UKRAINIAN STUDENTS’ COPARTNERSHIP IN THE REVOLUTION OF DIGNITY (2013-2014)

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The transitional economic system of Independent Ukraine caused a chain of social issues. One of those issues was educational devaluation due to the rigid labor market. That was the reason for the protest caused by unsatisfied students in November 2013. The students were ready to take part in the revolutionary movement, regardless of the risk of expulsion from the universities. That movement became a decisive factor of Euromaidan, which grew into a Revolution.

After the government’s decision not to sign the agreement with the European Union (EU), the chain of events happened in the city of Lviv. On the 22nd of November, more than one hundred students gathered in front of the building of the city rada. They protested against the governmental decision. The students improvised the EU flag and declaimed all-European slogans. After some time, they decided to turn their meeting into a street demonstration and appealed others students and passers-by to join them. In a short period of time, the demonstration increased to several thousand. Moreover, the academic power of local universities and collegiums stated about students support. The major Andriy Sadovyi and city rada joined them, blaming the national government.

Thousands of students were protesting on cities’ squares of western Ukraine, supporting students in Lviv [1]. At the same time, groups of students constantly were heading to Kyiv for the strengthening protesters in the capital. The student groups, which met during the capital protest action on the 24th of November, decided to create a strike committee. On the 26th of November, the first students’ protest rally took place in the capital [2]. The students created a petition and passed it to the presidential administration office in Kyiv, demanding from Yanukovych to sign the agreement with the EU.

Though, on the night of 29 to 30 November, the ruling regime rose in opposition against students’ peaceful demonstrations. Protestors were ferociously beaten by the police, this turned the students’ movement into a national movement against the ruling regime. Citizens of Ukraine rose against the repressive government. Ukraine people were supported by the European Union, NATO, the USA, the UNO, clergy, and international public institutions [3].

The violence, caused by the regime of Yanukovych against students on the night of 29 to 30 November 2013, began the Revolution of Dignity. A hundred thousand Ukrainians of different ages gathered in the capital and in the other cities of the country and created self-organized protesting camps.
As we can see, the reasons for the Revolution are the following: citizens’ indignation at an unprecedented increase of corruption, not signing of the association with the EU, and the cruel violence, that was used by the police against those, who were not afraid to show their dissatisfaction with Yanykovych policy.

After the beating, students’ activists from Kyiv, Lviv, and Ternopil created their own Students’ Coordinating Rada (SCR – Coordinating students’ rada) for students’ movement coordination [2]. During the first part of December, they published a collective list of demands, organized a few protest actions, and appeared in independent mass media, such as Hromadske TV. Among the main demands of SCR was holding responsible those, who directly were responsible for dispersal and beating the peaceful demonstrations, and resignation (and forbid to occupy public posts) of that time the Minister of Education Dmytro Tabachnyk.

With the development and mobilization of Revolution movement, the students’ movement lost its validity. The students’ activists were making complains about standing off opposition leaders, and that their claims were not met.

Right in the middle of January 2014 new student initiative – Students’ Assembly appeared [2]. The students laid down demands of reformatting of the high education and eliminating ‘tabatskych’ policy toward high education. The Assembly was created without leadership nominating. Any student had the right of performing during daily open sessions, so-called general meetings. And that new students’ movement found oneself in total dynamics of the Revolution of dignity.

On the 21st of February, for the first time in Ukrainian history, hundred student activists occupied the Minister of Education. They created self-defense detachments of Maidan for protecting occupied Ministry. They made a list of demands: suspension of the educational process, till the government of ‘national faith’ would be established, the penalty for committed violence against students in November 2013, and determined of Minister of Education coordinated with students. The last demand was partly accomplished. Sergiy Kvit – the principal of Kyievo-Mohylanska academy, became a new Minister of Education and proclaimed a chain of reforms. One of the main achievements of students’ ‘European’ protests and especially the Revolution of dignity became a new law about high education, which was approved in July 2014.

In a few months, the success of the Revolution was covered with the Russian occupation of Krym and the war in Donbas. Present events also brought some consequences for the students’ community. On the one hand, students’ ‘refugees’ from Krym and others devastated from war areas appeared. On the other hand, students were called up for military service, though there were those who wished to join voluntary battalions on the east of the country.

Thus, Ukrainian youths, especially students, showed themselves as the main motive force of the Revolution of Dignity, which not only were afraid of changes but demanded them as well. They had certain reasons for that. Especially it is about the students, whose mobility to EU grew during the previous years, and their desire to live and study in a democratic, educational reformed country.

References:

