

KIEV: SYMPHONY OF THREE SQUARES AND TWO STREETS

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Overture

No doubt, what has been happening in Kiev since November 2013 goes far beyond the ancient city, shaking and shocking not only Ukraine but the entire world. It looks like ordinary people woke up after decades (if not centuries) of deep slumber and recovered their senses, demanding a new *country* — *free of corruption, bureaucracy, bribery*, and outside rulers who desire to control it. Tired of being humble slaves shamelessly robbed and deceived by the rotten regime, they eventually rose from their knees, ready to struggle for their freedom, inner values and, above all, human dignity!

Although the bloody battle is far from over, they have already made it, because their mind has changed — once and for good...

A witness to all dramatic events unravelling right in the heart of Kiev, I was wondering what it was that suddenly inspired Ukrainians, making them so resolute, so strong, so united and so undaunted in fight against the outnumbering pro-government forces? Where did the source of divine energy come from to fill protesters' souls with light and power? Perhaps, from veins of the city itself, I said to myself, as the battle line swept across Kiev's main square and two adjacent streets. Moreover, I felt that the flame of revolutionary passion was somehow kindled by two more squares, located a walking distance from the epicentre of uprisings.

Three squares and two streets... What a geometric magic pattern. What an amazing five-movement symphony, with each movement having its individual tonality and tempo yet all of them united in the same spirit — spirit of the old city, its divine spark, which ignites people's hearts today.

By the way, Kiev, whose history spans over 1,500 years, has always been considered a mystical city — and not for nothing. To understand what stands behind the Maidan revolution, let's listen to the mystical symphony of three squares and two streets.

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Largo. Sofiyskaya Square

St. Sophia Cathedral — She Who Loves and Prays

It all echoes back to the ancient times of God's Holy Wisdom — a sacred cornerstone and key to the golden age of Kievan Rus, when the state reached its spiritual, cultural and economic rise during the 11th century.

Holy Wisdom can still be traced within the walls of St. Sophia Cathedral (*σοφία*, Greek for *wisdom*), the oldest remaining temple in Kiev and one of the oldest churches in Eastern Europe, which was founded either in 1017 or 1037 (historians still argue about the exact date of a *ground-breaking ceremony*) under the reign of Prince Yaroslav Mudry (the Wise). The project was to commemorate the site of the 1036 victory of Kievan Rus over the Pechenegs (*nomadic Turkic tribes* from Central Asian steppes) as well as glorify Christianity.

However, some scholars say, it was founded even earlier — in 1011 under Yaroslav's father, Prince Vladimir the Great, who introduced Christianity to Kievan Rus in 988.

This way or the other, the Cathedral was to become something more than just a triumphal memorial testifying to the Prince's power, grandeur and choice of religion. It was no coincidence that it was named after majestic Hagia Sophia cathedral, erected in Constantinople in 537 to worship Holy Wisdom (not some specific female saint Sophia).

St. Sophia Cathedral — Then and Now

Kiev's St. Sophia was crafted by nearly 40 architects and artists and 80 assistants specially invited from Constantinople. Yet the edifice did not blindly imitate traditions of popular Byzantine architecture styles. Originally, the ambitious cross-in-square structure boasted 13 cupolas, five naves and five apses. That was quite a surprising and innovative solution for those times, since normally Byzantine temples would be one-domed and three-naved. The central dome of Kiev's St. Sophia symbolized Christ, surrounded by 12 other smaller cupolas — his apostles, with four of them being Evangelists. Outside the Cathedral was engirdled by open galleries, while inside it was encircled by two-tier arcades from three sides — south, west and north — with the altar erected in the eastern part.

Though the exterior (once coated with brickwork) changed dramatically, however, the interior is well-preserved up to date, revealing the world's largest and most fantastic collection of authentic mosaics (260 square metres) and frescoes (3,000 square metres), dating back to the first half of the 11th century and representing the gamut of 177 various hues. Moreover, the walls retain nearly 300 ancient graffiti telling breath-taking stories about powerful leaders they had to outlive...

God is Within Her

However, the most precious pearl in St. Sophia treasury is and has always been — during nearly a thousand years, since the Cathedral was constructed! —

the Virgin Orans, the holiest symbol of Kiev (*Orans* or *Oranta* in Russian or Ukrainian is a loanword from Medieval Latin translated as *one who is praying or pleading*).

Everyone, entering the Cathedral, gasps in awe looking at the unmatched six-metre-high mosaic figure, depicting Virgin Mary in prayer with extended arms. Located in the central apse, she, bearing the solemn and static posture and pensive expression on her face, dominates all other interior elements. A central character, she immediately grabs attendees' attention due to her impressive size, monumental performance let alone rich and supple colours of her garment — the bright blue chiton, purple enveloping robe with golden folds, red boots, and white embroidered handkerchief hanging from the red belt.

Over her head there is a Greek inscription of the verse from the Book of Psalms (46: 5), preserved fragmentally: *God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*

Why *her*, and who is *she*? The city. The word *city* in Greek (*πολις*) is a feminine noun. Thus, the whole verse is developed on the contrast between a chaos sweeping lands across the globe and the impregnability of one city, where God is —Kiev, in our case:

¹ *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.*

⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

Therefore, the Virgin Orans serves as a protective palladium that prays to defend the Cathedral, the city, the state and its people from all disasters and calamities. She is dubbed *the Indestructible or Unmoveable Wall* for a good reason. According to the legend, as long as the Virgin Orans stands extending her arms over Kiev, the city won't be crushed down. To top it off, she will use the white handkerchief on her belt to wipe away tears of those coming to her with their problems and concerns.

Unmoveable Wall, Indestructible City

The legend, you say? Yet facts remain.

St. Sophia Cathedral managed to withstand shattering blows of *Mongol-Tatar* forces who invaded Kiev in 1240 led by Genghis *Khan's* grandson Batu. Seriously damaged and pillaged, nevertheless, the Cathedral was not ruined!

The following centuries were not easy for St. Sophia either. Burned and reconstructed many times afterwards, it continued functioning while gradually falling into disrepair. It badly suffered again in the 16th century, when it was captured by the Uniates (as Poland and Ukraine were trying to unite catholic and orthodox churches). Those days the Cathedral revealed a sorry sight with its roof decayed and numerous wall paintings missing.

Things turned for the better in 1633, when Metropolitan Pyotr Mohila reclaimed the Cathedral from the Uniates, founded a monastery on its territory and started the vast repair work. It was the epoch influenced by Italian masters, and, consequently, Italian architect Octaviano Mancini was assigned to oversee the reconstruction, giving it its current Ukrainian baroque look, while

preserving the Byzantine interior. The reconstruction lasted until 1767. New buildings (a bell tower, monastery canteen, bakery, etc.) were erected around St. Sophia, now topped with 19 onion-shaped cupolas.

The Cathedral faced another threat of destruction just a hundred years ago — during the Soviet antireligious campaign undertaken in the 1920s. But it was saved due to efforts of many scientists and historians, both Ukrainian and international. (However, St. Michael Golden-Domed Monastery, located nearby, fell victim to the sad fate, being violently destroyed in 1937 — we will speak about it later).

Today St. Sophia is an architecture and history museum — a must-visit sight for those wishing to enjoy its unrivalled beauty and unique flavour. Yes, the Cathedral may have been annihilated thousands of times during its 1,000-year history impregnated with battles, revolutions, fires, storms, plunders. However, the *Indestructible Wall* is still there, and the Virgin Orans keeps praying...

Woman and Her Wisdom

What or who is it that has been keeping the Cathedral and its sacred spirit intact since its foundation? Sophia. Holy Wisdom. The Virgin Orans. God's Mother. Woman... Let's consider this consequence.

The word *σοφία* in Greek (along with words with a similar meaning in Latin, Russian and Ancient Hebrew) is a feminine noun. Wisdom is *she*, which is not accidental. The ancient Greeks worshipped wisdom — legendary Homer in his immortal epic poem *The Illiad* associates it with goddess Pallas Athena, a patroness who guards and improves her city (*πολις*) with care and love (like the Virgin Orans, right?).

The Old Testament personifies *σοφία* as Holy Wisdom created by God. Both His creation and His intimate part, Holy Wisdom together with the Lord endows all other creatures, the entire Universe and human beings with His divine sense. (By the way, according to Greek mythology, Pallas Athena is a daughter of Zeus, *supreme god* and ruler of Olympus, who came out of his head).

Thus, Holy Wisdom impersonates God's demiurgical and world-harmonizing will. She symbolizes the very beginning — Mother's womb — where the World is conceived. She constructs the World and serves as its good and caring housewife. Thus, theologians identify *σοφία* with the image of Christ (the Word Incarnate), and then — with Virgin Mary.

In these terms, St. Sophia, Kiev's leading Cathedral, was erected as an iconic edifice to epitomize the Universe's ethical order and universal values of East Slavs. Promoting the wisdom concept, St. Sophia protected the city and its inhabitants against demons, due to the indestructible wall of sanctity and spirit. God's Mother herself was the first temple of Holy Wisdom — God the *Word* descended into her and she conceived Christ, turning God the Word into flesh.

Inspired by Holy Wisdom and blessed by Virgin Mary, St. Sophia Cathedral has always played (even in the days of its dilapidation) a key role in Kiev's social and political life.

For example, in the 11th and 12th centuries Veche (the popular assembly) gathered on the square in front of the Cathedral. It is where the Ukrainian people adopted the *Pereyaslav Rada* historical decisions (reunification of Ukraine and Russia) in 1654. It is where rebels rallied during the turbulent revolutionary 1917-1920 years. It is where a famous mass meeting took place (later described by outstanding Kiev-born writer Mikhail Bulgakov in his novel *The White Guard*), presided by Ukrainian national leader Simon Petlura, when his troops captured Kiev in winter 1918. Since the 1990s Sofiyskaya square has been a venue for many socially important events taking place in Kiev.

Day and night the Virgin Orans keeps praying for safety of her city, with hands extended... And the Woman — strong, wise, and loving — preserves a sacred flame in hearts of her people...

Presto. Mikhailovskaya Square

St. Michael Monastery — He Who Holds a Sword

Of course, prayer itself is a very powerful tool. Still it is more effective when enhanced by an iron sword and iron shield. Any woman needs a man — a warrior who makes her prayers come true here on Earth. Thus, besides the Virgin Orans emanating her divine female energy, Kiev is defended by the Man — Archangel Michael, a protector and leader of God's army against evil spirits.

Located near St. Sophia Cathedral, St. Michael Golden-Domed Monastery, a fascinating element of the city landscape, immediately stuns you with its sky blue exterior and golden domes glittering in the sun. With its recently renovated appearance (both outside and inside), the Monastery looks so modern you can't believe it was constructed 900 years ago. However, it is true...

Unique Domes and Mosaics

Some historians say it all began in the 1050s, when son of Yaroslav the Wise Prince Izyaslav (Christian name Dmitry) built St. Dmitry monastery and church in the old upper city of Kiev, looking over the merchant neighbourhood. The very place, near the Old Kiev hill, at the Pochaina river bank (now extinct) was regarded mystical, since it had housed pagan temples many centuries prior to launch of Kievan Rus.

Half a century later, Prince Svyatopolk (Christian name Michael), grandson of Yaroslav the Wise, ordered a cathedral be constructed there at the monastery, which is believed to have taken 5 years, from 1108 to 1113. It was the first ever temple dedicated to Archangel Michael — saint patron of Kiev and Prince himself. Another reason for erecting the cathedral may have been Prince Svyatopolk's battle triumph over the Polovtsy (or Cuman *nomadic Turkish* tribes), obviously overseen by Archangel Michael, patron of warriors and victories.

St. Michael cathedral was made of stone and brick, featuring six pillars, three apses, three naves and also a tower with a staircase leading to the choir loft. The cathedral was most likely to have been one-domed, although two smaller cupolas might have topped the tower and baptistery, adjoining the cathedral from south.

No matter how many cupolas there were, as long as all of them were... gilded! St. Michael was the only cathedral in Kievan Rus crowned with such extravagant domes, hence its nickname — *golden-domed*, setting up a new architecture tradition widely used ever since in Kievan Rus.

To top it off, it was under Prince Svyatopolk, as some historians suggest, when the sacred remains of Saint Barbara were allegedly brought from Constantinople to the cathedral. The shrine immensely enhanced St. Michael's position and image. Since the original cathedral was utterly destroyed during the Soviet times, the relics have been kept in Kiev's St. Vladimir Cathedral.

The most striking elements, St. Michael was renowned for, were its unrivalled paintings — an amazing blend of frescoes and mosaics with a *shimmering* effect. The interior paintings revealed an intricate dance of shadows and light — they would either spark or darken in turns, as if glimmering overhead. The unique style, introduced by Kiev's masters, was quite different from Byzantine traditions. Art critics consider it a new stage of art evolution in Kievan Rus. Although many shimmering mosaics and frescoes were torn down from the 13th to the 16th century, some, however, were partially restored.

From Oblivion to Resurrection

Let's read again the sad chapter in history of Kievan Rus, called the Mongol-Tatar yoke... During the series of devastating invasions of Kiev in 1240 (under Batu Khan), *St. Michael cathedral* was seriously damaged with its gold-plated cupolas removed by invaders. Following the fate of St. Sophia, the temple almost ceased existing for two and a half centuries...

Yet, by 1496 it was reopened and renamed as St. Michael Monastery (since nobody was sure which exactly church survived the invasion — St. Dmitry or St. Michael). In the 16th century it was hugely restored and enlarged, turning into one of the richest and most popular monasteries in Kiev. In 1620 Yov Boretsky, head of the Monastery, made it a residence for Kiev's Orthodox Metropolitan.

Throughout the following years St. Michael Monastery enjoyed favour of numerous hetmans, metropolitans (including the above mentioned Pyotr Mohila) and powerful rulers. Upon annexing Kiev to the Moscow State, Russian tsar Peter the Great was a patron to the Monastery — he and Cossack chiefs generously bestowed it with lands and estates on the left bank of the Dnieper River.

St. Michael Gold-Domed Monastery reached its peak of prosperity and splendour in the late 18th century, due to significant contribution made by Ivan Mazepa, Cossack Hetman of the left-bank Ukraine and Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. It was rebuilt in a Ukrainian baroque style and expanded with a new decorated façade, buttresses, refectory, and six additional cupolas, becoming the second best cloister after the legendary Kiev Pechersk Lavra, attraction for pilgrims from all over the world.

Here comes the blackest period in history of Kiev's churches, monasteries, cathedrals... In 1934-1936 the Soviet authorities started demolishing St. Michael Gold-Domed Monastery, replacing it with a new administrative centre. Some mosaics, frescoes and other items were transported to Kiev's St. Sofia Cathedral, St. Petersburg's Hermitage and Moscow's State Tretyakov

Gallery. However many treasures were confiscated or just stolen earlier — during the 20s. In August 1937 the Monastery that withstood barbarian raids of the Mongol-Tatar forces, battles between Orthodox and Catholic churches, cholera and many other disasters, was blown up to ashes — under the Soviet regime...

Let's not forget about Kiev's celestial and mighty protector Archangel Michael — the reconstruction of the Monastery dedicated to him anyway began 60 years later, in 1997. It was officially opened in May 1999, with the interior decorations, mosaics and frescoes completed by 2000 and some artefacts returned from Russia. St. Michael Golden-Domed Monastery functions today as part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and welcomes visitors to enjoy its Byzantine interior and Ukrainian Baroque style exterior.

And a few words about Mikhailovskaya square... One of Kiev's oldest squares, it was built in the 12th century, in front of St. Michael Monastery. It got its name and final shaping in the mid-19th century, after the territory between St. Sophia Cathedral and St. Michael Monastery had been divided by public offices. By the way, the square features an impressive monument to Duchess Olga (first known female ruler of the country) with Andrew the Apostle (we will refer to him later) and Saints Cyril and Methodius (founders of *Glagolitsa*, the oldest known Slavic alphabet).

Warrior and Protector

Archangel Michael — Kiev's patron, warrior, protector and leader... It was him, who oversaw what was going on Maidan from November 2013 to February 2014, who helped rebels fight for their freedom, who protected them against pro-government forces. No wonder, a magnificent monument to him adorns not only St. Michael Monastery but St. Sophia and Maidan also (we will talk about that in the next chapter).

Archangel Michael's spirit — both militant and merciful — reigns everywhere. Thus, St. Michael Monastery was the first religious institution that opened its doors to provide shelter and a first-aid post to Maidan protesters, when they got shot by the police. The injured people lay beneath icons and candles on the floor of St. Michael Golden-Domed Monastery being guarded by Archangel Michael, with a sword and shield in his hands...

Vivace. Maidan

Place for Revolutions — Those Who Change the World

The word *Maidan* means *a square* in Ukrainian. However, it has gone far beyond its original notion, being a *sacred* venue for major political rallies within the last century, starting from 1905. Maidan has come to mean something more than just a place to rally, where momentous events occur to impact the entire country and nation. Maidan reflects a certain state of mind of people determined to change their life — it involves, inspires, leads. Thus, the word *Maidan* need not be translated — it has already become a term now well-known and spoken across the Globe.

Well, what is it after all that made Kiev's major square Maidan Nezalezhnosti (or just Maidan, as it usually referred to) a scene and symbol of revolutions?

Once Upon a Time

Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) nestles in the very heart of Ukraine's capital, bordered by Khreshchatik, the city's main artery.

In the late 10th century the territory of present-day Maidan and Khreshchatik was just a wildwood, called *Perevisyshch* (first mentioned in 945). Some historians say, princes went hunting there, setting special nets (*perevisy* — hence the name of the area) to capture quarry.

Then, in the 30s of the 11th century, under the reign of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, the *Perevisyshch* wood became part of fortifications — earth ramparts circled with a wooden palisade. Allegedly, the Lyadsky (Polish) Gates — one of Kiev's three main gates — were built on the same spot. They marked the southern border of Kiev and led to the High City (Yaroslav City). The 1151 records said that the Polish people lived somewhere around the Lyadsky Gates, giving them their *foreign* moniker.

When Baty Khan sacked Kiev in 1240 (oh, the same old story), all the fortifications, including the Lyadsky Gates, were completely pulled down. And from that moment till the 18th century little was known about the area...

Rising From Ashes

Well, the area was neither inhabited nor developed till the late 18th–early 19th century — it was just a barren wasteland adjacent to *Kozyne Boloto* (Goat Swamp), which was foul-smelling (as implied by its nickname).

Only in the 1830s the desert started taking a shape of Maidan-to-be, with the malodorous swamp drained, litter (perhaps, fragments of the former fortifications) removed and the first wooden houses built on the spot. In 1843 the first fountain appeared on the square but it was poorly mounted — Kiev's residents did not like it and used it as a drinking bowl for horses. During the 1850s the stone buildings started emerging here, including the House of Nobility Assembly, designed by Alexander Beretti, son of famous architect Vikentiy Beretti (we will refer to him later).

Step by step, brick by brick, the square began winning its reputation, attracting even prominent people, like great Ukrainian Great Kobzar Taras Shevchenko, who lived nearby for a while in 1859. In 1869 the area acquired its first official appellation — *Khreshchatitskaya square*.

With the Russian Industrial Revolution kicking into high gear, Kiev quickly transformed into the third important city of the Russian Empire, after Moscow and Saint Petersburg, whereas *Khreshchatitskaya square* became a commercial centre housing a local market and various entertainment activities.

In 1876 the City Duma (Council) was erected here. In this regard the place was tagged as *Dumskaya square*. It was not the last time the area changed its name — you know, other days, other ways...

As the years went passing by, the square gained even more social and political importance. The first electric tram, built in the Russian Empire (opened 1892), reached the square in 1894.

In 1913, a monument to Russian Empire Prime Minister and reformer Pyotr Stolypin (assassinated and buried in Kiev in 1911) crowned the square, in front of the City Duma. Well, he was a hero of his time, to be replaced with others coming soon... Four years later the statue of Stolypin was publicly *tried* and dismantled by Bolsheviks. The dismantling frame resembled a gallows...

From Soviet Era till Independence

The October Revolution took place in 1917. Logically, two years later, the square was rechristened Sovietskaya square. In 1922, a new monument (this time) to Karl Marks replaced Stolypin's statue. Hastily erected, the alabaster monument was never cast in bronze. In the early 1930s the monument disappeared one night, under strange circumstances...

The City Duma was taken over by the ruling party to house the Regional Committee of Soviet Ukraine's Communist Party, leading the area to be labelled Kalinin square in 1935 — after Mikhail Kalinin, the first chairman of the Supreme Council of USSR (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic). When the German troops occupied Kiev in 1941, the square suffered immense damage — much of it, including the City Duma and other buildings located nearby, was blown up by the Red Army troops, retreating from Kiev prior to the Nazi invasion. However bizarre it might seem, but under the occupation the area regained its Tsarist name — Dumskaya square.

When the World War II was over, the place (called Kalinin square, once again) rose from ashes like a phoenix — it was reconstructed from scratch and architecturally blended with the renovated Khreshchatik street, bearing the neo-classical Stalinist style. Moreover, the square was dominated with the Pochtamp (Central Post Office) and Trade-Union House with its famous high-rise clock, built on the spot of the former Nobility Assembly. Kiev's landmarks, both buildings played their role in the Maidan protests. The Central Post Office served as a first-aid post and shelter for wounded activists, while the Trade Union House was one of pro-European protesters' headquarters, believed to be set on fire by the police during the Maidan bloodiest days, in February 18-19. Medics and fire-fighters found corpse during inspection afterwards — people were trapped in the burning Trade Union House...

In 1976-1977, due to the metro construction, the square was again rebuilt, consequently, obtaining a new name — October Revolution square. Part of the reconstruction included a truly monumental fountain complex as well as a massive cubist monument commemorating the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution, featuring a huge statue dedicated to Lenin. Both fountain and Lenin's statue were disassembled in 2001.

The interesting fact — during the Maidan protests, from November 2013 to February 2014 nearly 100 monuments to Lenin were torn down across Ukraine. The barbarous act in its essence, it however annihilated the last visible symbol of Communism...

Three Archangel Michaels

In 1991, when Ukraine was declared independent, the square finally got its current name — Maidan Nezalezhnosti. Ten years later it was given a present-

day look embracing a great number of architecture elements — the fountain-monument to Kiev's legendary founders Kiy, Schek and Khoriv and their sister Lybid, the monument to folklore hero Cossack Mamay, the white column with Bereginya (goddess of protection), the glass domes of the modern subterranean Globus shopping mall, and the statue of Archangel Michael (reconstructed on the site where the 12th century Lyadsky Gates, allegedly, used to be).

Sooner or later everything comes back, as Archangel Michael's statue did. In fact, it was the first statue that ever dominated Maidan (Dumskaya square), topping the City Duma. In 1921 the statue was removed to be returned there 80 years later, in 2002. Around that time two more statues of Kiev's saint patron appeared, embellishing St. Sophia Cathedral (2010) and St. Michael Gold-Domed Monastery (2000). Both buildings are located within easy reach from Maidan.

If connected with a line drawn on the city map, three Archangel Michaels visually constitute a triangle, outlining a special-purpose area... Strange, isn't it? I should add that two Archangel Michaels (of St. Sophia and St. Michael Monastery) are gilded, while the Maidan version is black and gold, looking very masculine, aggressive and awe-inspiring. All of them hold swords and shields in their hands, as if anticipating war...

Revolutionary Spirit

Maidan has always been the hub of political and social activity. The first revolution took place there a century ago — in 1905 workers and peasants rallied in front of the City Duma, claiming their rights and freedoms. The trial and symbolic *hanging* of the monument to Stolypin in 1919 was a sort of a revolutionary action also.

Starting from the 1990s, political activity of Maidan increased immensely. In 1990 157 students went on hunger strike (known as *Revolution on Granite*), forcing Prime Minister Vitaliy Masol to resign. *Ukraine without Kuchma* was the next large-scale campaign that took place in Maidan in 2001.

Then happened something that gained the international community attention — the Orange Revolution broke out in Maidan in late November 2004. Despite a freezing weather, hundreds of thousands of activists gathered on the square, to protest results of the run-off vote for the Ukrainian presidential election, leading Ukraine's Supreme Council to reject the previous results as non-compliant to the real wishes of voters. A re-vote occurred in the second round of elections, resulting in the victory of Viktor Yuschenko (51.99%), who, after being officially sworn in in the Parliament, took the oath in front of people there, in Maidan. The Orange Revolution was a turning point that enhanced the reputation of Maidan as a place with stamina and *revolutionary spirit, a symbol of the new Ukraine — free and really independent!*

The story did not end there — now the torch has been taken up and carried further on by EuroMaidan campaign...

Intermezzo — Two Beams

With the death toll reaching over 100 casualties and 1,000 of the injured in January and February 2014, two streets, Grushevskogo and Institutskaya —

two beams stemming from Maidan — became the theatre of real war, making headlines across the Globe. Yes, it was where Maidan peaceful rallies against corrupt authorities erupted into clashes between protesters and pro-government forces. It was where mothers cried over dead bodies of their sons yet did not bulge an inch in their defiance. It was where the new history was written as Ukrainians were fighting for a brighter future of their country, showing an iron will and unmatched dignity of human spirit.

Well, both Grushevskogo and Institutskaya are streets with their own story and charisma, which encouraged Maidan rebels to go ahead and clash against the police. Let's have a closer look at these charismatic streets.

Allegro-Moderato. Grushevskogo

Governmental Quarters — Those Who Rule and Rebel

The epicentre of EuroMaidan violence, Mikhaila Grushevskogo or simply Grushevskogo street stretches from European square (located near Maidan) far uphill. Set in Lipki, Kiev's expensive area of the prestigious Pechersk district, the street boasts numerous architectural pearls in its collection, including the National Fine Art Museum (designed by famous architect Vladislav Gorodetsky), the Academic Puppet Theatre (an awesome castle on the hill), the House of Officers (a first-aid centre for the injured protesters during the bloodiest days of resistance) and many others.

The street became home to major battles, blazes, pickets and barricades for a reason— tagged as the governmental quarters, it houses some high-rank government buildings like the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), Cabinet of Ministers, Mariinsky Palace (the former residence of Russian Emperors), the Parliament Library, etc.

Royal Residence

Grushevskogo street emerged half a thousand years ago — in the 16th century it was part of the Old Road which connected two densely populated districts of Kiev at the time — posh Pechersk and Podol (the lower city). Running through a forest (there was a forest!), the Old Road descended to the centre of Podol.

In the mid-18th century, as everywhere in Kiev's centre, manor houses started appearing along the Old Road, including fabulous Mariinsky Palace, designed in baroque style by highly-acclaimed architect Bartolomeo Rostrelli, on the order of Russian Empress Elizaveta I. The Palace was founded in 1744 and completed in 1752. Yet, the client — Elizaveta I — did not live long enough to see the implementation of her idea...

So it was to be Catherine the Great who was the first royal to stay in the Palace for a few months upon her visit to Kiev in 1787. Here she received Francisco de Miranda, Venezuelan revolutionary (what a coincidence!) who helped pave the way for independence in Latin America from Spain.

In the late 18th — early 19th century the Palace served as a residence for General Governors of Kiev, till it was burnt to the ground... What was left

of the Palace was rented by military barracks and the Institution of Artificial Mineral Waters.

It was completely reconstructed in 1870 under Russian Emperor Aleksandr II. His wife Empress Maria immensely contributed to reconstruction and interior design works. Besides, a large park was built in the southern section of the Palace grounds, on her request and at her own expenses! The renovated edifice deserved to be logically named Mariinsky Palace after Empress Maria (later the park was also christened Mariinsky). Till 1917 Mariinsky Palace was a residence for visiting members of the Imperial family.

As wealthy nobles continued erecting mansions in neo-Renaissance style along the Old Road, it resulted into a very long and winding street dubbed Aleksandrovskaia after Emperor Aleksandr II. Furthermore, it was the first ever paved roadway in Kiev. Tramlines were built here in 1894, and disassembled a century later — in 1998.

Revolutions and Wars

The October Revolution of 1917 came, replacing tsars with Bolshevik leaders, who set new regime *trends* Aleksandrovskaia street had to keep in line with. Thus, in 1919 it was renamed (and not for the last time!) Revolution street. To appease new heroes, in 1934 Revolution street was further divided into three parts, with the section covering contemporary Grushevskogo named Kirov street, after Sergey Kirov, head of the Communist Party in Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg).

Revolutions and wars left their mark on the street and its fascinating buildings. For example, till the World War II at different times magnificent Mariinsky Palace housed military headquarters, Kiev's Council of Workers' Deputies, Kiev's Committee of Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks), Ukraine's Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars), an environmental college, an agricultural museum... Set near the Verkhovna Rada, the Palace is an official ceremonial residence of the Ukrainian President today.

When Kyiv was occupied by Nazi troops in 1941-43, the street was renamed Doktor Tod Strasse. It is very odd, considering that *Tod* means *death* in German. Doctor Death street... It seemed to have foretold the bloodshed that would take place here 70 years later. After the World War II the street regained its pro-Soviet cognomen — Kirov — which was valid till 1991, the year Ukraine obtained independence. Then the street was rechristened again, hopefully, for the last time (so far) — Grushevskogo.

Why Grushevsky, After All?

Mykhail Grushevsky (1866–1934), whose name the street bears today, is a prominent Ukrainian academician, historian, politician, public figure and writer, who made great contributions to the Ukrainian national revival in the early 20th century.

His merit list is quite impressive, just to name a few: a foremost organizer of scholarship, leader of the pre-revolution Ukrainian national movement, head of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in Lvov; head of the Lvov University

Department of History; member of Czech, Ukrainian and USSR Academies of Science.

After the revolution of 1905 in Russia, Grushevsky set up the Ukrainian Scientific Society in Kiev in 1907 that was a prototype of the academy-of-sciences-to-be. After the 1917-1921 revolution, he founded the Ukrainian Sociological Institute in exile in Vienna, and after his return to Ukraine in the 1920s became a major figure in the newly founded All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev (since 1923).

Moreover, he produced over 2,000 scientific works. One of his works made him really immortal — it was his magnum opus *History of Ukraine-Rus*, issued in ten volumes between 1898 and 1937. Published in the Ukrainian language, it was the most comprehensive account of history of Ukrainian people, covering the period from pre-history to the 1660s and remaining unsurpassed in its use of sources and literature. Grushevsky's impressive research was highly acclaimed abroad, though banned by the Soviet authorities. Only in the late 1980s the Ukrainian people acquired access to this work.

To top it off, Grushevsky is regarded the first president of the country — he headed the Central Rada (Ukraine's 1917–1918 revolutionary parliament). He died under mysterious circumstances in 1934.

Life Continues, No Matter What...

I would like to share with you my personal experience of walking in Grushevskogo in February 2014, amidst the drama unveiling there. The street was taken up by protesters, who erected barricades blocking access to governmental buildings — the Verkhovna Rada and the Cabinet of Ministers. Nestling on Grushevskogo hills, the Academic Puppet Theatre — children's favourite attraction — pensively overlooked the barricades. Built like a fantasy castle, with two grand clocks chiming every 15 minutes, its own grounds with a mini-park featuring the light-and-music Thumbelina fountain and other statues of funny characters, the Theatre seemed to be out of place. Indeed, it had to shut down in February, for obvious reasons...

Much to my surprise I learnt, when talking to art director of the Theatre, that nevertheless they were getting ready to reopen its doors in March — no matter what.

Founded in 1927, the Academic Puppet Theatre is the oldest of its kind in Ukraine, with many rewards and titles — winner of the Druzhba (Friendship) international prize in 1995, member of UNIMA (UNION Internationale de la Marionnette in French), and many others. For nearly 90 years the Theatre and its highly professional team have been treating kids to plays staged in a classical, or *academic*, fashion. And it will be doing so, as the art director told me, because Andrew the Apostle protected the Theatre, set on a hill where he used to wander...

Another protector of Kiev? It may be so — in fact the Theatre reopened in March, even with a renewed repertoire, bringing some hope and laughter in our life after months of tension and resistance...

Andante-Moderato. Institutskaya Heavenly Hundred Street — Those Who Die in Battle

Remains of barricades, heaps of tires, pavement stones torn away and scattered everywhere, smoke in the air... Souvenirs of war are still there, cluttering (or rather decorating) the street. All this eloquently reminds of the violent conflict that broke out here in February, leaving Maidan protesters killed — Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, as they are known today...

Now Institutskaya represents a sort of the open-air shrine to the activists shot here by marksmen — it is carpeted by flowers (mostly red carnations), and candles brought here by thousands of people to commemorate their fallen heroes. Just imagine grey tires and cobble stones vastly covered by blood-red flowers — the sight is both sad and splendid, tragic and inspiring, bizarre and attractive...

Well, what is it about the street after all that made it so special?

Begichev's Mansion

Located in the above mentioned prestigious Pechersk district, one of Kiev's key thoroughfares stretches from Maidan Nezalezhnosti, partially covering the old Ivanovsky shlyakh (road), known since the times of Kievan Rus. It used to run from the Lyadsky Gates (in Maidan) up to the Kiev Pechersk Lavra monastery.

Let's go 200 years back. Built in the late 18th — early 19th centuries, the street was — small wonder! — named Ivanovskaya. However, it did not hold its name for long. During the residential construction boom in the 20-30s of the 19th century, it was redubbed Begichevskaya after General Dmitry Begichev, whose posh manor nestled there, right on the hill over Kreshchatitskaya street (present-day Maidan). You ask — why should it be a reason to have the street renamed after him?

The thing is, in July 1834 Begichev told the then Governor General Vasiliy Levashov that he was ready to *hand over his property to St. Vladimir University (present-day Taras Shevchenko National University) or to any other institution of the sort with no fee or reward*. His gift was highly appreciated. Thus, St. Vladimir University gained its own premises to keep there its library for some time.

However, a few years later, Governor General Levashov ordered the manor territory be home for the Institute for Noble Maidens, opened in 1838, giving the street its new moniker — Institutskaya.

Yet, there was another version of the *charity* story. Rumour had it, Begichev's manor had something weird and mystical about it. Though coming from a good noble line, General Begichev enjoyed the notorious reputation as a freemason, mystic, astrologist and extrasensory perception adept. His three-storeyed mansion, encircled by a magnificent park, was a venue for meetings of writers, philosophers, artists, etc. That excited the most incredible comments across Kiev, probably, due to Begichev's personality. Famous for his huge charity work, he was widely considered *a bit eccentric*, to say the least. This way or another, the Begichev family had to leave Kiev (for a political reason) and handed over the manor to the University...

Institute for Noble Maidens

First, the Institute was accommodated in Begichev's mystical mansion (which did not survive up to date), then, in 1843, it moved to the impressive four-storeyed building constructed on the spot of the mansion territory. It was designed in Russian classism style by famous architect Vikentiy Beretti, who, by the way, also modelled St. Vladimir University. Ironically, Beretti lived nearby, on the opposite site of Institutskaya. The Institute for Noble Maidens was so popular, the street was widely known as *The Girls'* street.

After the 1917 October Revolution, the Institute for Noble Maidens was shut down as *the relic of the past*. Under Stalin, the building was used by governmental authorities, including the KGB (State Security Committee) that worked there during 1934 — 1941, the tragic years of mass repressions and massacre of the Soviet people. Through a twist of fate, the former Institute turned to a macabre jail where nearly 120,000 people were interrogated and killed (shot down or by other means). Among them — famous Soviet Ukrainian artists, painters, writers, politicians, professors, teachers, scientists, priests...

In the World War II, the building was destroyed, the headquarters — burned down. It was reconstructed in 1952—58, transforming into the October Culture Palace, with a hall accommodating over 2,000 people. The fate again took a turn, this time from Death to Art...

Called the International Centre of Culture and Arts (ICCA), today it is one of the nicest and largest theatres in Kiev, featuring spacious lobbies, comfortable rooms for amateur groups, marble and mirrors — all this inspires and gets you in a festive mood.

The curious fact — during the Maidan protests, activists, coming to Kiev from all over Ukraine, found shelter in this building. I remember attending the ICCA in mid-December to enjoy the performance by G Verdi Chamber Orchestra. Nobody was sure that the Italian-based band would dare to come to Kiev in those tumultuous times, whereas all other concerts, exhibitions, performances were cancelled or postponed. But they did!

I will never forget that *night at the Opera*, with the G Verdi Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Fabrizio Ficiur, treating the audience to wreaths of marvellous Italian baroque compositions, on one hand, and a motley gang sleeping just on the pile of blankets scattered on the floor, on the other. Exquisite music and revolutionary atmosphere gave me an impression so weird, so powerful, so mystical... That's not the end of the story — when protesters got shot by snipers in Institutskaya two months later, in February, the ICCA served as the first-aid post for the injured activists.

Rich and Successful

Of course, the ICCA is not the only one building worth mentioning. The point is, in the late 19th century Institutskaya was considered a *financial street* of Kiev, being very popular among financial experts, businessmen and bankers. It accommodated a state-run commercial bank (present day Ukraine's National Bank) and the first Stock Exchange in Kiev.

The Kiev travel guide as of 1897 said that Institutskaya housed a number of financial institutions, like a state credit company No.8, land bank No.9,

affiliate of Saint Petersburg international commercial bank No.3, stock broker Value No.3 and others. In a while some more banks emerged there, including Dvoryansky (Noble), Krestyansky (Peasant), Zemelny (Land) and private commercial banks.

It is no coincidence that many prominent businessmen and public figures had mansions erected nowhere else but there, in Instituskaya, including one of Old Kiev's richest sugar tycoons Lazar Brodsky, General Governor Fedor Trebov, and architect Georgiy Shleifer. The city's leaders resided in Instituskaya, making crucial decisions there.

If you think that only New York or Chicago boasted skyscrapers 100 years ago, you are utterly wrong. Kiev's first skyscraper appeared in Instituskaya in 1912 — constructed by prominent contractor Lev Ginsburg, it was immediately nicknamed the Ginsburg House (present-day Hotel Ukraine). Designed in art nouveau style, the 11-storeyed Ginsburg House was the tallest (allegedly 60-70 metres) and most technically advanced building in Kiev, equipped with rare Otis lifts.

It was used as a hotel for tourists (tenement house), with its spire-tower seen from everywhere in Kiev. The project proved lucrative, as the building offered 94 luxury apartments, comprising up to 500 rooms, and first-floor shops.

The Ginsburg House did not survive up to date — it was destroyed along with Kiev's strategic constructions by order of the KGB authorities, when the Nazi troops invaded the city in autumn, 1941. In 1954-1961 the hotel, first named Moscow and 50 years later Ukraine, emerged on the site of the former Ginsburg House. The building still plays an important role in the city's life, opening its doors as a first-aid station for the wounded activists in February 2014...

Well, years went by, and the street changed its name a few times — in 1919 it was dubbed the 25 October street, in 1944 — the October Revolution street. In 1993 it regained its historical name — Instituskaya. In the meantime, it is changing its name again, now being called Heavenly Hundred street, paying tribute to those who were killed there during the recent standoff between opposition supporters and police officers. Moreover, a new building was added to the list of historical constructions in (already former) Instituskaya — a wooden chapel commemorating the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred was erected where most Maidan protesters met their death...

Final. The End or the Beginning?..

What started in Kiev as a wave of peaceful public protests demanding closer European integration, erupted in the overthrow of the Ukrainian ruling regime and finally ended in war against the external aggressor. However, the primary *battleground* in this warfare (spiritual, above all) is *our hearts* and minds. It is our choices that make us what we are. And Ukrainians are making their choice right now — Freedom or Slavery, Prosperity or Misery, Light or Darkness... And may all saint protectors of Kiev help them in this righteous fight, as they always did throughout centuries...

I think, what has been happening in Kiev since last November is a very important test for Ukraine's civil society and the global community as well — it is time to decide which side we are on...