Przemysław Pazik

[Warszawa]

Paweł Pujszo

[Warszawa]

The Three Ukrainian Revolutions: project aims and current state of research

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Given the importance of mass protests in the recent history of Ukraine, the 3 Revolutions project aimed to analyze the three most significant waves of protests which have taken place in Ukraine since 1990: the Revolution on Granite (1990); the Orange Revolution (2004–2005); and the Euromaidan Revolution (2013–2014)¹.

The last three decades in the history of Ukraine have been marked by three powerful waves of protests in the Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) in Kyiv, whose scale and impact have attracted the attention of an international public opinion. The Revolution on Granite in 1990 was the first of these protests, leading, for the first time in the history of the USSR, to a high-ranking official's resignation under the pressure of public opinion, and paving the way for the revolutionary demonstrations of the following years. The revolutions of 2004–2005 and of 2013–2014 were exceptional in terms of their scale and impact on EU and American policies in the region. In particular, the events of 2013–2014, internationally known as “Euromaidan”, were met with wide European and international

¹ This paper was written within the framework of the “3 Revolutions” project implemented by the College of Europe in Natolin.

responses. “Maidans” supporting the protests in Ukraine gathered in London, Paris, Vienna, Warsaw and New York. Moreover, the protests brought about a pro-“Western” change in Ukrainian politics. This allows us to understand the roles of Ukrainian revolutions as milestones on the country’s road to integration with the “West” in general, and the EU in particular.

Throughout the project, we wanted to stimulate an academic debate by providing new perspectives and new information for the study of the Ukrainian revolutions. To achieve that, the 3R team has carried out more than 100 interviews with selected participants and leaders of the 1990, 2004–2005 and 2013–2014 protests. After being translated into English, this unique material will be published online, available to all scholars, experts and the general public. The 3R website (www.3rnatolin.eu) also contains a repository of archival documents, iconographic material, and many other resources.

Since the beginning of our work in late 2015, we have taken a series of steps to establish a network of scholars of the contemporary Ukraine; at the same time, we sought to broaden our methodological horizon to prepare us for the fieldwork involved. These two goals led us to organize three conferences, the first of which took place on 19 February 2016. We organized the research seminar, *The Oral History of Ukrainian Revolutions*, where we invited researchers from Poland, Ukraine and Czech Republic involved in oral history research in each of the respective countries. The speakers were Dobrochna Kałwa, Katarzyna Bock-Matuszyk, dr Pavel Mücke as well as Leonid Finberg and prof. Gelinada Grinchenko. Their contributions facilitated preparing a methodological workshop for a group of 3R interviewers in Kyiv in May 2016. Afterwards, the group began conducting interviews with participants, bystanders and opinion makers involved in the three Ukrainian revolutions. Moreover, the knowledge and expertise of Iwona and Adam Reichardt from the “New Eastern Europe” proved invaluable when organizing the project’s fieldwork.

In June 2016, the Natolin Campus hosted a major conference titled, *Revolutions, Maidans and Protests in Contemporary Ukraine. Current state of research and future directions*, which brought together 40 scholars from Ukraine, Poland, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, Canada and the United States of America to debate problems in Ukrainian Studies which received substantial scholarly attention. Presentations ranged from discussing a large volume of sources on the Ukrainian revolutions to methodological issues, by examining the ways in which a comparison of the three

revolutions could be approached. Finally, some speakers concentrated on the existing typologies with respect to themes such as the causes of the revolutions, the actors who animated them, and the interplay between earlier and later revolutions.

The conference, *Three Revolutions – Portraits of Ukraine*, was held in Natolin on 28 February and 1 March 2017 and constituted the culmination of nearly two years of work. This two day-long intensive event gathered more than 100 guests and speakers. The innovative format, which brought together prominent actors (e.g. Pat Cox, Viktor Yushchenko, Aleksander Kwaśniewski) and experts of three key events in contemporary Ukrainian history, provided us with crucial information, but most importantly revealed new directions for research.

We are delighted to present our contribution to this issue of the “Wrocław Yearbook of Oral History”. Two academic papers explore the theoretical and practical implications of the application of the oral history methodology to the interdisciplinary study of mass protests. Three interviews provide a good sample of the empirical material that has been gathered. Finally, the interview with professor Georges Mink explains our goals and methods. We warmly invite WRHM readers to make use of our empirical and analytical material.