Lecture Timothy Snyder (Yale University, Fall 2022)

The Making of Modern Ukraine

20 - Maidan and Self-Understanding (Marci Shore)

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg_CLI3xY58

00:00 Greetings everyone.

Thanksgiving is coming, less students are coming.

Today, we have a wonderful opportunity to...

To close the historical part of History of Ukraine course, with guest lecturer, Professor Marci Shore.

She is Assistant Professor...

Associate Professor of history already here at Yale.

Professor Marci Shore teaches European cultural and intellectual history.

She graduated with a bachelor's and PhD from Stanford, and holding master's degree from University of Toronto.

She wrote it extensively on intellectual history of Eastern Central Europe.

And recently, she published book on history of Euromaidan (indistinct) was submitted to read, "The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution" And today, we'll be particularly talking about the years coming to Euromaidan, and revolution itself, and its consequences.

01:24 Marci, the floor is yours.

- Oh, thank you.

Thank you, it's nice to see you.

I'm recognizing some of you, so I think some of you have listened to me talk before, or taken my classes, so hopefully this won't be too repetitive.

Let me start...

Let me start just briefly with...

With the fall of communism in 1989, 'cause this was also reminding me of when I was younger.

One of the things Maidan did was bring me back to that moment when I first became enchanted with this whole part of the world, with Eastern Europe.

02:05 And in 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, it was one of those things that felt inconceivable and impossible until the moment that it happened.

And then, in retrospect, it seemed inevitable, which I think is a lesson for historians in general, that the thing that seems impossible and inconceivable will seem that way until the moment that it happens, and then it will retrospectively seem to be inevitable.

The Soviet Union seemed like it would go on forever.

The one thing that struck me when I first started going to Eastern Europe in the early 1990s was how many people said to me, "I never thought I would see it end in my lifetime." People who were dissidents, people who sat in prison, people who did everything they could to protest, people who did nothing, people who were content, people who went along with it; Everybody said, "We never thought "we would see it end in our lifetime." And I know that you've all, by now, sat through this whole course on Ukraine, so you know a lot by now about the Soviet experience.

03:06 So I'll just say, as a reminder, in some sense to myself as well, that the Soviet project was arguably the largest, deepest, most far reaching experiment in social engineering that has ever been performed on mankind.

And in some sense, we are still grappling with the sheer scope of the experiment, and the sheer magnitude of the failure, of the catastrophe.

It was not just an attempt to remake a government, and it wasn't even just an attempt to remake a society.

It was an attempt to remake human beings.

It was an attempt to create a new kind of human being.

And I was...

I was the last generation to grow up during the Cold War.

04:00 The war was...

the world was divided into two camps.

There was an Iron Curtain, not literal, although in the case of the Berlin Wall, there was actually physical wall.

The world was divided into those two sides and you were never gonna see what was on the other side.

Sorry, I'm trying to avoid moving around too much, which is my usual practice because I see that there's a camera there, so I'm gonna try to be disciplined and stay right here.

And then, one day, it was over and the wall fell, and the world opened.

And soon enough afterwards, the Soviet Union seemed to dissolve.

Kind of, just dissolve into pieces.

Ukraine, as you probably heard, got its independence, to a certain extent, by default, but also with some agitation, and with some desire on the part of the population.

And in the West, we were celebrating.

"The wicked witch is dead "and now we all live happily ever after," that was the paradigm.

05:00 I always think of the Wizard of Oz, and "Ding Dong, the witch is dead." You've all seen the Wizard of Oz, yes? "Ding dong, the witch is dead." There was a sense that the wicked witch is dead, and now we were all gonna live happily ever after.

Ironically, or perhaps paradoxically, the Hegelian narrative that had been underlying communism all these years gave way to what was also a Hegelian narrative about a liberal teleology of progress, that now that communism had failed and now we knew that, in fact, the locomotive of history was leading towards liberal democracy.

And there was a sense that liberalism, democracy, free market neoliberalism, they were all part of, what Adam Michnik has called, the "utopian capitalist package." They were going together as part of a harmonious whole, and now, we were all going to move on that train and live happily ever after.

There had been wonderful existentialist metaphysics among dissidents and philosophers in the 80s and 90s...

06:06 Or 70s and 80s, especially after 1968.

That kind of disappeared in the 90s because everybody was celebrating the end of history, as Francis Fukuyama called it, and the triumph of neoliberalism.

There was something kind of smug about that.

Our smug Western triumphalism that, yes, we were right, now everybody lives happily ever after.

Now, in some sense, that was a narrative that, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, was very deeply felt.

But something we perhaps didn't appreciate so much, being on the former capitalist side, or the still capitalist side, of the Iron Curtain was just how brutal the 1990s were for the societies that were coming out of communism.

Nobody really knew how you go and undo the communist experiment, and try to get back on that locomotive.

07:04 Nobody really knew how you made those transitions.

There were lots of theories.

There was shock therapy in Poland.

There was a faith that even if it were...

However rough it might be, there were gonna be some bumps in the road, but now we knew where the road was going.

And the 1990s, I mean, not only in the former Soviet space, perhaps more dramatically in the former Soviet space than in the rest of Eastern Europe, which was also quite rough.

One of my graduate students now, who's from Albania, said, there's an expression Albanian, that's "it's not the 1990s," that references that you're continually referencing the trauma of the 1990s.

It took us a long time, I think, in the West to understand that the 1990s were traumatic.

There was a kind of wildness to it, a sense that the old rules no longer obtained and nobody knew what the new rules were.

08:01 The coming of capitalism came as a kind of what, in American history we've called "robber baron capitalism." Capitalism as a wild free-for-all with no rules.

It left open the possibility of former communist apparatchiks very quickly transitioning into gangster-style neoliberals who managed to monopolize and steal a lot of the state resources.

The transition was not particularly gentle, and not necessarily particularly fair at all.

So Ukraine was languishing under these conditions, as were other places.

It was called...

The Ukraine of the 1990s was called by the American political scientist, Keith Darden, "The blackmail state," which was a term that got taken up.

Was mired in corruption scandals, you probably heard a bit from Professor Snyder already about Leonid Kravchuk, who came through the Communist Party.

09:05 And then, his successor, Leonid Kuchma, who was entering politics around 1990, and just mired in corruption scandals.

This omnipresence of corruption, of this lawlessness that is accompanying the transition to capitalism.

I mean, I still remember the transition to capitalism even in so-called "gentle places," like Prague, where you just got in a cab and they could charge you any amount of money.

There was no in there being any kind of limitation, or any kind of commitment to rates that were pro...

That were posted.

I mean, you just felt constantly vulnerable because there were no rules.

In the year...

In September 2000, this era is probably personified, or symbolized, by a brutal murder, an assassination of a Georgian-Ukrainian journalist...

Young Georgian-Ukrainian journalist, Georgiy Gongadze, who had been reporting on corruption, who was assassinated during Kuchma's reign.

10:12 There wasn't widespread violence en masse against the population, but if you were a dissident journalist or if you were making trouble in particular, then you were clearly very vulnerable.

And Ukraine languished this way until the elections of 2004, which is really where I wanna pick up for today.

And the elections of 2004, the presidential elections, were the elections between two

Viktors.

My kids are always complaining that all of these people we know in various Slavic speaking countries, their names repeat too much.

There are many Agnieszkas in Poland and Romania.

There are many Viktors, there are many Sashas.

So this is an election between two Viktors; Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko.

11:01 And Viktor Yanukovych was your post-Soviet gangster type.

I mean, not really "type," I mean, he was a gangster.

I mean, and not...

My friend, Ivan Krastev, the Bulgarian political scientist, said to me once, "Marci, it's not just that "he's a gangster, "he's a petty gangster." To which Radek Sikorski answered, "the sums of money involved were "really not so petty." Post-Soviet gangster type, close to the Kremlin, representing continuity with what had come before.

The presidency would clearly enrich himself and his circle of friends.

And then, there was Viktor Yushchenko, who seemed to be the person who was Westward-looking, who was looking towards Europe, who was going to take Ukraine, or had visions of taking Ukraine, on a path towards eventual European Union integration.

And the short version of this particular story is that Yanukovych's team tries to poison Viktor Yushchenko with dioxin.

12:09 Not only tries, they do poison use Yushchenko with dioxin.

The doctors save him, but his face is grotesquely disfigured.

And in some ways, that disfigured face, the images of Yushchenko as a victim of this dioxin poisoning, becomes the face of those elections, and a symbol of the brutality and the corruption.

Not only do they poison Yushchenko, but then they cheat in the elections.

In a way, not so dissimilar from the way that Lukashenko, in Belarus, cheated in the elections two years ago.

It was quite obvious to people that they had forged the election results.

And at that point, Ukrainians come out onto the streets.

And in particular, they come out to the main square in the center of Kyiv.

13:04 And the main square in the center of Kyiv is called the Maidan.

I just wanna say about the Maidan, it's an unusually large city square, and it's an unusually complex geographical space.

So for those of you who are interested in what is visual, who are interested in what is architectural, it's multi-leveled, which is not so typical for a city square.

And there's a underground part, with a subway and with some underground shopping.

So it's large and complex, and architecturally offers possibilities for things to happen on this square.

So for those of you who haven't been there, that physical space is significant to the rest of the story that I'm going to tell.

And hopefully, you all go some day.

Hopefully, after the victory when (speaking foreign language).

As they say Ukrainian, "We can all go back and do fun things on the Maidan." Ukrainians go to the Maidan, to the central square in Kyiv, and they protest in November 2004.

14:12 They protest forged elections.

And Kyiv is very...

It gets very cold in the winter.

It's fairly far north, not as far north as Petersburg, but quite far north.

For three weeks, people stand there and they freeze and they shout.

It's completely nonviolent, but they insist on free elections.

And somewhat miraculously, it works, Under pressure to some extent from other European countries, but the elections are done over.

This time, Yushchenko is declared the winner.

And people are happy and they go home.

And as you can probably guess, this is not going to be happily ever after.

We're still waiting for that moment in history when happily ever after comes, it's never come, so we don't want to anticipate too much.

15:05 People go home, and there's a sense of, "Now, we are on the right path." But the short version of this story is that Yushchenko turns out to be a disappointment.

And hopefully, you'll have some time to talk in your discussion sections in more detail about why he turns out to be a disappointment.

Was he never quite the same after the dioxin poisoning? Was he never actually the Messiah figure that he was projected to be? Was it because of infighting on his team? Did it have to do with the falling out with the Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko? Was he always a little bit self-interested? Did he always have certain nationalist leanings? For overdetermined reasons that will...

We will never be able to know, with certainty, exactly what was causal.

It doesn't work out well.

And again, I hope you'll have some time to talk about this in your discussion sessions 'cause it was an interesting moment.

And in the meantime, Yanukovych, it had seemed absolutely impossible that this man could ever come back.

16:03 I mean, first of all, he was hardly very inspiring to begin with.

He was...

He had a past that was a past as a gangster, he was involved in robbery, he was involved in assault, stealing state resources, being his usual gangster self.

There's nothing particularly appealing about him.

I realize I'm being very biased here.

And it was publicly exposed that he poisoned his opponent with dioxin and cheats in the election, so you think, really, he's out of there.

But somehow, he's still lurking around in the background, and he doesn't give up.

And he finds out that in Washington, there are some Americans who have a little boutique industry going for gangsters with presidential ambitions.

I mean, really, American capitalism, you can find anything.

And so, he decides he's going to hire one of these public relations consultants who specializes in gangsters with presidential ambitions.

17:06 And so, this guy, whose name was Paul Manafort, you may have heard of him, comes over to Ukraine from Washington.

He doesn't know Ukrainian, he doesn't know Russian, but he knows how to play golf.

He has opinions about suits, he has opinions about haircuts, he has opinions about facial expressions on television, and they hang out and he grooms...

Manafort grooms Yanukovych and gives him a makeover.

Now, again, I realize I'm not a very objective source of information here because I find Yanukovych somewhat repulsive.

I didn't really see the transformation.

Nothing seemed to be particularly enchanting about him after Manafort worked on him.

But somehow, he comes back and in 2010, genuinely wins the election.

18:03 And this time, nobody disputes the election results.

And as a thank you gift, he presents Paul Manafort with a $30,000 jar of black caviar.

I don't even know what one does with a $30,000 jar of black caviar but again, I'm speaking as somebody who doesn't like caviar.

So again, for overdetermined reasons, I'm not impressed by this.

In any case...

You can tell I'm not really a neutral observer to this story.

I'm not Ukrainian, but I'm also not a neutral observer.

It's hard to maintain your stance as a neutral observer for a very long time.

In any case, Yanukovych is the president, he's being his usual gangster-like self, not particularly inspiring.

He's not offering anyone some kind of grand narrative.

I mean, he's not one of these dictators with "I am going to restore you to greatness." There's no eschatology, there's no teleology.

19:00 It's just like "the next gangster could be worse, "so you better kind of shut up "and go along with me." He's not using widespread violence against the population, unless you really get in his way, and then people could be eliminated here and there.

And he's dangling out the carrot of eventually, slowly perhaps, one day, putting Ukraine on a path towards European Union integration.

And this, for the people, especially the people who are exactly your age, was...

Meant everything.

Whether or not, if you were...

If you were 15, or 18, or 22, or 25, whether or not Europe was going to be open to you meant everything about what kind of future you could have.

Would you be able to learn foreign languages? Would you be able to study abroad? Would you be eligible for Erasmus exchanges? Would you be eligible to do internships in Brussels? Would you be able to travel, and go to conferences, and meet with other young people without spending months waiting in long lines, and humiliating yourself, and paying lots of money and pleading for a visa that you might or might not get? So this, whether or not the doors of Europe would be open, was enormously important, especially to young people, and especially to students, especially to people who were looking at their future, who were upwardly mobile, who wanted to learn languages, who wanted to see the world.

20:32 In November 2013, Yanukovych was due to sign this very long anticipated association agreement with the European Union.

Now, it was not a fantastic agreement, and I think that the TFs can tell you more about the details of this agreement.

It would have involved Ukraine undertaking costly reforms to get in line with European Union regulations.

It almost definitely would have provoked retaliation from the Kremlin, who did not want Ukraine associating more closely with the European Union.

21:09 And at the end of the day, it didn't make any promises about European Union membership.

This was an association agreement, it wasn't a membership agreement.

But it was a foot in the door.

It was symbolically of enormous significance.

It was a sign that Ukraine had intentions of getting in line with European standards for integration.

And it was a sign that, potentially, even if contingently, if everything went well, Europe was open to the possibility of accepting Ukraine.

And so, for an agreement that, on the face of it and in the details, didn't seem so

spectacular, it was of enormous symbolic and existential significance, especially to a certain demographic.

At the 11th hour, when the ceremony had...

22:01 There was a signing ceremony.

It was set up in Vilnius.

Everything was all arranged for the end of November.

And at the very last minute on November 21st, Yanukovych suddenly said, "No, I'm not gonna sign." And then there was a feeling of sudden shock and devastation.

Again, not equally throughout the population.

And I keep emphasizing that because it's very different from the war that's going to come later.

The people who were...

The part of Ukraine that was truly devastated by the association agreement was a more distinct demographic than the part of Ukraine devastated by the war, which is a whole country.

At that point, still, nothing might have happened.

It's one of the lessons about historical contingency.

People were very depressed, people were very upset, people were angry.

Had not a 32 year old Afghan-Ukrainian journalist, named Mustafa Nayyem, not posted on Facebook, in Russian, a little note on November 21st, saying, "Hey, let's be serious.

23:10 "If you're really upset, "come out to the Maidan by midnight tonight." And he said, "likes do not count." Interestingly, that "likes do not count" initially often got mistranslated to English, which I found odd because it's one of the rare, serendipitous moments when the Slavic translates perfectly into English.

It was literally "likes do not count." And as a historian, that really captured me because I thought, "Wow, "that's a sentence that would have made "no sense before Facebook." Like, student...

I mean, literally, it would've been devoid of any semantic meaning before Facebook.

And now, "Likes do not count" is going to become a revolutionary slogan for the 21st century.

People come out to the Maidan that night.

Mostly, although not exclusively, young people, students, people exactly your age, quite similar to yourselves, they go out to the square.

24:09 It's November, it's cold, not as cold as it's going to get in January, but cold.

They hold hands, they sing, they play music, they're completely peaceful.

They're not interested in ethnic politics, they're not interested in language politics, they're not interested in opposition political parties, they're not talking about elections.

Their slogan is "Ukraine is Europe." That's it.

"Ukraine is Europe." And they call themselves "Euromaidan." They want Europe to be open to them.

And there are, at any given time, anywhere from several hundred to a couple thousand of them on this square.

They stay there for about nine days.

Again, completely peacefully, hanging out, dancing, declaring that "Ukraine is Europe." And then, at four in the morning on November 30th, Yanukovych suddenly, or not so suddenly, we don't really know, I have no privileged epistemological access to what was going on inside his head, perhaps under pressure from Putin, he decides to send out his riot police, called Berkut, to brutally beat up the students.

25:34 And this was a shock.

It was a shock because there had been a tacit social contract that however much

corruption there had been, however weak the rule of law had been, however much that people's livelihoods and resources had been stolen from them, however a journalist may have been assassinated here or there if they were too critical, since 1991, in independent Ukraine, the regime had not used mass violence against its own population.

26:06 And there was a sense that that was a line that was impermissible to cross.

Nobody was killed, although that was initially unclear, but the beatings were really quite brutal and a lot of people were seriously injured.

It seems that Yanukovych was counting on the fact that if you shock people this way, not enough to kill people but enough to terrify them, the parents will freak out and they will pull their kids off the streets.

And one of the people I talked to about this afterwards was a great Ukrainian novelist who writes in the genre of magical realism, Taras Prokhasko, you should all read him, if you haven't, there's quite a bit that's been translated into English.

His son, Markian, who was a young journalism student, was on the Maidan in Kyiv at the time.

27:03 And Taras was in Ivano-Frankivsk, so he was not there.

He was an overnight train ride away.

But his son, who was a student, was there.

And Markian had been there for several days.

And just coincidentally, at like two in the morning before Berkut came onto the square, he went to a friend's apartment and fell asleep.

And he had been on the square day and night for the past couple days.

He turned off his phone and went to sleep.

And there's this sudden outbreak of brutality.

People call...

Phone calls are being made.

Taras gets a phone call, a message from a girl who knows his son, and he's trying to get ahold of his son and he can't.

He's calling, and calling, and calling, and Markian is not answering the phone.

And he's getting more and more distraught.

I know you guys are too young to have children, but it's like...

As soon as you do, you are like...

I already had children by the time that Maidan came, and you can feel it under your skin, this terror about like not being able to find your children at such a moment.

28:08 He's calling hospitals, he's calling police stations, he's calling everybody he knows in Kyiv, and Markian is not answering the phone, nobody else can find him.

Finally, Markian wakes up, turns on the phone, finds out...

Finds hundreds of messages, sees that...

Finds out what's happened.

Calls his girlfriend, now his wife, she posted a message on Facebook that says he's alive.

He talks to his mother, talks to his father, the things you're supposed to do, like a good child, when your parents have been hysterically worried about you.

Keep that in mind if you're ever in such a situation.

And Taras immediately gets in his car and starts driving...

Driving to Kyiv.

And as I said, it seems that Yanukovych is counting on the fact that you do something violent, and shocking, and you terrify parents, like Taras.

And of course, he was not the only parent who was terrified.

29:02 I'm just telling you his story because I happened to talk to him.

And he thought they would then pull their kids off the streets.

They're not gonna expose their children to this, And so, Taras is one of the parents who runs to find their children.

And when he finds Markian, he doesn't pull him off the street, he joins him there.

And that's the moment when everything turns because that is en masse what the parents do.

So you go from having had several hundred to a couple thousand people on the streets of Kyiv, to, a day and a half later, you have hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of Kyiv.

Nobody has ever seen that many people on the streets of Kyiv.

And now, they're not just shouting, "Ukraine is Europe." Now, they're shouting, "We will not permit you to beat our children." And interestingly, I heard this also from people who didn't have children there per se, but they all became our children.

30:09 "We will not permit you to beat our children." And that was the moment that when I talked to the...

Vasily Cherepanin, who is one of the leading leftist intellectuals, who was probably in his early 30s at the time, he said "That was the moment when Euromaidan became Maidan," with no prefix.

And it was no longer just about the European Union.

It was now a revolt against...

Against something that, in Russian, is called (speaking foreign language).

This is a word we don't have in English, but during the Trump Administration, I was suggesting that we needed to introduce it in English because it was missing, which is this idea of arbitrariness tinged with tyranny.

The sense of helplessness in the face of power.

31:02 The feeling that the powers that be can do whatever they want to you, and you are helpless.

That you are being treated as a play thing, as a thing and not as a human being, as an object and not as a subject.

And the maidan became a revolt against (speaking foreign language).

It became an insistence on being treated as a person and not as a thing, as a subject and not as an object, and they began to call themselves, "On the Maidan, the Revolution of Dignity." And "dignity" here...

I really...

You're gonna...

I'm now exposing myself as the intellectual historian who teaches a lot of philosophy.

"Dignity" here in the Kantian sense.

So for those of you who haven't been subjected to reading Kant with me, and if my husband hasn't told you enough about Kant, Kant has a famous definition of a human being.

Kant says that "Whatever can be exchanged "for something of equivalent value has a price.

32:00 "Whatever is beyond all price "and bears of no equivalent has dignity.

"Human beings are distinguished "in that we possess dignity.

"We do not have a price, we possess dignity." And from this comes Kant's categorical imperative, which is the basis of his moral philosophy, which is you always treat a human being as an ends and never as a means, always as a subject and not as an object.

In this sense, the Maidan was a very Kantian revolution.

I realized most of the political commentators were not talking about Kant but I said, I'm

intellectual historian, so I feel compelled to talk about Kant.

It was a Kantian revolution.

We wanna be treated as human beings and we are going to insist on being treated with dignity.

It was a remarkable moment for me as a historian because so many revolutions have been emplotted as oedipal rebellions.

33:00 You can emplot, in fact, the whole history of communism as a series of oedipal rebellions, where each generation rises up and turned against the fathers.

So the fact that suddenly you have parents joining their children on the streets, and that is the moment that creates the revolution, was just an extraordinary thing to witness in real time.

And then, when I was working on the book, I became very interested in interviewing people in the same family of multiple generations who went to the Maidan, because people then started going to the Maidan with their children, with their parents, sometimes with their parents and their grandparents.

You would have multiple generations going.

And one of the...

One of the people I interviewed, together with his father, was this young kid.

I mean, literally a kid.

He was 16, he wasn't even at university, he was still in secondary school, named Roman Ratushnyi, who was on the Maidan from the beginning.

34:00 His shoulder was battered in on November 30th from Berkut.

But he was determined to go back.

He kept going back.

And I was talking at this cafe in Kyiv, and it must have been December 2014, to Roman, to his father, Taras.

And Roman was living with his mother at the time.

And I said, "Your m..." I mean, he seemed so young to me, and I said, "Your mother must have been very upset, "but she let you go back." And he said, "My mother? "My mother was making Molotov cocktails "on her (indistinct)." Yes.

One of the horrific pieces of news I got in the spring early in this war was that Roman, before his 25th birthday, was killed in June, fighting in the East.

After that, within a couple days, the Maidan became a whole parallel polis.

35:05 Parallel polis was a concept that was developed by the Czech dissident philosopher, Vaclav Benda, in the late 1970s.

And it was the idea that to oppose the regime, to oppose tyranny, was not just, or should not be primarily, "we're going to have a political protest." It was to create an alternative space, an alternative society, with your own institutions, in which you live according to the values as you wish to see them instituted in the society as you wish to imagine it.

The Maidan became a parallel polis.

Within 48, 72 hours, there were elaborate kitchens running, there was a whole infrastructure.

People were cooking soup in cauldrons, they were making tea, they were making coffee, there was clothing distribution points, a piano, a stage, a library, an open university, medical clinics.

36:04 There was a whole world going on in the Maidan.

People were living on the Maidan.

People were coming every day to the Maidan.

Some of them were coming in shifts to the Maidan, walking around the Maidan.

It was getting colder and colder, so you couldn't stand still, you had to keep walking.

There were cleanup crews.

One of the other young students who was on the Maidan, who now is fighting in the East, and who I worry about every day, Misha Martynenko, said "the Maidan was so clean "you could eat off the pavement." Everybody was taking care of this space.

This was their space.

People were suddenly not drinking alcohol, which was extremely unusual, like in Kyiv in the winter.

There were performances, there were lectures, there were discussion groups, there was a whole world that took place there.

It was a masterpiece of self-organization.

37:02 And interestingly, there was a sense of an explosion of civil society, of self-organization, in a way that hadn't been anticipated.

But I found when I pushed, that you could find the origins in these much smaller instances, or more modest instances of civil society, that had been percolating beneath the surface.

At one point, my friend, Katya Mischenko, who was shuttling back and forth at the time between Vienna, where she had a fellowship, and Kyiv, who was...

Among other things, she was guarding patients at hospitals from being kidnapped by Yanukovych's people, which was something he liked to do.

Protestors would be injured by Berkut, and then while they were vulnerable in the hospital, they would be kidnapped and taken away.

And Katya was...

Came back to Vienna one day, and all of us were jumping on her and say, "Okay, tell us what's going on.

"Tell us what's going on." And she was talking about guarding people at the hospital, and how they had organized teams, and there was an SOS hotline and if you saw somebody taken away, you could call this number.

38:10 And there were these people with cars, and they were on this program.

And I said, "Katya, how'd you guys get "an SOS hotline overnight, "in a couple hours? "How did you get it so fast?" And she said, "Oh, well, there was an LGBT group "that had a confidential hotline." It was small, it was under the radar.

You could call and discuss personal issues, but...

And so, they just turned it over to the Maidan.

And I found that an interesting detail because it suggests that even if something is kind of...

Is in a very nascent, modest stage, any little bit of infrastructure, once it's there, then becomes a jumping off point.

You've already got a hotline set up.

Maybe it's a small hotline, maybe it doesn't get many calls, but it's there.

And once these little pockets of things were there, it turned out that there was a springboard that was unanticipated.

39:00 It was an extraordinary thing to watch.

There was also this sense of what Europe meant changed.

I think Europe was no longer, first and foremost, the highly imperfect, contingent empirical manifestation that was the European Union.

Europe was Europe, in the kind of platonic essence of Europe-ness.

Europe represented human dignity, it represented human rights, it represented the rule of law.

It represented western civilization in the sense that Gandhi meant when he was one...

Gandhi was once famously asked what he thought about Western civilization, and he

gives this answer, which some of you may have heard, "I think it would be a very good thing." I mean that Europe, that would be a very good thing, was the Europe that was at stake on the Maidan.

The essence of what it would be to live under a regime of human rights and the rule of law.

40:04 The other thing I wanna talk about that was so remarkable to me, and goes back to the idea of the overcoming of a generational divide, is this overcoming of boundaries.

And I should say, my perspective on this was influenced by the fact that I was...

I was an American in Vienna, watching this livestreamed.

And the people in the Maidan set up cameras to live stream themselves, so the Maidan was live streamed 24 hours a day on the internet, which is also an uncanny, trippy thing.

People turned the cameras on themselves.

You were kind...

It was a self-violation of one's own privacy in an effort to assert one's own narrative.

And so, I was an American, watching this livestream from Vienna, but in some ways, I was watching it, above all, through Polish eyes.

I mean, I was following the press in different languages, including in English and German.

41:00 But the coverage I was somehow clinging to most was the coverage coming from Poland.

And in particular, what my friends in Poland, who had been veterans of Solidarity in the 70s and 80s, and who had sat in prison under communism, were writing.

And maybe, I'll just take a little brief detour here to say something about that.

So there's...

There are two remarkable Polish films, which you should all watch, by the great director, Andrzej Wajda.

They're in a series starring Krystyna Janda, "Man of Marble" and "Man of Iron." And in the second one, "Man of Iron," it...

Early in the film, we are in 1968 in Poland.

In 1968 in Poland, the students lead protest against communist government censorship, and many of them end up in prison, including many of those people who were still...

Who were watching the Maidan, and who I was in close touch with watching this.

42:01 And in the film, one...

Which is fictional, but based on real events.

A young man, a student, goes to his father, who is a shipyard worker, in 1968, as the communist secret police are coming and battering the students, and asks his father to bring out the workers in solidarity with the students.

And the father refuses, and he locks the son in his room, and he says, "Someday, when the time is right, "we'll march together." And the son is livid.

And he says, "No, I will never forgive you.

"We will never march together." And two years later, in Poland, it's the shipyard workers who demonstrate against the regime.

And in the film, in Wajda's film, "Man of Iron," the father then comes to his son and ask him to bring him and his friends out in solidarity with the workers.

And at that time, the son basically says, "Hey, you let us down two years ago, "now you go to hell." And what Solidarity was in Poland, both in its proto form, as the Committee for the Defense of the Workers, which was spearheaded by Adam Michnik and others in 1976, and then the form it evolves into through 1980 and 1981, was this remarkable moment of the coming together of the fathers and the sons, and the workers and the intellectuals, and the Catholics and the Marxist, and the Jews and the Poles, and all of these hitherto existing boundaries.

43:37 And that was what happened on the Maidan.

You had people who never in their lives would have encountered one another, who wouldn't have necessarily been on the same side, who wouldn't have shared a common way of understanding the world, suddenly encounter one another with this kind of openness that people would not have expected.

44:00 And it was watching...

I think part of my captivation was seeing how people like Konsta Gebert, and Adam Michnik, and Aleksander Smolar, and these veterans of Solidarity were watching the Maidan because they knew better than anybody else that that Solidarity, that Solidarność in Poland represented it, that it lasted 20 seconds after communism fell.

But they also knew that it was this extraordinarily precious thing that most people never experience, and they never counted on living to see a second time in their lifetimes.

And they appreciated it, they knew what it meant.

They knew that it was that miracle that most people never experience.

And that that was what the Poles understood about the Maidan.

I think that's why the coverage was so different.

In the German press, people were talking about the kids in Kyiv, supportively, but in a slightly condescending way.

45:07 In the Polish press, they were talking about powstanie.

powstanie, which is insurrectionary.

It's like this romantic, lofty, noble word in Poland, to talk about powstanie.

"Those who fight for our freedom and yours." Okay, I see I'm...

Okay, I see I'm running out of time, so let me...

People stay on the Maidan.

They stay all winter.

They stay and freeze, and the stakes get higher and higher, and the government violence becomes more and more severe.

Peoples disappear.

Sometimes their bodies are found, having been tortured and frozen in the woods.

Activists are frozen and battered with fire hoses.

46:04 There are...

There's a sense that the violence is only increasing.

And again, it seems to be that Yanukovych is saying, "If you keep raising the stakes, "it's going to stop." But it has the opposite effect because at a certain point, you can push people to the other side of fear.

You can push them to the point where they feel that "no one will ever be safe "as long as this man is in power.

"The only way any of us are going "to be able to breathe again is "if he's overthrown." The stakes become all or nothing.

Remarkably...

I mean, even watching from a distance, even watching this livestream, you could feel a kind of existential transformation.

When those students went out to the Maidan in November, nobody was thinking, "We're gonna die here," or "We're ready to die here." And by the second half of January, you could feel, almost palpably, and even from a distance that something had turned, and a critical mass of people was ready to die there if need be.

47:15 And then, you were kind of...

You were just waiting for the end game.

You knew that more violence was going to come, and you knew that those people were not gonna leave.

And there was this sense of voyeuristic terror that I was watching this with, and many people were watching this with.

This happened in the second half of February 2014, where Yanukovych's regime unleashes a sniper massacre, and there are snipers on buildings firing down.

And this is all being live streamed, so you are watching people being killed in real time.

48:04 You're watching these battles in real time.

More and more reinforcements start coming to Kyiv.

In Lviv, there's a former real estate agent...

Or she's still a real estate agent now, but she turned herself into a committee to organize buses.

They were just putting people on buses and sending people to Kyiv.

And people wanted to go.

More people wanted to go than they could produce buses.

Radek Sikorski, who was the Polish Prime Minister at the time during this massacre, flies over to Kyiv to try to negotiate a ceasefire.

He goes to the presidential palace to talk to Yanukovych.

The presidential palace is very close to the Maidan.

I mean, Radek gets there and you can smell the smoke.

I mean, things are burning, buildings are burning, people are burning.

49:00 You can smell the smoke in the presidential palace.

He goes in to talk to Yanukovych.

I found this...

I found this kind of extraordinary because I thought...

When I talked to him afterwards, I thought, "Radek, you're sitting there, "talking to this man.

"You know that with every "additional five minutes that takes, "more people are being killed.

"And you know you're talking to someone "for whom other people's lives "just don't have any value.

"I mean, was he at all concerned about "these people who were being killed "as you were talking to him?" And Radek is like, "Marci, he doesn't have much of an emotional imagination.

"He's not that bright.

"No, he didn't seem concerned at all." But finally, they managed to negotiate a ceasefire, and a call for early elections.

Yanukovych agrees to early elections.

Not immediately, but several months from then.

People in the Maidan do not wanna sign it.

They don't trust the president.

They've just seen their people die.

Radek takes a very hard line stance and says, "Hey, listen, "I grew up in Poland under Solidarity.

50:00 "We underestimated the strength of the regime, "and we got martial law and mass detention.

"So you accept this now.

"Later, you push for more.

"Otherwise, you're gonna get the army, "you're gonna get martial law, "you're all gonna be dead." And they sign.

But it's clear that people are just furious.

I mean, they're carrying corpses in caskets through the Maidan, and Yanukovych flees.

He flees across the border to Russia.

And Paul Manafort is out of a job.

We all know what he does next.

Little greed men in unmarked camouflage appear on the Crimean Peninsula, sent by the Kremlin.

While no one has had a chance to catch their breath, one president has fled, he's been deposed.

There's an interim government, but they haven't had elections yet and nobody really knows what's going on.

51:00 And Putin capitalizes on, particularly, that moment to try to take Crimea...

To take Crimea, and to instigate separatist rebellions throughout eastern and southeastern Ukraine.

So-called "Russian tourist" come across the border.

They have been told various stories, one of which is that the Maidan was a CIA-sponsored conspiracy, and that Ukrainian Nazis are now heading east to kill all the Russian speakers.

I don't have time to go into, unfortunately, the rest of that story, but I'm sure after the break, you will be caught up as to what happens after the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in the Donbas.

Let me just...

Maybe if I can say something philosophical and existential at the end.

So I'm not really a political historian per se.

One of the things that struck me most about the accounts people were giving on the Maidan was how everybody started talking about how they lost track of time.

52:08 Something happens to time during a revolution.

It changes its form.

You can't remember what happened an hour ago, what happened the day before, what happened a week before.

I mean, one of the principles of revolution is that the state of affairs that obtained five minutes ago could become completely irrelevant five minutes later.

That anything can change at any moment.

That suddenly, there was an effacing of the boundary between night and day.

You could call anyone at any time.

(That) That was true if you were 15 or if you were 75, that the experience of time changed.

And I became very interested in thinking about time.

Time and revolution.

And one of the things I learned from the Maidan, or learned from the accounts of the Maidan that I was getting from my friends, and colleagues, and other people who were there, was an appreciation of Sartre's idea of time, of the present.

The present is a border.

53:00 The present is a border between...

Between what Sartre calls "the inward self." Facticity, what has already happened, who you have been up to this moment, what cannot be changed, and "the forward self." What is coming in the future, what is not yet determined, what is the possibility for transcendence, to go beyond what has been and who you have been up to this moment.

And that border is with us, every moment of our lives.

The present is the moment of that crossing of the border from what has already been and who we have been to the possibility of going beyond, but we normally don't feel it, we normally don't turn our attention to it.

And revolution is that moment when you suddenly shine a glaring light on that border, and you are shaken into understanding the present as the moment of the possibility of going beyond.

Thank you.