yanukovych's escape. Was it a surprise for you?

AD: Yes, yes. I remember this day as I was then, we were meeting all the time, in some cafes, or other places, then we met at home with my friend from Kyiv, who was also from Lviv, we knew each other from the time of the Revolution on Granite, Yurko Panasiuk who later became an IT specialist. Now he is in ATO, he joined the army and is now fighting in eastern Ukraine. But then he was in Kyiv and we were…. We would often meet at Maidan and his girlfriend with whom he lived at that time, Katia Gorchynskaya, she was the editor-in-chief of *Kyiv Post*. And they wrote a lot about it. And then we met in the evening and Katia Gorochynskaya got information from sources close to the president that Yanukovych had escaped. And then I called, I remember, that then I called Andriy Oncharuk who was then the president's foreign policy advisor. Like today, for example, Yasiliev. And he confirmed it that yes we have such information that Yanukovych flew somewhere, that he flew out but he did not know where, where he had escaped, but that he was not there. So I asked him: "And what about you? Are you also going?" and he said: "No, I am staying in Kyiv."

IR: Would he (Yanukovych) follow the fate of Ceaușescu? If he stayed…

AD: I do not think so. Meaning… if it happened after the 21st, 22nd, I do not know what would be the reaction of the people who had attacked the Presidential Administration. I suspect that attitude of the protesters was to legally finish – I do not know how to say this in Polish – tension, conflict… but after this, after so many people had been killed, it was difficult to expect that the reaction would be a calm one. Even thought the leaders of the protest were rather opting for a peaceful completion of the protest. And this is when this appeal by Parasiuk, Volodymir Parasiuk, that we had to go till the end, that we will all die. He, nonetheless, was motivating these people who were there at Maidan.

AR: Were you involved in the negotiation process?

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AD: No, I was not involved in that. I was close to Yatseniuk because we knew each other from the times of our work at the MFA. Later I supported the foundation which he chaired, Open Ukraine. I worked with him, my wife worked for this foundation. I also knew Tarasiuk who participated in these talks, Ohryzko who had contacts with those foreign guests who arrived. Overall, Tarasiuk was kind of a minister of foreign affairs of that Maidan. Valeryi Chalyi too, but I was not in the Maidan Council. I did not participate. But I was very close, as I say, to these people, plus Serhii Fomenko, Foma, Foma – nick name Foma – the leader of the "Mandry" band, he was also there, and I had a very good contact with him but I did not participate.

IR: - Thank You

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