

Interview with Andriy Salyuk (AS). Interviewer: Olesya Yaremchuk (OY). Place of record: Lviv.

A.S.: We always talked about it at home. I remember when I was a little kid (around five-six) and the whole family gathered around a table to celebrate a holiday or birthday, my favorite part of the evening was the last part – when everyone started to go home. After that we sang our songs a bit quieter. We sang about firearms and cannonry. At the age of five I used to think those songs were about Cossacks. But shotguns did not fit the story. I thought maybe they confused something. I loved that part of the song even though I did not fully understand it. When I grew up I found out that those were songs of the Sich Riflemen. Later on, when we created the brotherhood organization (which happened spontaneously, basically in one day), when we started to go on camping trips, when we got to know each other better, we found out that around three fourth of the brotherhood joined it for very similar reasons. Most of their family members were in prison or sent to fight for Ukraine. Those people wanted to do something, they were ready to take the responsibility and, what is most important – to act. Not just to observe, but actually do something. Therefore, without long preparation or demanding recruitment process, our Student Brotherhood was established. By the way, we all still keep in touch and stick together. We have similar backgrounds, so we get along very well.

O.Y.: How did you find each other? How was the group formed?

A.S.: Even before I joined the army, there was a lot of talk about perestroika. At the time politics were discussed more often, although nobody dared to talk openly about Ukrainian independence. I served in the army in the Zakarpattia Oblast in today's 128th brigade. In winter of 1986-87 we hang the flag of Ukrainian SSR above our tent. Although, technically it was forbidden in the army. Our argument was very simple: we were in Ukraine and we were from Ukraine. Everyone who was in the tent was from Ukraine, apart from the one guy who came from Buryatyi, but his parents were deported from Ukraine.

When I came back to Lviv, I saw that a lot had changed since my departure. Before there was only komsomol, but new organizations were set up and new projects were organized. For

example, “Expedition Along the Dnieper”. They were studying ecology, which after Chernobyl, was a painful subject. These types of organizations like “Ecological and cultural expedition along the Dnieper” significantly differed from komsomol. People started to talk in a different way, this was one of the first steps for further action. This project inspired the creation of the “Lviv Society”.

There were many projects connected to history. Many went to Lychakivsky cemetery, looked for it and talked a lot how unique the cemetery was and that you cannot find anything like that in whole Europe. They took the initiative to clean and take care of it. I lived in a dormitory back then and tried to contact them, but this historical society was very secretive and it was difficult to get in. At the same time the Head of the Ministry Council of the USSR adopted a law about the Ukrainian language, which gave a start for establishing the “Enlightment” organization. I remember talking to my grandmother when “Enlightment” center was established at my faculty. She told me that they also had one back in the day.

After that the “People's Movement of Ukraine” began to actively develop. Unfortunately, a lot of people joined because their party committees advised them to. Despite that there were plenty of positive and nice people and the “Movement” did play an important role in Ukrainian history; yet there were a lot of people which I did not like. I was a part of the “Fellowship of the Ukrainian Language” and we always organized various events. Then came the year of 1989.

In 1988 one of my friends, who is now a journalist, encouraged me to join the organization, established by students. Not a lot of people knew about this organization and we constantly postponed going to their meeting, so I couldn't get in.

The spring of 1988 was full of different demonstrations. One of those demonstrations took place on March 11th, and there was forceful crackdown on protesters, not at the level of Maidan, though. But many were arrested. Students tried to help those who were arrested. Our friends, who later became members of the “Student Brotherhood”, spent five days in jail for participating in the demonstrations. The worst thing was that those students were expelled from universities.

O.Y.: Do you remember who was it?

A.S.: One of them was Yanko Yurii. He told us: “While I was in jail, all I thought about was to steal the aluminium cup and show it later to my kids to prove that I spent some time in prison for Ukraine. That was all I could think of.”

I had a classmate – Lubko Petrenko. When I returned home from the army, he was already in the fourth year, although he was supposed to attend the second. He knew boys studying journalism, who organized the “Student Brotherhood” in Lviv University in 1988. Some of the members were: Pankieev Volodya, Kuzan Oleg, Pohranychnyj Oles and others.

The arrests of students on March 11th provoked demonstrations in front of the administrative buildings of universities. On the next day I found out that it was our guys from the Polytechnic University that got arrested. We started discussing it and what should we do. Some students from the Academy of Arts joined us. We went together to demonstrations, although they were poorly organized and rather naïve. Nonetheless, it was a serious signal for the authorities, because that demonstration that happened in front of Polytechnic University building got their attention and was discussed during the session of the Regional Committee of the Party. The rector of the university was told to catch all the participants.

Then there was a very important event – elections to Verkhovna Rada. It was a popular discussion topic among students. In fact, on April 19th some of us at the Polytechnic gathered to choose candidates for deputies of the Soviet Union. We chose Ivan Drach as a candidate for the elections. He was the president of the “National Movement” at that time. I did not belong to that organization but we did work together with teachers from the “Movement”. My friend Lubko Drach once said to me that we should support our candidate, so we started thinking how we should do that. Lubko’s dad had a lot of connections, for example he knew Horyn and Chornovil. So Lubko was our informer. We decided that we needed to support our candidate by organizing a demonstration in front of our university chanting “Politechnic for Drach”.

At first there was about thirty people in the protest, which was not enough and there was no reaction. So we started to ask other students to support and join us. All our classmates from Lviv started to call their parents and ask them to support Drach for a candidate and talk about him at work with their colleagues.

Soon more people joined us and we gathered a big crowd, people came from other universities and firms. We stood there for a long time, until late at night, demanding to accept Drach as our

candidate. In the end, we did not succeed. But that was a spontaneous demonstration. We then decided that we should gather again on the next day at five at the Market Square for a city protest. If to Politechnika came around a few thousands of people then to the Market Square came tens of thousands. Later we named it a week of protests, because everyday there was a demonstration. This was April of 1989. Later we marched through the city center, along Pidvalna street and near the city administration.

During the protests near the Polytechnic we had a certain order, everyone was afraid of provocations, for instance, somebody throwing stones at the window or calling the police and so on. That is why we stood in a row in order to separate the protesters from the people who came for the the meeting inside the university. During the break from the meeting delegates went out and we did not want them to throw anything or hit anybody. Basically, not to provoke something. We naturally formed a sort of a student group, but it did not stop people who did not know each other from joining us. In order not to get lost we agreed to meet near the monument of Pidkova and went from there to the demonstration.

Late at night, when they officialy declined Drach's candidacy, we marched back to the dormitories, to let everyone know that on the next day we were going to have another demonstration. Around 50-60 people were going along the Myru street. New people joined in, everyone got to know each other. Soon we realized that we needed to create an organization that would defend the rights of students.

O.Y.: When did you establish the "Student Brotherhood"? Of course, at that time the tensions were somewhat eased but it was still quite a radical move. Nonetheless, you decided to act. What motivated and inspired you to do that? Did you take the experiences of Poles and Czechs as an example?

A.S.: Later we did have a contact with Poles and Lithuanians, but I cannot say that we followed their examples. We acted because we simply knew we had to act and do something.

O.Y.: Why did you decide to do it?

A.S.: Because, as I mentioned before, when I was little I listened to those songs, which celebrated independence, and especially independence of one's country, I listened to my parent's conversations on this topic. My parents were sent to Siberia with the help of UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army). My grandfather was a priest and he was arrested by Poles for preaching in Ukrainian. When the Soviets came – he was released for political reasons and later he was imprisoned again for political crimes. At first he spent some time in prison, later he did time in camps in Mordovia, later he was exiled. While he was in prison he made my grandmother write a refusal letter, otherwise she along with two kids would be sent to Siberia. Those were difficult times. After some time she voluntarily travelled to my grandfather.

I remember talking to my friend about all of this, when we had already created the “Student Brotherhood”. Many of the members came from families with similar backgrounds. He used to say: “If we actually had to go to a war, I would rather be killed. I am really afraid of being captured. I am not sure if I would have survived all the torture.” His grandfather was in UPA, and afterwards in Buchenwald.

During my 4-5th year at the university, when the “Student Brotherhood” was created, I had to study really hard and even received a scholarship. I understood that it was easier for them to expel me for failing the exams than for political reasons.

On April 25th we decided to establish the “Student Brotherhood of Lviv Polytechnic University”. We also established the Council of the “Student Brotherhood”. We tried to reach consensus when choosing people to the Council, so very different people got in. We also adopted the “right of minority” as part of our code – the right to disagree with a decision and the right not to participate in our projects, but, at the same time, they could not hinder the process. It was especially important to us, since the situation was ambiguous and uncertain. This way everyone was free to decide for themselves what they wanted to do.

The “Student Brotherhood” was formed in the building of the “Lev Society”. We cooperated closely with the “Lev Society”, because we shared the same ideas and opinions. A lot of things that we organized we did together. Moreover, we even shared the same members. For example, Slavko Pavluk was a very active member in our organization, and, at the same, time he was the head of the “Lev Society”.

Soon after the establishment of our organization at the Polytechnic University, we thought it would be more effective if every university had a student brotherhood. So until May 25th student brotherhoods were established at the medical institute, the Art Academy, and on May 25th the “Lviv Student Brotherhood” was formed. We elected Demyan Malarchuk, a history student, as the head of the organization.

O.Y.: What did you talk about at home then?

A.S.: When I returned home to Novyj Rozdol from Lviv, I mostly talked to them about what was happening in Lviv. None of my parents told me that I cannot do that or that I do not have a right to do that. The only thing that my dad told me when I was going to Kyiv for the hunger strike was: “Be wise”. My parents knew all my fellow members from the “Brotherhood”. They often came to my house. We spent all holidays together, we visited our families. We really did have great relationships, we had the feeling of brotherhood.

O.Y.: Did you have any slogans?

A.S.: “For Ukraine”. We always tried to be “for” something and not “against”. We wanted to show that we were representing students’ interests. We defended students’ rights at the faculties, in front of the dean. We organized festivals like the “Spring of Polytechnic”. We encouraged other students to join us.

Overall, there were around 140-150 members in our organizations out of 15 thousand students. Fifty people from the Polytechnic decided to go on the hunger strike. But if anybody of the members came to us and encouraged to go to a protest, for instance, to demand equal rights for international and Ukrainian students, we all went there to support.

We had the respect of the people and we cherished it and tried to deserve it. Sometimes it happened that in a group there was only one person from the “Brotherhood” and it was enough to win the support of the whole group. Although there were some exceptions, overall the brotherhood enjoyed its high authoritative status.

O.Y.: Why do you think the movement did not become more popular?

A.S.: There are no active majorities in societies. It is very fortunate if active people represent at least one percent of a society. It was the same with Maidan. There are people who only offer moral support, they support the cause but are unwilling to actually go to the streets. But those fifty people in our brotherhood were committed to the idea, they were true patriots and activists, who were ready to give their time and efforts for the cause. Brotherhood members were the first who started the hunger strike. The rest followed their example.

I often get asked who came up with the idea of the hunger strike. In the spring of 1990 we had a day of a hunger strike in honour of the Chinese students repressed on the Tiananmen Square. In a year since the “Brotherhood” establishment we had already had various experiences of social activity. We did all sorts of things like, for example, the restoration of the Sich Riflemen graves in the Lviv Oblast. The core of the organization was very strong. Although there were a lot of active newcomers, it was usually the core of the organization that took the decisions. Nonetheless, it was not a hierarchy.

O.Y.: Was there mutual trust? Could you rely on each other?

A.S.: We knew that anything could happen, but we also knew that those people were absolutely trustworthy. Of course we were aware that there would be people who will report on us to the KGB. But those were not the people who could have any real impact or those who would take decisions. We were not manipulated. Outsiders could only observe.

During one of our meetings with guys from Kyiv we decided to go on a hunger strike on the October Revolution Square, today’s Maidan of Independence. After the meeting I talked to Markiyan Ivanyshyn and Igor Kotsyuruba. Markiyan worried that somebody was going to leak the information about the protest. So somebody proposed to do it in another place. Somebody replied: “But that is the very center of the city.” “So let’s tell them that it is going to be in Mariinsky Park, but in fact do it in the Square.” – that was somebody else’s suggestion. To which we got a response: “You are idiots.” But our arguments that it was easier to set up tents in the park on the ground rather than on concrete, were very persuasive.



We sent our colleague – Myshko Kanafotskyj – to Kyiv, to make sure that the preparations will go smoothly. And he did show up to the strike with lots of materials for setting up tents on the ground because he thought that it was going to be in the park.

We nominated three people to be in charge of the hunger strike – Markiyan Iwanyshyn, Oles Doniy and Oleg Barkov. They represented people from the East, West and center. We formed a few groups: people who were going to be on the hunger strike, a medical group, a security group and those in charge of the equipment – tents and sleeping bags. I am very proud of the Lviv students who played a key role in the beginning of the revolution. Because in the very beginning there were few people from Kyiv. I also mention organization of “Honest Brotherhood” in Kyiv that was very active in the protests.

I was the head of the Polytechnic Brotherhood at that time and, by extension, a part of the Council. The Council of Polytechnic Brotherhood decided that our female members will not go to the hunger strike. Girls were angry with me for a year and a half after that decision. But, keep in mind that we went there with a deep conviction that we were going to be arrested on the first day there. We did not plan just to stand there, we expected that there would be a fight. In addition, not long before our protest there was a tragedy in Tbilisi where demonstrators were beaten with spades. Girls did eventually come on the third day of the hunger strike when we were sure they were not going to disperse the demonstration.

I remember the girls were seriously upset and cried when we left because they were not sure how it was going to end. We thought that they were going to go to prison so we told them that once they do that they should organize strikes at the universities. Other people got imprisoned, another strikes started so there would be a real protest movement.

O.Y.: Why do you think they did not stop you?

A.S.: They were afraid. There were too many of us. At first there were around 112 people, but that was together with those on the hunger strike, security, doctors and media.

I think that another reason for our success was that we kept order. We were all well-behaved, strictly listening to the leader, without any bickering. Later we could debate who was right and wrong but at that moment we all knew we needed to maintain order.



When we were on the train on our way to Kyiv, fifteen minutes before our arrival, me and Markiyan were giving the instructions. First of all, when leaving the train we all had to go in different directions. Because we were convinced that somebody was already waiting for us. Second of all, the hunger strike was going to be on October Revolution Square, not in the Mariinsky Park as it had been announced before.

Me and my friends went to a cafe near Maidan and ate as much as we could. What else can you do before a hunger strike? (laughing)

Of course, people sometimes resort to starving themselves as a treatment to improve you health. Only for ten days and you need to prepare yourself for that. We were not as conscious. On September 29th we all went to Markijan's wedding, and on October 2nd we began our hunger strike. I suppose it was a strange thing to witness. When a lot of people started to gather around Maidan at the same time and began to set up tents, taking out their blankets, sleeping bags and signs "We are on a hunger strike". Some people had a hard time setting up their tents on the granit. Two patrolling policemen looked truly shocked watching what was unfolding in front of them. We did sent two of our guys to Mariinsky Park to check out the situation there. They said that there were more policemen than trees. They waited for us.

We did wonder who could have betrayed us. We do not have proof, but we know that Vjacheslav Pichovshek was closely involved in that process. I think he was sent to us on purpose. Maybe somebody else contributed as well. In Mariinsky Park they would shut down the protest quickly and quietly. None would even know that the students came there to demonstrate.

At the Maidan people kept coming over and talk to us. Soon journalists also took a notice of us. They made many press releases. We did manage to start it when the authorities were not prepared for that. At that time there were many people in the Kyiv City Council who disliked the central authorities, and in the evening we received from them a permission to continue with our demonstration.

Back then we had OMON with white helmets and dark grey shields. They stood behind the Lenin monument. There was a fifty meter distance between us.

Myshko Kanafatskyj, whom I mentioned before, took care of the hooks for the tents, made in "Lenin's Smithy". We distributed them among the guys for protection. The second thing, which I asked for was to take the girls who came eventually, away from the camp or at least to underpass.

I also asked the guys to interlace the ropes from the tents in a way that in case they were going to run, at least it would slow them down.

We put pegs with a rope around the camp – a sign not to enter. Myshko Kanafatskyj took a piece of paper and wrote: “Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square)”. He was the one who named the square.

We received letters of support from various places – all over Ukraine, from all over the world, from the Chinese students, from America, Poland, Australia, Canada, the Ukrainian community in South Africa.

On the fifth day of the hunger strike we did not know what to do. The journalists kept coming to us, but there was no coverage on the media. Nobody even mentioned it. We felt like we were in an information blockade.

The first two to three days of starving were difficult, but later it was easier and we calmed down. The authorities did not react in any way. It was as if we did not exist. We began thinking what we could do to attract their attention. But they did it for us. On the fifth day the communists decided to come to honour Lenin and bring flowers to his monument. They wanted to destroy the camp in this way. Since they were supposed to come to the square the police were supposed to guarantee “order” and, by extension, take care of us.

It was a very important day. We started to prepare for them in the morning, since this ceremony was to be held at noon on purpose. We noticed that significantly more people started showing up to our camp than before. People kept coming and soon on the street where they were supposed to come with flowers, the whole place between Chreshchatyk and our camp, was full of people. Kyiv came to support and help us. From the beginning of Maidan to the Lenin monument, to Instytutcska street, people formed a sort of shield between this big square with our camp and people who came to the Lenin statue. Thousands of people came to help us and not to allow for a fight.

It was the first time when people came to stand up for starving students without prior agreement or arrangement among themselves. That was a sign of change. From that moment on all the newspapers, radio and tv channels started reporting on the situation. We got a phone installed in the camp from the main post office.

We had a press service. It was an information breakthrough for us. And we should give credit to them for doing it. Students came from different Ukrainian universities to join those in Kyiv. We asked students in Kyiv to support us. We started to form groups with Kyiv students and hunger strike participants. We started to organize different events. In order for our activity to become more dynamic.

On October 14th, on the Feast of the Intercession day, we went to Verkhovna Rada for the first time. There were hundreds of thousands of us. It was the first such demonstration in Kyiv. We set up a tent camp in front of Verkhovna Rada, the police could not stop us. We occupied red and yellow pavilions of the university. They, the authorities, realized that we will not back down. There were people in Verkhovna Rada who thought they should use tanks on students, and others said they were on hunger strike with students and the world would not forgive them. Protests began in every city with a university. In Lviv they went on a hunger strike in front of the Theatre of Opera and Ballet.

The most important demand for us was about not signing the new Soviet treaty. Gorbachev lobbied a lot for this treaty. Some people tried to add some social demands – student rights, scholarship raises. We rejected all of that, our most important goal was not to allow the signing of that treaty. We also wanted that our boys from Ukraine would serve only in Ukraine, not all over the Soviet Union. We did not want our boys to die in the so-called hot points – for instance, Nagorno-Karabach. Another of our demands was the organization of new parliamentary elections on multiparty basis. We wanted the dismissal of the communist party and comsomol, nationalization of the communist party's property.

We did not talk out loud about Ukrainian independence yet.

O.Y.: But you thought about it?

A.S.: The protest was the first step to Ukrainian independence.

O.Y.: Why did you stop the protest?

A.S.: Because Verkhovna Rada accepted the demands of the students.

Almost all Ukrainian cities with universities started their protests to support us, except for two cities. One of which was Zaporizhia and some other city. On October 15th we had a meeting to discuss whether we should help organize something in Zaporizhia. The decision was: “Andriy, go to Zaporizhia and take a few volunteers with you who are willing to accompany you.” And on the same day about ten people went to Zaporizhia.

So I ended my hunger strike. We did not want to die of hunger, what mattered to us was the result. On the tenth day of the hunger strike hundreds of new people joined us. There was no point to continue for those who were there from the first day.

During our hunger strike we only drank warm water. Ten days of not eating was not so difficult, but psychologically we were exhausted. In addition, it was constantly cold, living in tents. So there was physical exhaustion as well. I remember we intentionally did not use the stairs and went directly through Chreshchatyk, because it was too difficult for us.

So on October 13th I started to gradually wean off the hunger strike. I had to leave on the 15th so I needed to return to not eating on the 17th. On the 16th we arrived and met with local activists, students to discuss all the details.

On October 17th I began to write a request claim statement to the police about the picket (back then there was a rule that you have to warn the police about a demonstration. Although, now you have to do that too.) Yulia, a student from Zaporizhia, came in and told me: “You can stop now. The demonstration was canceled.”

“What has happened? Did they disperse the protest?”

“No, they accepted our demands!”

We could not believe that. I felt a bit offended because I was not there. I tried to call the phone on Maidan, but the line was constantly busy. I called my dad: “Congratulations, son!” “Thank you! What happened?” “You don’t know? Where are you?” and he told me what was going on in Kyiv. Verkhovna Rada accepted the demands. That is how I found out about our victory. Of course, I was immensely happy, but I regretted not being there in Kyiv.

O.Y.: It is difficult to imagine what could have happened if it was not for that victory.

A.S.: First of all, it was very important that a new Soviet treaty was not signed. Another significant moment was the decision to hold new parliamentary elections on multiparty basis. Verkhovna Rada accepted the decision, following the demand from students, that in spring of 1991 there will be new elections to Verkhovna Rada. That was one of the key steps towards implementing the rest of our demands. But our deputies that represented national-democratic groups could not grasp just how important that step was. They did everything in their powers to stop those elections in the spring of 1991 from happening. They made a deal with Leonid Kravchuk just not to implement this demand. They were worried that many would vote for a younger population and they would lose their seats in the parliament.

After the unsuccessful coup d'état in Moscow, the communists in Verkhovna Rada were afraid that they were going to share the blame for participating in the Moscow coup d'état in August. In my opinion, this is the only reason why they decided to separate Ukraine from USSR. If Ukraine was an independent country, the KGB of the Soviet Union would not be able to do anything to them. If elections were held in spring of 1991, they would not be in the parliament. And the proclamation of Independence would have happened in a different way. They adopted all the laws that were beneficial to them. Unfortunately that set Ukraine on the wrong path of development.

The biggest failure of the Revolution on Granite was that people who we believed would finish what we started did not do that (and we were absolutely convinced that our colleagues in national-democratic forces in the parliament were same-minded and share our ideas and goals). They struck a deal with the authorities and did not do enough to organize new elections on multiparty basis.

It was the National Council. And I blame everyone from the National Council. None of them had the courage and decency to stand up and say that we need to go to the end with this. Nothing of that sort happened.

There was also a hunger strike in 1992, but it was not as big. Kuchma was the prime minister and the police dispersed student protest with batons. There were constant fights with students. Communists adopted to a new reality. They desperately did not want another protest to happen. Every next Maidan we have had was even more brutal than the previous one. If our protests in the 1990s went peaceful, the Orange Revolution was completely different and the worst was the Revolution of Dignity.

I am incredibly grateful I have met such great people from the Brotherhood. They could feel the responsibility to act. Today some of them are in publishing, some are musicians, some are journalists, but if there are some events like this going on they always show the initiative and get involved. We try to meet every other every for New Year's. Before the war we tried to meet again and go to Shatsk just to spend some time together.

O.Y.: So you all still keep in touch?

A.S.: Absolutely. For instance, soon is Andryj's name day, and I am sure everyone is going to come to my house and celebrate it. We rarely see each other throughout the year, but when we have an occasion or there is an important event we always get together.

O.Y.: What did you feel in the beginning of Maidan?

A.S.: It hurts more after it all has ended than in the beginning. When you realize that essentially nothing has changed. The same was with the Revolution of Dignity. When the revolution ended we were all excited, but half a year later we saw the same pattern being repeated all over again. People again do not trust the authorities. During the Revolution of Dignity it appeared as if all the losses, the price we had to pay, all the pain should have been enough. After it all ended it felt like a victory. Despite the fact that the war has begun. But there was an apparent result – Yanukovich and his people were ousted. And those new people that got power, who swore to be loyal to the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian ideals, are not much different from their predecessors. In your mind you know that change does not happen in a moment of time, but you are still heartbroken. And this pain lives on. It hurts because we sacrificed so much and no real difference has been made.

Many journalists ask me: what do we need to do now? Had I known, I would have done it already. I know I cannot just come to Poroshenko and tell him to step down. I cannot change our president, even though I think he is unworthy of his position because of what he is doing now. I am not saying that everything depends on him and he is responsible for everything, but a great deal does depend on him and the president can do a lot. And he does not do anything. I do not care about his

finances: whether he stole or not. I consider that him doing nothing is a crime. But I cannot change that. That is why I do what I can. I can help one or two people survive this war. Now I am trying to help those fighting in the East. There are true patriots who are fighting to defend our country. We need to look after them. We cannot allow another Illinois, where the most motivated ones died.

It makes you wonder if they did not do it on purpose to destroy the most motivated ones, who are willing to fight for our country.

I belong to a volunteering group called “Lviv Knight”. When the third Maidan began I went there with my fellow brotherhood friend. I also went there with my daughter. I never thought that I was going to go to a revolution with my daughter. I did not believe in the beginning of Euromaidan. There were such good people, such nice, open-hearted students, but there were wrong people in charge. The real revolution began when the innocent students were sent under attack.

There were no outlined demands, no well-planned action. When we were organizing the protest in the 1990s even those people that stayed in Lviv knew what needed to be done. We knew what we were doing and what we wanted to achieve. I realized that I could not help with anything on that Maidan.

After the beating of the students in Kyiv, the students asked me to help them set up a medical help center. People brought warm clothes, food and so on, but everything was thrown into one pile. I did not like it so we started to sort it all. This all was initiated by the students. They reminded me of our brotherhood. In January 2014 there were about seventy people. We did not receive any money but we gathered food, clothes and all the rest.

In spring 2014 the border guards came to us. They were going to Chonhar then. They did not have any sleeping bags or normal shoes. They came to us and asked: “Maybe you have something left after Maidan?”. We gave them our body armours, food, warm clothes, sleeping bags, blankets. Later, when the events in the East began, we realized that it was not enough to win the war. So we relocated to help the soldiers with the equipment.

Since spring 2014 we have begun to help them with food, tried to find a way to buy them equipment. I remember when I brought the first imager to Ukraine. And said: “We need night vision goggles” “But this is better” – I replied. I knew what an imager was because it was used in a restaurant where I worked at before the war. But they did not know what it was then.



We needed to teach them. Until July 2014 nobody knew about us. Later we realized that we needed to let people know about us somehow. I came up with an idea to name our organization “Lviv Knight”.

In 1914, when the Russian army took over Lviv, there were many Russophiles who thought of them as a brother nation. After a few months of Russians staying in Lviv there were no Russophiles left, because people saw it with their own eyes what it was and how they behaved. When in 1916 the Russian army again was nearing Lviv, the city dwellers began to gather money to strengthen their defense. With this idea in mind a sculpture of a knight out of a lime tree which was two and a half meters high was made. He was stood where today is a monument of Ivan Pidkova. Everyone who paid money to strengthen the army could hammer a nail into his armour. Now he is at the History Museum. Those were the nails that they used for soldier’s shoes. Then came the idea that a society can help strengthen army’s defense capacity.

I knew about this story before. I think that we are doing the same thing now. And we did want to copy that sculpture. We wanted to repeat the idea of the Lviv’s Knight – when the community looks after its soldiers. I proposed to make a sculpture of a Knight as Saint Yuriy who was always a saint patron of Ukrainian soldiers. But we did not want to hammer nails into the Saint so we gave him an armour. After all, the armour became a great symbol after Maidan.

O.Y.: How in your opinion, besides the priority to protect Ukrainian borders, should the reforms be implemented effectively?

A.S.: One interesting man once told me that you cannot take a swine away from the trough because there will be another swine to replace it. So you need to take away the trough. We need to unite our people in order to make those people in charge start working. After Maidan our society changed a lot.

Now we have a situation similar to the eastern legend “How to Kill a Dragon”. When a warrior with noble intentions to protect its people from a covetous dragon is going to kill him and give people all the stolen goods. But after his victory the warrior sees all the treasures stolen by the dragon, and forgets why he came there in the first place. He is fascinated with the treasure and power, tries to protect the treasure from the people and keep it for himself and turns into the same

evil dragon. Now the former warrior and a new dragon continues to steal from the people until a new warrior comes. And this vicious cycle will never end until one of the warriors stops it and will not be tempted by the treasures. We should not wait for a new warrior, but use the power of the people to restrain the warrior in power so he would not be able to show his dragon form.