Interview with Yevhen Bystrytsky (YB). Interviewer: Tetyana Pryvalko (TP)

TP: Today is 25th of July 2016. My name is Tetyana Pryvalko and I’m conducting the interview with Yevhen Bystrytsky as a part of the project named “Three revolutions”. Mr. Yevhen, do you give your approval to use the materials of the interview for the scientific research?

YB: Yes, I agree, and we have already discussed this.

TP: The first question. I would like to ask you to introduce yourself shortly. After all, the way in which a person speaks about himself, how he or she positions himself is very important. Tell me a little bit about yourself. Even give some biographical details. So that the people who will work with this material will understand, what kind of a personality you are, and why you, why do you have such answers, connected with these three revolutions.

YB: Well, first of all, I am the executive director of the International foundation “Renaissance” with the mission of promotion the development, shaping and activities of citizens for an open society, building of an open society, a democratic society in Ukraine. Secondly, I am still the head of the department of philosophy of culture, ethics and aesthetics at the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and I’m still getting published – I have recently published our book “Civil society and national identity”. That is, I have a website which you can visit and see what kind of a person is that. The best source to know the biography of a person and about who is the person is not the words of this person about himself, but the texts which he wrote. It is enough for me to read a text of yours – one, two, three – and I will know whom I’m dealing with. So, here, here it is what I wanted to say about myself. I am committed to the idea of Ukraine or to the Ukrainian idea, as it can be generally called. Usually, when I’m asked what the Ukrainian idea is, I reply that there is no answer to this. Ukraine should be… well, so to say, to have its identity. Well, it is thanks to my parents. My mom and dad were from the village, from Vynnytsia region. Yes, from Shpykivsky district and from Tamarkivsky district, I know. They were old, my parents. My father was born in 1904, the mother in 1908. I am late, late child I was, so. That’s why… My father was a soldier, he was called… was called up for the war, before the Second World War, from Kyiv. He went to Vynnytsia, he served there. He was a land-surveyor, an engineer land-surveyor, he served in artillery – in intelligence artillery, for the entire war. My mother, respectively, was evacuated as well, and then she has returned to the village. That is, I can say one thing, my father had very critical view of the Soviet… (smiles) Soviet system for the whole his life, despite the fact that he was a military man – it was by force. There was already no possibility to leave the army, or you could go who knows where. Here, my mother was a teacher for her entire life. Well, this is what kind of a family it was, yes. So, it was like… Father had all his life dreamed that when he will retire (and he retired within the Khrushchev demobilization of 1960), we dreamed to go to Kaniv, to build a house exactly there (laughs), so that the cherry trees would buzz, buzz, so that everything would be so to say, as it is meant to be – yes, just as in Shevchenko.

03:40

TP: So, why do you think that he had critical views?

YB: Well, all… You know, I don’t know how the life evolved, because he, he kind of saw the artificiality of this system. I don’t know, I… He didn’t like to speak about the war, he very much didn’t like to talk about the war. His diaries are left, such, where he describes all this. Well, everyone was aware of the fact that it was some kind of a slavery system. Well, already later on in school (I finished the mathematical school) I became interested in philosophy, so, I started to read early Marx. At that time the new edition of the first chapter of his “German ideology” was just released. It is fantastic, it is very critical, yes. We even were writing such a magazine with my friends, where we described the Soviet… the Soviet bourgeoisie, the so-called “burzhui”, “burzhuins” “sovbur”. In other words, it has already been clear that the system falls apart, we were very critical towards the system. Well, and this is how the life developed, that the critical approach was in principle brought up in me. That’s why I went to the philosophy, yes. Well, unfortunately, for various reasons I wasn’t able to enter the university. It was very difficult: someone who is not a party member wasn’t able to enter philosophical faculty back then. So, yes. Then I went to the army, yes. In the army they have raised my case: the fact that I was involved in samizdat. In the Far East, Far East the magazine was being published, yes, samizdat type of a magazine. I wrote two articles there, very nasty for Soviet system. There was a congregation in the army, the Komsomol meeting, where they have made a reprimand to me on the Komsomol line: “for speaking out, defaming the Soviet reality” and for the participation in samvydav, yes, how? in samizdat, right? So that’s why I was not able after the army to enter university, because I didn’t have a characteristic. And after that, obviously, I started to work again. Before the army I worked as a loader, I worked, I worked initially… Since I finished the mathematical school, I worked as a mathematician and programmer on the first electronic computers which appeared in Kyiv. Then, there were family material difficulties, in the family – and I went to work as a loader at the dairy factory. After that – two years in the army. After that they had thrown me away from the army one month before demobilization, because of this, because of that situation, because of the fact that it was observed by KGB. So, yes. I went, I came here, for the entrance exams - and I didn't have the characteristics, so. I went to work as a worker in an auto park - I worked as an auto electrician. I was called for interviews in the regional KGB department for a couple of times. And I had such very "nice" interviews there when I was told: "you will never be able to enter any university". But they gave me brilliant characteristics there, in the auto park. And I have penetrated the university, the faculty of philosophy. So, yes. And when on the fourth year it became known that I was "nasty", there was a Komsomol meeting. Well, and since I was a very successful student, and since I have already completed - according to my age I was not already a member of Komsomol - already 27th year was coming, they did nothing to me. So, yes. And so, this is how I have graduated, yes.

07:45

And then I got into the Institute of philosophy. Also by chance, because it was allowed for a person with no party affiliation... But I had a "bad" past - yes, such - and all knew about it. I had a mentor, Popovych, he also said that he cannot help with any means, and here it is, the diploma. Well, there was a person at the Institute of Philosophy - and it was the Dean at the time - Dyshlevyi, who was such a national-oriented and who employed me at the Institute of philosophy, at the department as a junior laboratory assistant. So I was sitting at the Institute of philosophy as a junior laboratory assistant in summer, and at that time the deputy director was a person who didn't know anything about me (and I had a red diploma, I had excellent marks from the university), and this person has proposed me to go to Moscow, to have a traineeship at the Institute of philosophy for two years. To what I immediately answered: "Yes". I went to the Institute of philosophy in Moscow. And when I have heard there what the philosophers spoke about, then my entire previous so to speak critical attitude towards the Soviet system appeared to be just a baby, just a "childish babble", yes. It turned out that you can say a lot of different things there, yes, as Oleksandr Zinovyev says, and all the others, everyone was critically inclined. That's it. I wrote the thesis there, I came back here, and I have defended it, so yes. My book has been published. Such a book - it still exists, everything is known at the webpage. I became a PhD. And since I was supported by the Institute of Philosophy in Moscow, so then the people started to reckon with me here. And I became a scientific fellow. And I made a career even up to the deputy head of the department. So, yes. That's it. This is my kind of a very short biography.

09:39

TP: Mr. Yevhen, tell me please, you were already in Kyiv during the Revolution on the granite, right?

YB: Yes, in Kyiv, right.

TP: But, well, some memories...

YB: But what was that year, remind me please. It was 1993, right?

TP: It was 1990. October month. The beginning of the month of October.

YB: I was here. But I don't remember anything, anything special from this. Such main. E-e-e. What we were involved in back then? At that time we were supporting "Rukh" at the Institute - this "Movement [Rukh] for the reconstruction", this communist movement for reconstruction, (laughs), in which the philosophers were active among others. So, yes. There was a revolution but I don't remember this to somehow... somehow myself to have a feeling that it is a revolution. It was clear that the society was going through such a period when, when such sort of actions, they concentrate, concentrate the public mind... public opinion of the entire society against that government which was there, against that regime which was there. That's why it is very good as well. It was done in appropriate time.

10:48

TP: And of the Orange revolution you already have more memories, right?

YB: More.

TP: Tell me, please, what do you remember of such the most important?

YB: I remember what we were doing here. (Laughs) Well, first of all, imagine, then, on the eve of the Orange revolution, so, in the end of 2003, right? The Communists in the Parliament united with some, there, current, which afterwards became the regionalists, right? They have opposed the Foundation and the donors that support the development of civil society, of non-governmental organizations. There was a committee, there was a commission, such a big, which wrote its invective, so. Well, therefore, we have given the response to it, we gave the answer. In other words, they wanted to close us back then. Well, they didn't manage it for various reasons. The society was still stronger. It had respect to the Foundation and to civil society organizations, yes. I don't remember these materials now by heart, but we have all of them. So, yes. It was at the eve... at the eve, in other words it was already connected to the movement "Ukraine is against, well, Ukraine is against Kuchma, there". This movement has started, and so on, and so on. Well, in other words, the "Renaissance" Foundation held its own position. We had never ever supported any party, we have supported active public figures. And in 2004, when it have started... Well, first of all, I would like to say, that we didn't give a single penny to the very support of the revolution itself. That is, it was very important to us. We... This is obviously a non-party position, yes. So, yes. Grant money, as I said, we didn’t give a single penny and this is very important, yes. But what have we done during the revolution? We have made, we have supported such a small printing house in UNIAN in order, in order to distribute the latest news about Maidan: what is happening at the Maidan and in the world. It was very important, because, if you remember, people at Maidan, differently from our second Maidan, it was such a more peaceful, yes. So, yes. And that's why the people... they were just sitting and defending their right, their right, so to speak, of demonstration on Maidan, of life on the Maidan, right? There were no clashes, I don't remember such clashes there. And so, to ensure that they understand their mission and what they do, it was necessary to give them certain information. And this information back then, together with UNIAN we... Oleksandr... (God, I already don't remember the surname... now deceased) Nalyvaychenko or Nalyvayko (I don't remember it, I believe I have somewhere his book there, I forgot) was still alive. In short, we did it, and it was the only thing which I clearly remember from that time - so, what we were involved in at Maidan, right? There were different appeals to us. We satisfied these appeals just with the fact that we just have helped to the entire civil society to be active and to be aware of what is happening.

14:20

TP: But tell me please, in your opinion, who was responsible for the political decisions, in other words, who was influencing more during the Orange revolution, and in particular within the opposition of that time?

YB: I have very bad historical memory. Since I'm a philosopher, I cannot stand history for various reasons. Because the history, the interpretation, sometimes it misleads, everyone interprets all the events in his own way. Well, the thing which I remember is, first of all, the wave of such a patriotism and Ukrainian... It was the first wave of nationally oriented protests. This is extremely important. In... during the first Orange revolution it became clear that Ukraine feels its Ukrainian identity, its national identity. This was very important. I would even say now as a theorist, yes, some sort of, I would say that, it... well, the first revolution - yes, that was the revolution of Ukrainian identity. That's why it finally won, and Yushchenko became the President, Yushchenko as the voice of Ukrainian community, here. And the second revolution, on contrary, this, the last one, the Euromaidan, it was much more complicated for us. It, together with the consolidation, yes, strengthening, strengthening of national identity, it has also set a question of political identity, of political unity of Ukraine and its political, political identity - what does it focus on? In other words, on which political values focuses the entire... civil society in general. So these are the two fundamental differences of the two revolutions. Here, at the... during the first revolution the political identity wasn't discussed as such. It was about... in the explicit, in the explicit form. It was about the national identity, the own national identity had to be defended there. In fact, against the government and against Kuchma's politics which was linked to, I would say, to the fact that there were the oligarchs, and there was such a pro-Russian disposition. And despite of this, Yanukovych won, after this revolution, yes. So, yes. Well, Yushchenko won, but then eventually after Yushchenko Yanukovych won. Because of the fact that Yushchenko... This victory of the idea of national identity: that we are Ukrainians, that we have to defend our national interests as Ukrainians - this was not a radical nationalism, this was... it was like the understanding of our national unity again. This was for the first time like this, after, after Kuchma. And that's why Yushchenko seemed to be a messiah. He himself went through this identity, that he carried this Ukrainian, Ukrainian idea, yes, of Ukrainian unity. So, yes. Well, it failed because it is not enough, as it turns out, just to be a patriot. In addition to patriotism you have also be uncorrupted, you have to be honest, and finally you have to be a good manager and to govern the country very well. That's what was important. And that's why the regionalists turned out to be, so to say, more rational on this wave, like more so to say... such that on the wave of distrust to the government of Yushchenko and to Tymoshenko, they won actually, yes. So, yes. So, this is what I can say about the Orange revolution very shortly.

18:16

TP: And tell me please, can we say that the oligarchs in those times, in 2004, had such some sort of a significant impact which had changed or defined the course of events, the outcome of the events?

YB: No, you cannot say this. The oligarchs at that time were only just starting to develop. They were becoming the oligarchs which we know, well, let's say until 2010, 2011, 2013, yes. So, yes. Still, the nationwide feeling, it overcame the oligarchs. And it overcame those potential leverage which Kuchma had, so, to resist this together with the help of the oligarchs, so, they defeated them, they were stronger - both nationwide interests and the all-Ukrainian interests. I cannot say this, I cannot give a positive answer to your question.

TP: I see. Then, if in 2010 the oligarchs have been strengthened, their power has increased, then it is obvious that they have already stronger influenced the last Maidan, right? Was there their influence?

YB: The oligarchs have strengthened during the period of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko's governance, when Tymoshenko was the Prime Minister. They have strengthened. In fact, it was such a... Because of the fact that the government and the authority itself, and the political power, in fact they expressed... have expressed such a, defended the interests of the oligarchy. In other words, the interests of those larger groups, groups, communities of the richest people and clans that were created. They were created, they fought among themselves. And finally the regional clan, the clan of the oligarchs which have supported the party of regions, won. Because they were industrial... from the industrial region, they were more, were more financially secured and rich, they were able to do it, they were able to defeat the others, so to say. So, yes. In other words, this average oligarchy who arose (I will not mention the names) from Western Ukraine, from Central Ukraine, from Southern Ukraine, let's say from Ukraine, who supported Yushchenko, this was such middle level oligarchy which was still in the process of development. It obviously wasn't able to win with those industrial oligarchs who emerged in the East of Ukraine and in the South - in such industrial regions.

TP: And during the Revolution of Dignity this middle level oligarchy, did it in any way influence the?...

YB: Definitely, definitely, I believe that a lot of things was supported and financed precisely by the middle class. I called it middle class or... it is not the oligarchy, it is middle, business, let us... The middle, the medium-sized and small business. This is the most important thing. I didn't call it correctly. Oligarchs are the one who... The thing is that during Yushchenko appeared these... the bonds of political power with the medium-sized business - this is also a sort of oligarchy. Oligarch is the one who uses various political influences in order to earn money. So, this definitely was. They didn't get rid of, didn't get rid of that Yushchenko's government, as far as I understand this. But the major oligarch, the major oligarchs won before... after the Orange revolution, finally. They have strengthened, have consolidated, yes. And they didn't win in the economics only, they won in the media sphere, and it's very important.

22:05

Let's say, Yushchenko... Two things which the Foundation did, on the wave of the Orange revolution, I believe that it is very important, that was, first of all... I brought once from England (when I had a training there) an idea of independent external evaluation - the test system. And thanks to, here... Yushchenko signed this decree, and thanks to his signature, the decree, it was introduced, thanks to those ministers, such as Vasyl Kremin and...

TP: Vakarchuk?

YB: I will recall it now, my God. The memory is already, when you spin like this, then it does not work. It was... Nikolayenko, and Nikolayenko. These particular two ministers who have supported it back then, and it was implemented. And Liliya Hrynevych who is a minister now, precisely she... The Foundation, was, we hired her... she was a manager and she was implementing the pilot projects on this evalu... evaluation. And very good... external independent evaluation... and very good that Yushchenko has signed it back then. Well, do you remember? And the decree on the establishment... all the necessary papers were basically prepared, all such expert papers, in order to implement... to introduce, to implement the public broadcasting, social broadcasting. And he didn't dare to go for this decree, because he wanted, still, to keep the control of the First national channel, in order to have an impact on the situation. And it was clear. He... everything was prepared. So, yes. Well, what do we speak about, I already forgot, what do we speak about, remind me please.

TP: You said that the Foundation has supported the following two projects: with the external independent evaluation and with the public broadcasting. Well, and now...

YB: Not only. In addition to all this... These were the outstanding projects, I believe, of ours.

24:20

TP: Concerning the last revolution, in general I would like to ask you about the terminology or the classification of these events. So, which of these three events can be called a revolution, or maidans, or how, well, in your opinion, in general, which terms is better to apply to these events?

YB: You know, you ask theoretical questions. I would say that it will become clear if it was a revolution when it will maximally win. Now, let's, let me and you: the Orange revolution, it won in the fact that Ukrainian... (I have already mentioned that), that Ukrainian national identity became strengthened. This in particular is very important. The fact that it was, that Ukraine started indeed to understand itself as independent from Russia, and as a distinct kind of community, yes. This is extremely important. And I believe that in that sense it was a revolution. In other words, the consciousness of Ukrainians has changed. They started to understand themselves as a plenipotentiary representative, so to say, in the international arena, in a certain sense. Well, another thing is that it was not fixed with economic reforms. So, the things which we now talk about the Revolution of Dignity, exactly so... it was called as well. Well, if it would be achieved... the dignity. What does it mean? This means the rule of law. The rule of law – it is such a legislation which simultaneously both respects human rights, it combines this. The fact is that... it... that the laws are the same for everyone, that there is no corruption, and a person feels precisely worthy. A person goes, let's say in court, and protects his or her rights, and knows his responsibilities. His duties are reserved, and the rights are reserved, yes. Further. The Revolution of Dignity - this means, that a person lives in a society where his voice can be heard, yes. That she or he can, is able to defend their interests. To advocate with dignity in a group of people, to be able to defend their interests. So, yes. It is obvious, that this in the society in which nobody has a monopoly to the truth as it is now, so to say, oligarchs control substantially most of the national media, yes. So, this as well. That's why I cannot say that the revolution is complete. And this means that it is still in the process, it still continues. The reforms are also the continuation of the revolution. That's why, let us see if we will be able to call it a revolution of change or not in the very end. So, yes. The potential. Potentially this was a revolution, definitely. It changed the attitude of the publicity towards the authorities. Yes, and by the way, it, I often repeat it at international meetings: for the first time Ukraine became eternal. This is a very important thing which Euromaidan has done. The world heard about Ukraine. The point was set. Now, now you can conquer Ukraine, I am sorry, such a figuratively saying, you can destroy it as - well, here already can be different crises, to destroy with the crises. But Ukraine remained, and it will always recover as a, as a coherent, well... community, yes. So, this was very important. And here the point was set. There will no longer be questions: is there Ukraine - is there no Ukraine? It already forever came to the international map of the countries, and no one already is able erase it from this map. That's it. And this is an extremely important achievement of the Orange... oh, I mean of this Revolution of Dignity. That's it, point. The point is set here. The other thing is reforms. So, yes. In fact, the vision of dignity was declared. I have listed the criteria of dignity: if they will be achieved, this will mean that the revolution is complete. And if they will not be achieved - the revolution is unfinished.

28:34

TP: And where Yevhen Bystrytsky was during the Revolution of Dignity?

YB: He was at the Maidan and in the Foundation.

TP: What did you do?

YB: I did various things.

TP: Please tell me a little bit more.

YB: Well, what, I walked, I took pictures, I was passing the paving blocks and something else, let's say, yeah. I gave my baskets to some of my friends who were there. So, yes. And the Foundation here worked as usual. Let's say, we organized the meetings of public leaders of civil society organizations. We supported the human rights protection of the defended which... well, these Maidan activists who have been accused and who were dragged to courts, yes. We supported the human rights organizations. We supported informational things to make the people aware of what was happening, in order the publicity to be engaged. And yet again I would like to say that we didn't support a single particular party. So, yes. Well, let's say, before the Maidan, before Euromaidan, we sat together with the famous people and thought about that, yes, about people to get up. One day I will speak more about it (laughs).

TP: It's not the time yet?

YB: It's not the time yet, let it settle down a bit.

TP: And is there any kind of a brightest memory which you will tell after decades,

recalling this period of the Revolution of Dignity.

YB: Every day is bright for me. Up until the very end, when people were killed, of course. So, yes. I was constantly taking pictures here, there are the photos. There are some of my bright pictures from Maidan. And here are from Kharkiv. Well, let's say, in Kharkiv we were conducting, I was at Euromaidan in Kharkiv. This one is not bright, it's just one of such examples like this here. We were attacked there, so to say. I together with Sergiy Zhadan was conducting the so-called civic education - there was such a direction. And we were in the Bookstore Ye - they started to throw bombs with the tear gas there. This is Maidan as well. This is the frontline of Maidan. There are the interesting pictures from the frontline. Like everyone! Everyone was there, and all doing the same thing. So, yes. The only thing which I can say is that I did not shoot, with rifle or with the automatic gun there - this is for sure. Everything else was allowed to do.

31:38

TP: Well, I wanted to ask a question. Now I think whether it was appropriate. Was it possible to solve the political crisis which has developed at the end of autumn of 2013, was it possible to solve it without this mass protest?

YB: Without what?

TP: Without the mass protest - without people going out to the square?

YB: No, it was not possible. It was demonstrated by the behavior of the President and his entourage. I'm not talking about what actually brought all the people to Maidan, yes. Well, let me tell you a bit about my own vision of the Maidan. So, when we went out to Maidan, and when so to say there have been appeals to Maidan, well Nayyem especially vividly did it, it was clear, that we cannot rely on any political power, there was a great distrust to the politicians and to political parties. And there was this distrust because it was clear that they are associated with the oligarchic clans, that they are such old type, all the parties. If you remember, when Maidan have started, there were two Maidans - one was created by the politicians after the general public has created its Maidan on the Independence Square. Trust to the politicians throughout the entire Maidan, as far as I can assess, was extremely low - well, no more than three to five percent of people in Maidan. So, yes. In other words, people thought that they are making their own revolution, and they believed in it. This was not a revolution of politicians. That's why, for example, when the politicians have already crawled out, excuse me, began to appear on the scene, well, just as everyone? There was a perception: "Well, speak, speak, my God. There. This is your problem, so to speak, yes". So and when Yulia has already been released from the prison and came out to the Maidan, it was clear: the perception about her has already been ironic. So, here it is, this is an extremely important feature - it, it was political in the broadest sense of the word, the Maidan. It was a civic Maidan, obviously. And this, obviously, wasn't done by the government - this indicates the government's quality. Whatever Yanukovych was shouting now there and was performing, or the representatives there, his representatives or defenders, he never went out to Maidan. It was clear that what was motivating the Maidan, it was just a pretext. But it was possible to solve the issue of Maidan in some way without mocking the people and without killing them later on, yes. So, yes. The reason was clear, that the rejection of the European kind of a perspective, the refusal of the signing of the Association, of the Association Agreement. An agreement with Putin on relevant, on corresponding assistance – this was perceived as a bribery, obviously. Well, the fact that Maidan stood for several months, in December, in January - and the President of the people didn't come out to the people, and we have seen: there were up to 300 thousand people (I don't know, up to 500 thousand there were), but he didn't come out there to the people and didn't say anything! It is obvious that he was not a people's President, that he was the president of clans, it was absolutely obvious. In other words, with this government it was already clear: we are not going to walk the same way, with this politics of orientation towards Russia, to rejection of, of, of, of the European choice. Which mistake has been made by the politicians later on, after Maidan? The politicians have started... First of all, Maidan, and this in necessary to emphasize, Maidan was openly pro-Ukrainian precisely because of the fact that it was anti-Russian, yes: "The one who doesn't jump is moskal!". And everyone who was there, in general, was obviously pro-Ukrainian. And now, after Maidan this intension was picked up by the politicians. And a big mistake was done when politicians have tried, such politicians like Kirilenko (the Kirilenko's language law, well, there was a group of politicians, and "Svoboda" was there, and so on), they have tried to use Maidan for their own private political purposes. And this was a big mistake. Maidan was nationwide, it was against Russia, against the oligarchs, it was the Maidan of Dignity, it was not the Maidan of Ukrainian dignity, it was of the nationwide dignity. This is extremely important. This was a mistake, and this mistake has cost quite expensive to us. And the others took advantage on it, Putin took advantage, in order to justify, to justify ideologically the aggression. So, yes. So it turned out that... Well, this, this is logical, because the people have tried to make Maidan without politicians. I would rather say about generally political. Well, when it was already necessary to elect the politicians, yes, and in order to have the legitimate government (the President and the Parliament), there was no other choice then to be content with these politicians that were at hand. And they were ineffective. They didn't think in advance. There was a complete absence of strategic thinking. So, here, this is such an objective reality which we had to meet after Maidan.

37:31

TP: Was it possible for Maidan, this last one, to finish without shedding of blood, without the radicalization of this protest?

YB: No, it wasn't. I said why: the Government has shown that it was anti-popular, it was not people's, it was anti-people's. There was no, any attempt to negotiate with Maidan, to come for a dialogue, and it was possible. I was sure that if Yanukovych would come out and start a conversation, and if there would have been at least some explanations, of his politics, because he did have the one, one, one, if I am not mistaken, during a meeting with the Europeans - with someone from the Baltic States, with some people from Baltic States, he spoke with the Presidents and he said: "Well, it was you who left me alone with Putin". In other words, if they would, let's say, declare that we give the support, the economical, financial support back then, it could have turned in different manner. So, yes. Because actually... There is more profound history here which is necessary to understand. So, you see, our oligarchy, the big oligarchs, they are pro-Russian. They are pro-Russian not because of the fact that they are not patriots of Ukraine. They are pro-Russian because of the fact that their entire business was built in the exactly same manner as of Russian oligarchs - on the fact that, on the fact that they, first of all, own the property which speaks Russian language. All the specifications, all, all, like all prescriptions, all, all the laws, all, the business correspondence there -all is Russian-speaking and based on Russian principles, on the principles of the old economy construction. So, they themselves are the flesh and blood of kind of Russian, such a post-Soviet, post-Soviet accumulation of capital. It is natural for them. So, yes. And that's why it is obvious that they promote, and now we see the mass media which belong to our oligarchs, yes, - they are in Russian language, they are such kind of Russia-oriented. They show the movies. Thanks God, they do not make pro-Russian propaganda, but they, well, the values, both of language, and of the worldview, they are such, so to say, kind of a post-Soviet type, yes. So, this is how it is. Since they have supported Yanukovych, in a way, yes, it is obvious that it was the most natural for them to reject the European choice and to incline more towards the help of Russia. And I don't know how it was there and no one can tell now, but it is obvious that there was some sort of more and more of opposition which was producing the tough position from the side of Yanukovych and of those who supported him, the oligarchs, these, who supported him: yes, it has to be stopped, to be stopped by the force method. And so, it has began, this termination. In other words, I don't think, that the position itself, the position of Yanukovych stated from the very beginning, the position which he stubbornly and stupidly advocated, has led in fact to this bloodshed.

40:52

TP: I see. Mr. Yevhen, regarding the self-organization at the Maidan, there is a lot of talk about this, that this level of self-organization, that even the foreigners were impressed by this.

YB: It impressed me as well.

TP: What would you note, some such the most, the most striking examples of self-organization? And did they have any continuation afterwards, do they have any continuation now?

YB: In critical moments it will be restored, undoubtedly. The self-organization, first of all... What could have been?.. Well, first of all, there was an absolutely friendly atmosphere, of mutual help. You were mentally getting into that atmosphere which was necessary for a person in order to defend their interests there in Maidan. It is necessary to go forward - this means, the men were gathering, were coming there, well, let's say, it was on 11th of December, I remember, when the wife woke me up, and I went there at 4 a.m., I took some car, I caught, to Maidan, they said that it's necessary, so I have to go. And then, so to say: there was, obviously, self-maintaining. And then... the councils of Maidan began to work. It was very important, because they were posing, were giving the common, some common vision, a common understanding of what is going on and where the Maidan goes, yeah. The moderators worked very well in Maidan: Nishchuk with the guys, with girls there, yeah. The University of Maidan was functioning - it was also an extraordinary, I would say, event. Then. Both scientists have mentally organized, and people there were. It became clear that Maidan is not just some ignorant people have gathered, but very intelligent people, yes. So, yes. Obviously, economic and material support of Maidan, I mean like the clothes, the food, the tents, all these forms of organization - it was, it was very important, yes. The support of people itself. I, you know, there is often talk about American support, you know, that Nuland fed them with cookies there and so on, so I can declare that, as far as I know from inside the forms of Maidan's organization, there has been no effective influence from abroad, absolutely, absolutely no. In other words, this can be excluded immediately.

43:42

TP: And the Foundation, did it support in any way some initiatives with the grant funds during the Revolution of Dignity?

YB: I have already mentioned what we supported. We supported the medical initiatives, we have immediately created a fund to help the wounded in the Maidan. We headed it, there was a special, special, special supervisory council of this fund, in other words, we have created it. And we supported the human rights activists, the gathering of information at the Maidan, the protection, the legal defense of Maidan activists. We have supported these organizations, and the provision of information. It is our, it is our mission.

TP: Well, about the informational one - could you specify, I mean were there a lot of some informational projects or there were some specific magazines or resources?

YB: Well, Hromadske television started to function, to work. We have supported it. "Hromadske", well, radio, I don't know, I don't remember, did it start to function already back then? So, yes. The Internet network - well, all those who were with "Maidan SOS" there and so on, and so on. Thanks to these activists, who were supported by us before that.

00:44:55

TP: Well, here we are, in the autumn it will already pass three years as the Revolution of Dignity has began, the third anniversary. And I remember that both after the Orange Revolution, and now, after this revolution, it is said that here at last there is a civil society, it's been said that here finally the civil society had risen. So did it finally arise or not?

YB: It is necessary to define the concept of the civil society. The fact that various forms of self-organization emerged, definitely - if this is the criterion of the civil... then yes. Let's say, the volunteer movement, which have emerged after the Maidan... The Maidan itself has been the volunteer-driven. And this movement that unfolded - the help to the army, both material and financial, and, and, and, there, the help to the refugees, to the temporarily displaces persons - this, obviously, wouldn't have happened without the volunteers. This means that it emerged as a form of self-organization. The fact that after Maidan... Well, you know, a very interesting thing has unfolded after the Maidan - the dialogue between the government and the civil society organizations. And the Foundation occupied one of such leading positions here. After the Maidan, you know, the Intensive care reform package was created, yes. It is a group of organizations which started to propose the changes in the legislation, changes in the policies of reform. The Foundation has created strategic advisory councils at the ministries, which have developed the documents for implementation of such reforms as decentralization, e-governance, privatization of state enterprises, deregulation, changes in education, reform of education, health care reform, and anti-corruption reforms. In other words, this was the society. This government which came after the Maidan would never be able to develop the strategy of reforms and even to think about the reforms properly without the society. Because it was still the old one, still. So, yes. And this public influence - this is the consequence of Maidan and this is the most important thing which is ongoing, which is ongoing now. Another thing is: to which extent this power, to which the public assists, is effective - here we already have another question. It was after ... right after the Maidan. By the end of Maidan and after the Maidan it became, this... so to say, the idea of a national reform council was also not the government's idea but ours - together with the European Bank for reconstruction and development. We have supported the functioning of the National reform council for the first year, it was 2014th, the end of 2014th, and 2015.

47:51

TP: I see. Well, such a generalizing question. Is it possible at all to talk about the phenomenon of Maidans for already three revolutions, of continuance of these uprisings, protests, which were, for example, in the 20th century? And in general if it is possible to say...

YB: It is a new form, it is the form of protests which was unknown before, unknown in its own way, unknown by its quality. Such a form of protests could only emerge in... Well, first of all... There is a communication, the formation of a national state within the conditions, the conditions of a new informational... in new informational circumstances, in new communicational capabilities of citizens. So, yes. The thing is that, so to say, the Revolution on the granite, yes, the first revolution, in fact it initiated the defending of the national interest against the post-Soviet, typical post-Soviet... against Sovietism, against Sovietism and the Soviet type methods of management. So, yes. And it was, it was, I would say, a very nationally oriented, and that's why it won, the Revolution in the granite. It was necessary to... So, well, you know, in general there is one thing here, which is very important to understand. The legitimization of any power in Ukraine after the years 1990-91, the ultimate ground of legitimization or trust to the government, it is based on the following: whether it is Ukrainian or not? And that's why all the politicians will, will speculate with the name of Ukraine or, or mention it. Both Kuchma did it, and Yanukovych did it, and Tymoshenko when she was a Prime Minister did it, and Yushchenko even more, and now as well. This is the last threshold of legitimacy for political power. As soon as the government will say that it is against Ukraine, that's it, it will not exist anymore. It's obvious, yes. So yes, the first Maidan just precisely set this mechanism, this way and the understanding of legitimization of power: "all that is non-Ukrainian - away!" So, yes. That's why many leaders of the first, first, revolution at Maidan, they became such kind of like pro-Ukrainian leaders. Sometimes radically nationalistic, sometimes just such as, let's say, Doniy, who still until today carries the idea of Ukrainian as such, yes, as a nationwide idea. So, yes. And the other Maidans have broadened this, this connection between the national, between the formation of the nation, yes, of Ukrainian nation as deepening of identity in the circumstances of freedom of speech and of more widespread communication capabilities that would be able to reach the people in every corner of Ukraine. So, yes. And the third Maidan generally took it as a basis, because the streaming or the leave broadcasts from Maidan - this was fantastic. People saw what was happening there, they were involved - everyone, well, not every single one, but the mass of people have been involved in the events at Maidan. It was not possible to hide, impossible to hide the murder, and even less possible were to hide, or rather it was impossible to hide the beating of people, it was impossible to hide the killings, it was impossible to hide that it is a peaceful Maidan against which Berkut people stand, there, you know, armed, beyond which in fact the authorities hide. It was clear. In other words, it was especially... These new revolutions. The revolutions, well, in our conditions it was a national revolution, the revolution of the formation, in addition, of a political nation, of a civic nation or of a civil society. Indeed, in the conditions of new communication possibilities.

52:12

TP: Well, so, if to speak specifically about Ukrainian mass protests, then they differ, for example, from those protest traditions which have formed at the same Poles or Czechs. Or they are simply just the same, and just only their goal is one, or maybe still this is the phenomenon of a global scale, what do you think?

YB: I don't know, there, you mean the velvet revolutions, right? The velvet revolutions in Poland and somewhere else there, yes? I don't know, you see, what's the difference of all this? It differs in the fact that these protests in our European neighbors, they have led to the construction of a more efficient state machine. So, yes. Unfortunately, it doesn't work well in our case.

TP: Why?

YB: I could give an answer, but it will be general. I think that this morality, I would even say ethics, the sittlichkeit, this is "nravstvennost" in Russian language which we have here - it is different, just simply with its quality, I would say, it is worse by its quality than the ethics which was founded, so to say, by the Catholic religion, by the Catholic society in Poland, which became a traditional setting. So, yes. People here have much more cynicism, much more incredulity. Now you can see, shall we say, in Facebook, that "all is lost" or "everything is bad", yes. In other words, when people say so such massively, yes, that everything is bad, that all is lost, and they only criticize, this means that people have no understanding, that it is necessary to hold on somewhere, that is, that it is necessary to find some positive basis in yourself in order to believe in future. So, yes... and some values. If you don't have values, you will criticize everyone, because you yourself, you by yourself treat yourself as a scoundrel, as the one who doesn't have, so to say, decency in himself, yes. So, yes, this, unfortunately, is a consequence of our history, yes, our history, our, including the former, and religion, and Sovietism. That is, to say this in other words, this is our misfortune that such moral founding pillars, yes, how to say it, grounds on which you could rely massively. And the traditions which would protect the dignity, we didn't have it, it wasn't entirely formed. And this is precisely why the revolution was of dignity, it was saying again: let's be, let's develop the human dignity. So, this means that people have felt that there is no dignity, you see. After all, this is the typical, the typical virtue – the dignity, yes, the moral virtue, finally. They didn't even speak about justice, but they spoke about dignity. And this is extremely important. So, with the fact that there were the foundations for more, for further defense of dignity, this is obvious. There, in fact, they actually fought against anti... against communism there. It was an anti-Communist revolution, yes. And we had a revolution - still for the dignity. This is an addition. And this is the difference between these revolutions and our revolution.

TP: I see. OK, thank you. Perhaps you would like to add something else.

YB: That's it. Perhaps, if something else here. You know, if you would give. I just don't remember the precise names of some of our projects, which we supported, I will just send you a list, if you will give... Projects... They were all, this is very important to emphasize, they were such that they did not support any political force.

TP: Good, thank you, Mr. Yevhen.

56:17