# Ukraine: Private Revolutions

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*by Oksana Forostyna*

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*Features*

# Private Revolutions

By Oksana Forostyna
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TARAS HATALIAK: CONFRONTING THE STEAMROLLER

LVIV, Ukraine | One night in the spring of 2004, a Lviv printer made a business deal with some young Ukrainian political activists to print a large lot of stickers with the logo and slogans of their organization.

By morning, the stickers adorned walls and lampposts in Lviv and other cities. For several weeks similar stickers had begun appearing in Ukrainian cities and police had detained students caught pasting them.

There were still almost six months to go before the first round of voting, but the political atmosphere was charged with argument and speculation. The mostly student activists of Pora – the word means "It's time!" in Ukrainian – were calling loudly for radical change and an end to the tightly controlled political-business regime of President Leonid Kuchma and his chosen successor, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych. Already it was clear that Yanukovych's only real challenger would be former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko.

Taras Hataliak, a 33-year-old father of two, owned the Papuga printing business, which printed the stickers on that evening of 20 May. He was not a member of Pora, although he had been active in the anti-Soviet student movement and had printed posters for the Ukrainian opposition in previous election campaigns. At 6 a.m. on the morning after his meeting with Pora activists, police began simultaneous searches at his apartment, printing plant, and office. He was questioned all day by officers of the state security bureau, SBU, and was then ordered to appear the next day to answer charges in the southern city of Odessa.

In Odessa, Hataliak found himself accused of printing materials for the opposition, but not in Ukraine. Prosecutors alleged that members of the Moldovan opposition hired him to print counterfeit Moldovan currency, their goal to take power after destabilizing the country's economy with a flood of fake money. A member of the gang named Mykhalyk had ratted on Hataliak, they said.

Investigators told a court that three printers in the Papuga plant churned out counterfeit

Moldovan banknotes in 2003 worth 19.72 million leu (now $1.5 million). But Hataliak had an alibi: he was not in Lviv on the dates the counterfeits were allegedly printed. Undeterred, the prosecution said Hataliak had employed a double to oversee the printing in his place.

Hataliak spent nearly six months in detention. Still in jail, he voted for Yushchenko during the first round of the presidential election in October.

"Everybody had to show their voting papers to a prison officer," he says. "Guys who voted for Yushchenko were under great pressure. Their cells were searched, they were refused permission to receive packages."

He says investigators kept leaning on him to dismiss his lawyer, to get out of the printing business, to confess. He refused.

"On the third day of my imprisonment I understood that there is no justice in Ukraine. … My investigator promised I would spend 12 years in Odessa."

Eventually Hataliak's lawyers tracked down his "double" in Belarus, a man named Yevhen Sobol who bears little physical resemblance to him, and found other alleged perpetrators and witnesses in Transdniester and Canada.

Hataliak was freed from detention in November on condition that he inform the police of his movements and not leave the country. The charges against Sobol were later dropped.

That same month Pora became the main driving force of revolution: young people – the average age was around 20 – were more willing than most to spend days or weeks camping in the snow and cold on Kyiv's Independence Square. They soon gathered support from all sectors of Ukrainian society.

"From the very beginning Pora was the only organization to help," Hataliak says, finding lawyers to defend him and mounting a protest when a court tried to send him back to jail after his release from detention.

In 2005, after the Orange Revolution, Hataliak and Sobol appealed to the SBU in Kyiv in an effort to prove that the case against them had been fabricated. Instead, they were advised to leave Kyiv as soon as possible. On 13 December 2005 a court in Odessa found Hataliak guilty of the lesser crime of negligence and handed down a three-year suspended prison term and one year of probation. "Journalists weren’t allowed in the courtroom," he says.

DMYTRO ROMANIUK: MY AIM IS TRUE

The young student was out walking his dog when someone told him the prime minister was coming to town that day.

It was 24 September 2004, just over a month before the first round of presidential voting. Dmytro Romaniuk was a 17-year-old student of economics at Precarpathian University in Ivano-Frankivsk, a regional capital of 200,000 in western Ukraine.

"Nobody knew Yanukovych was coming," he says, sitting in a Frankivsk café two years later.

Romaniuk became interested in politics before entering university, following the lead of his older brother and his father, who was the dean of the university economics department.

"I'd read that in other cities students were forced to welcome Yanukovych," he says. "So I had decided to prepare a speech in case he ever came to Ivano-Frankivsk."

Even though he found that only students of the university's tourism institute were required to welcome the prime minister, Romaniuk decided it was time to act. He went to his scheduled lecture, but the professor was late.

"I didn’t know how to get people fired up, so I just said, 'If you are not indifferent to Ukraine’s fate, come with me!' "

Accompanied by 20 or so fellow students, he borrowed some money, bought 30 eggs, and went to meet Yanukovych.

"I was lucky," he says, smiling. "Yanukovych’s bus stopped right in front of me." His classmates held fire and only he threw an egg. "There were more plainclothes police than students around, and I was grabbed within five seconds."

Though he was under age, he was questioned alone at a police station for several hours. His father was allowed to see him late that afternoon.

"I had never seen my father looking like that before – he seemed 10 years older. That was the only hard moment for me."

The next day Dmytro's father was summoned to the regional government offices and told that his son's fate rested with Yanukovych. Media soon reported on his plea to the prime minister to forgive his son’s rash act. He later suffered a heart attack but was able to return to work.

Dmytro Romaniuk was luckier than Taras Hataliak. He spent just one night in jail, thanks to Yanukovych's public forgiveness, and in December 2004, as the Yushchenko wave reached its peak, the charge of hooliganism against him was dismissed.

But in the hours after he tossed his egg things looked bleak for the young man, though he probably was clueless as to what was happening outside his cell. When the egg hit, Yanukovych – the tall man with two youthful convictions for robbery and assault, now the chief of the powerful Donetsk business-political "clan" – had fallen senseless to the ground and been taken to hospital. During the day the state-controlled media (in other words, almost all media) reported that the prime minister had been struck by a heavy object hurtling out of the crowd of nationalist demonstrators.

Only the independent Channel 5 television broadcast images of the incident, clearly showing a single egg striking Yanukovych. It was a turning point in that dark presidential campaign. Yanukovych instantly became fodder for countless jokes, songs, and animated cartoons that appeared on websites and even some Ukrainian media outlets. Just three weeks after Yanukovych's main challenger Yushchenko came down with a mysterious near-fatal illness, not yet confirmed as dioxin poisoning, a society bound up in fear, pressure, and threat began to make fun of itself.

## ANDRIY ANDRUSHKIV: A PERSONAL REVOLUTION

The night before he started work as an election observer, Andriy Andrushkiv slept in a mortuary. Along with two friends from Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, the 19-year-old had traveled south to the Odessa region, as volunteer observers of the presidential runoff election on 21 November 2004 between the two top vote-winners in October's first round, Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko. A funeral parlor in the village of Shevchenkove let them sleep on the floor.

Voting went normally that day despite the tension in the air. By midnight the votes had been counted, and Andrushkiv and his friends received copies of the official precinct election returns. The next stage in the process was the delivery of the ballots to the district electoral commission. According to law, representatives of each candidate should have accompanied the ballots, but when the car carrying the ballots was about the drive away, only Yanukovych's representative and the chairman of the village council, with the ballot boxes on his lap, were inside.

Andrushkiv protested.

"The chairman told me not to interfere," Andrushkiv says. "I ran to call my friends, but when I got back, the car was about to leave."

He lay down under the car's wheels and said he would not move.

"I didn’t assert the rights of any candidate or party," he says. "It was just a reaction to a local injustice, the beginning of my personal revolution."

Finally a Yushchenko representative got into the car and the three students began writing a complaint to the local election commission, standing outside in the headlights of a car because officials refused to let them back into the polling place.

Reports of voting irregularities were circulating across Ukraine over the next days and disgust over the conduct of the elections only increased when Yanukovych was declared the winner.

The next day Andriy and his friends went to Kyiv, where protesters were already gathering. They remained throughout the three weeks of the good-tempered mass revolt dubbed the Orange Revolution.

Yushchenko and his supporters called for a nationwide strike. On the three students' first day in Kyiv, "when we were going around the universities in Kyiv and recruiting students to join the strike, we asked a woman the way to some university building," Andriy says. "With an expressive look, she handed us some money and said, 'Buy yourselves something to eat. The university is right there.' "

He also recalls an old woman in Shevchenkove who immediately pegged the three students as outsiders.

"She called over my friend Vlodko and took out of her pocket some candies in a handkerchief – you know how old ladies do? – and gave them to him. She thanked us and went away. We didn't eat the candy, though. We decided to wait and celebrate the moment everything was OK."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Taras Hataliak now serves as a national coordinator and is one of the oldest members of Opora, a civic watchdog group that formed when Pora split into two factions after Yushchenko's election.

He still runs his printing business and works as executive secretary of the Lviv region’s public police monitoring board, a body that examines complaints against the police.

This August Hataliak's appeal against his conviction was rejected by a higher court. His hopes now rest with the Supreme Court, but if the highest Ukrainian court does not declare him innocent, he says he is ready to go to the European Court of Human Rights.

On 1 March this year, Hataliak's son, Svyatoslav, now 10, came running to his parents' office, crying that someone forced him into a car after school and drove to another part of Lviv, but soon let him go.

Hataliak and his wife filed a case with the public prosecutor, who could not determine that the crime had actually been committed and closed the case after two months. "They said the boy made the story up," Hataliak said.

But Hataliak still believes the Orange Revolution had a big effect on his case.

"The cardinal change is that I’m not in jail. Otherwise the sentence would not even have been suspended and I'd still be there. So there was a strategic change. But tactical – it’s clear that Yushchenko won’t busy himself with my case."

Yet, with so many people on his side, Hataliak believes his name will be cleared.

"Falsified evidence, unjust accusation – everything is against them," he says of his accusers. "The steamroller that flattened me is going to start moving in reverse."

After his dramatic debut in politics Dmytro Romaniuk went to work for Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party as an election observer. Still a student, he entered his name on the party’s list for last spring’s elections for the Ivano-Frankivsk city council but was not selected as a candidate.

Romaniuk says he is still optimistic about politics. He worries, though, that the rules of the game in both politics and business are reverting to their pre-2004 state, especially in light of Yushchenko’s deal with Yanukovych that saw the loser in the 2004 elections return to high politics as prime minister: "Yanukovych was dead as a political figure until Yushchenko reanimated him."

He wants to devote himself to politics but doesn't feel comfortable with any of the political forces now on the scene.

"I think a new movement will be created not from the top, but from the masses. That is my aim," he says.

After Yushchenko's victory, Andriy Andrushkiv returned to his studies and worked in the student canteen to earn money for tuition. He hasn't taken up the offer of a job on Yushchenko's staff made to him and another Catholic University student by the president himself at a meeting with Lviv university administrators and students. He hopes some day to start a Christian youth radio station.

"It was nasty to see," he says of the Yushchenko-Yanukovych agreement. "But a coalition [between them] seems to be the only way. And this is only politics. But even today, after all that's happened, I think the revolution has come true. … That it happened was a fact of resistance, an event. And it was a great event."