



Stas Olenchenko 🇺🇦 @TheStanislawski

Nov 21 · 17 tweets · [TheStanislawski/status/1594735328866230273](https://twitter.com/TheStanislawski/status/1594735328866230273)

Exactly 9 years ago today, I was in a pub with my uni pals when we heard the news that then-president Yanukovich would not sign the association agreement with the EU, crushing Ukraine's European hopes and locking us to Russia.

We were not buying it.

Here's what happened next 🧵

In 2013, we were second-year social & political science students – we were young and angry, and we definitely were not ready to spend our adult lives in a post-Soviet dictatorship.

So the next day, we went to Maidan Square in Kyiv with thousands of others fed up with Yanukovich.

Thousands grew into tens of thousands as Yanukovich ignored our demands.

Here's a photo from a 50,000-strong protest in late November. Still peaceful, still hopeful.

The thumbs-up kid on the left is me.



The next four months were so densely packed with protests, emotions, and news that it's impossible to put them all into one thread.

I'll just mention some of the most notable moments.

Maidan became permanently occupied by the protestors (us) after the brutal beating of the students.

It was getting clear at that point that Yanukovich was trying to crush the protests and usurp the power to become a true dictator.

Now, hundreds of thousands went to the streets.

I was watching a live stream from Maidan at 1AM in mid-December when Berkut (the special police) went on the offensive, trying to rip the Maidan crowd and take back the square.

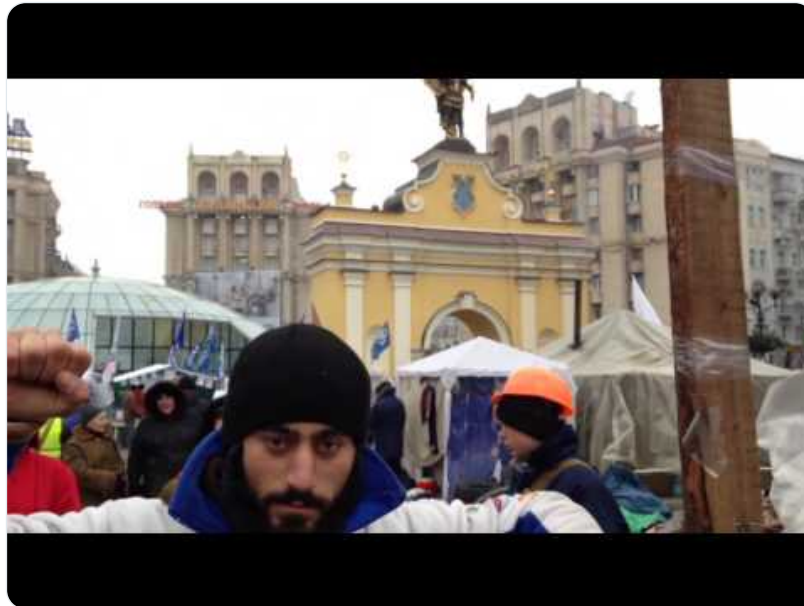
I woke my dad up, and we decided to go. Thousands more flooded Maidan at 2AM to defend the protest.

Yanukovich's police never managed to crush Maidan. In January 2014, after approving a set of draconian laws, the regime started to unleash lethal violence on the even more outraged crowd.

I remember crying hard when Serhiy Nigoyan was shot dead in the middle of the rally.

Here's Serhiy reciting Taras Shevchenko in Maidan only a couple of weeks before getting murdered by the regime.

He was 20 years old, only a year older than me.



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/CyEgqstK7e0>

Clashes with the police, Molotov cocktails, fortification building – it all became the new norm from later February.

Everybody was at Maidan – friends, family, people from all around Ukraine. My grandma regularly made a massive tank of borscht and carried it to feed the folk.

On February 19, we stayed late at Maidan until 2AM helping prepare the Molotov cocktails and building fortifications from car tires.

Here's a (very) blurry photo of me and my friend Daniel from that night.

6 hours after we left to get some sleep, the shootings started.



On February 20, more than 80 protestors were shot dead by the special forces in another, most brutal series of early morning clashes.

Following a series of shock, chaos, and negotiations, Yanukovych just took his belongings and ran away to Russia.

We won.

Lots of things happened next.

The annexation of Crimea, the start of the war in Donbas, the new elections, and, finally, a complete return to a European path for Ukraine.

As you are well aware, post-Maidan events were only the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine.

As years went by, I realized, to my surprise, that some foreigners believed Maidan was a Western coup designed to hurt Russia.

I saw a lot of people on the outside doubting the real reasons behind Maidan and mixing up the chronology of the events. It was a mess.

As with any revolution, Maidan was not perfect, and it did not bring a perfect government to power. That's not how revolutions work.

However, those three months in 2013-2014 changed my life and the life of Ukraine forever. My generation finally arrived and demanded change.

My people finally took power into their hands and went through blood and terror to break away from authoritarianism and Russia's imperial influence.

It truly was a Revolution of Dignity, a people's movement – and everyone who saw Maidan in person understands it crystal clear.

In 2022, we have entered the final stage of the events triggered by Maidan.

This war will decide who wins in the end – the people who have chosen a democratic European future for their country or a bunch of post-Soviet police states led by dictators with imperial issues.

If 9 years ago someone in the pub told us what would happen next, I would have done it all over again – with more dedication and certainty.

And I definitely would have done it alongside the same brave, bright, unbelievable people.

End of thread.



• • •