SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

TV SERIES "SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE" AS THE SCRIPT AND POLITICAL TECHNOLOGY OF ZELENSKY'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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Abstract

This article analyzes the innovative character of the landslide 2019 presidential campaign of Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine. Unprecedented in many ways, it deserves to be included in political consulting textbooks. This article deals with the political technologies and scripts used in his presidential campaign. It has several important, innovative characteristics: it used theater and TV series to present its narrative and "dramaturgy", and mobilize the population to participate in these elections; it lasted three seasons and engaged the whole population; its narrative and political values united most of the Ukrainian electorate; it rejected the old, manipulative electoral technologies; it created the image of Zelensky as the people servant; it was sponsored and staffed by volunteers who shared the values of the campaign; it was inverted in time, that is, it was won before the party "Servant of the People" of Zelensky has been formed and before he has declared his candidacy; it had the interactive nature in that the platform of the campaign and its goals were put together with the help of the people; the goal of the campaign was to replace old autocratic elites with the people of new generation and their new values; it offered a new model of participation in political system for people; it was the most effective presidential campaign in the history of Ukraine, and possibly in the world. The article also discusses the challenges before Zelensky and his faction in the newly elected Rada, in his stand against old elites, and the on-going military conflict with Russia.

Keywords: Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine, political technology, political dramaturgy and script, 2019 Ukrainian presidential elections, Servant of the People.

The **2018 Ukrainian presidential election** was held on 31st March and 21st April in a two-round system. The landslide score of the 2018 elections

stunned everyone: Volodymyr Zelensky received 73.22% (13.5 million votes) against 24.45% for Petro Poroshenko with a turnout of 62% [3].

Zelensky's result is an absolute record for electoral campaigns in Ukraine. The former president Poroshenko had spent twenty years in Ukrainian politics by that time and participated in all political campaigns of the independent Ukraine, and lost not to an experienced politician, but to a newcomer, a person with no practical experience in politics. Almost the same can be said about all the members of the Zelensky team who helped him win.

Five presidents have already changed in independent Ukraine. All the previous campaigns, and the last one especially, proved that Ukraine is a competitive rather than a managed democracy. The first four presidents left their post, losing to a candidate representing the opposition party and its faction in the parliament. However, at the 2018 elections, the incumbent president and all other candidates lost to a non-systemic candidate from the newly minted party, who did not have their own parliamentary faction, party structures in the regions or its own representatives in local election commissions and administrations.

Experts are still interested in the question *why* Ukrainian people preferred the "clown" to heavyweight politicians. In this article, I will be interested in the question of *how* not *why*. How exactly did Zelensky manage to enlist the support of most of the people? The question "how?" does not cancel the "why?", but rather complements it, transferring it to a specific professional area - political technology. So: how was Zelensky's campaign conducted, and can there be useful lessons from it for other contenders in preparation for the future elections? The main focus of this article will be the use of political technologies, in particular, the strategy of the election campaign. It is in this respect that Zelensky's campaign is absolutely unprecedented not only in the post-Soviet space, but throughout the world, and will go down in textbooks on the art of electoral technologies. It is unique in many ways, but we will start with its most obvious feature - its theatrical nature.

Politics as theater and theater as politics

We will talk further about theater in politics not in a metaphorical, but in a completely direct sense. Since its inception, theater has been involved in politics. The ancient Greek comedian Aristophanes in his productions scourged rulers, aristocrats and the rich, acting as a defender of the rights of the common people. The German theater director Erwin Piscator (1893–1966), a communist by conviction, was the first in the 20th century to understand that theater is not only a mirror of society, but an instrument for its transformation. In 1927, the leader of Bauhaus Walter Gropius proposed a new architectural solution for his political theater. In it, for the first time, the audience was placed in the center of the hall, and the stage revolved around it. The project was not implemented at

the time, but the idea of an active role of the theater in politics received a new impetus.

Cinema and TV, having barely won a wide audience, joined theater in the role of a political agitator. The birth point of "presidential" TV series is considered to be "The West Wing" (1999–2006), the series about the life and work of the US presidential administration. This was followed by the series "24", which stretched for 18 years; in it, counterterrorism agent Jack Bauer sparred with changing US presidents and participated in resolving the threats looming over their administrations.

Many political films were made with the aim of introducing to the audience new types of candidates for the role of president. Thus, the first black US president appeared in the TV series "24" in 2002, six years before the election of Barack Obama. On the eve of and during the two election campaigns of Hillary Clinton, seven (!) films about a woman president were released, not counting women in other high government positions. Similar series have also been produced in other countries, such as the Danish TV series The Government (Borgen). However, none of them appeared before the Ukrainian series "Servant of the People" (51 episodes, 2015-2019). Its hero, the teacher Goloborodko, is played by Volodimir Zelensky, who literally stepped off the screen into the presidential chair. Political theater and TV shows produced by the studio Kvartal-95 , led by Zelensky, demonstrated that a satirical show can not only become a tool for healing and uniting the nation, but also for inventing a new electoral technology.

The first season of "Servant of the People" was released in 2016. It was the rating leader on the Ukrainian channel "1 + 1" among all audiences, including the category from 18 up to 54 years old. In Ukraine, it was watched by more than 20 million viewers, and on Kvartal-95's YouTube channel by about 100 million people (by the end of June 2019).

Zelensky's competitors in the election campaign tried to convince voters that Zelensky was a clown, a jester, an actor, and therefore a non-entity. However, Ukrainians have seen enough of their parliament and other governmental institutions. They found deadly accurate jokes and parodies by Kvartal-95 about these institutions and their seat holders. And if you consider that Zelensky was not only an actor, but also one of the authors and producers of the show, as well as the artistic director of the studio, then he seems head and shoulders above many politicians - the targets of his parodies.

After Zelensky's victory, the Ukrainian website and weekly magazine Novoye Vremya (The New Times) published an article stating that one of Estonian political theaters carried out a very similar experiment in democracy in 2010. Ten actors from theater No. 99 created a new United Estonia party, launched an online "School of Elections" and staged several public actions, which, according

to opinion polls, would provide this party with 25 seats in parliament [11]. It was not an example of a virtual party, but a deliberate hoax, a pure social experiment. Actors later revealed their game. They wanted to show how easily voter behavior can be manipulated. The author of an article about this political joke [10] Victoria Ptashnik asked if the Ukrainian experience was a repetition of the Estonian one. We will point out only one significant difference: the Estonian actors were not going to transfer their party from the virtual world to the real one, while Zelensky and his team took this important step. Further we can see other differences.

Having pointed out the active role of the dramatic arts in politics, it is necessary to dwell briefly on the concepts of *dramaturgy* and *script*, which were borrowed from them and received new meaning in the art of electoral technologies.

Political technology script and its dramaturgy: some theory

In the organization of modern election campaigns there are standard technologies, procedures and tactics: focus groups, polls, meetings and speeches in front of voters, advertising, debates, etc. However, the uniqueness of each campaign is determined not by these standard elements, but by its *intrigue (plot) and script*, or, as political strategists put it, its *dramaturgy*. These two characteristics of political campaigns   bring political technologies closer to art. It is dramaturgy that can make a political technology (PT) script custom-made and unique, despite the fact that some of its elements and blocks can be quite standard.

We will henceforth use the terms *script* and *dramaturgy* as applied to an election campaign interchangeably, although there are some differences between them. In particular, not every election script contains dramaturgy, namely actors with their characters, changes in tempo and genre, twists in the plot and intrigue, as well as other dramatic devices. Political technologists more or less agree on the set of tools and tactics used in the election campaign, but the level of their professionalism and efficiency is determined not so much by their use of these tools, but by the general idea and level of dramaturgy of the campaign as a whole.

Many of those involved in the PT business do not fully understand the very nature of their activities themselves. The self-name of this profession adopted in Russia - political technologist - very inaccurately reflects the nature of this activity and misleads researchers and the public. As director of the board of the PR-Intellect agency Mikhail Lozovoy put it, "the line between electoral technologies and electoral art is almost arbitrary" [5, p. 19]. Electoral scripts often use myths, symbolic images, metaphors, dramatic techniques and other expressive means, which brings them closer to art. Therefore, it is natural to consider the art of election campaigns as part of the art of politics in general.

Campaign scripts can differ in plot and concept, genre, sequence of events, composition of actors, type of conflicts, figurative solutions, and other essential characteristics of the campaign, such as the list of candidates – rivals and allies, the profile of voters , their past experience, their attitude toward the current government and their perception of power in general, their expectations and much more. The PT-script solves several problems and serves several functions. It contains an analysis of the pre-election situation, the goals and objectives of the campaign, the roles (images) of candidates, as well as the strategy and tactics of professionals involved in the election campaign at its various stages. The script also describes *the narrative* that political technologists want to impose on all participants in the electoral process, including competitors. The script sets as its ultimate goal the mobilization of "their" potential voters. It can be done in many different ways. Among the most well known methods are persuasion, bribery, pressure and intimidation, emotional mobilization, etc.

Let's finish our discussion of PT-scripts with a methodological remark about the difficulties of studying them. First, only those who write it know about the script, and according to the laws of the profession, they do not reveal it until the very end of the campaign, and possibly never. Secondly, when some political technologists do tell about their scripts after the fact, there are serious reasons to doubt the reliability and completeness of their testimonies. Finally, any script, like the battle plan, can change over the course of a campaign to accommodate new circumstances. And yet, despite these methodological difficulties, it is possible and necessary to reconstruct electoral scripts from disparate data and external observations, at least in their main features, for the purpose of public control over the observance of democratic norms in elections.

The foregoing is quite enough to move on to describing the content and fundamental novelty of the PT-script of the Zelensky campaign, or the Ze! campaign. Truly unique feature of the script "Ze!" is that it was made public before the elections - in the form of the show Servant of the People.

The PT script of the Ze! campaign

As mentioned above, not every PT-script is unique. Moreover, not every election campaign has a script at all. Some of them, so to speak, are just happening. Invention and successful implementation of a new election script is the valor of a few. This requires special talents and deep motivation of the team of political technologists. But even among original PT-scripts, the Ze! script, as we will show below, is quite unique.

The authors of the series Servant of the People deny that Zelensky intended to participate in the elections during the first two seasons (2016–2017). If these statements are true, then what allows us to consider the script of this TV-series as political technology at all? In other words: what makes it possible to consider

a certain plan (set) of actions as a PT-script? The answer to this question follows from the list of tasks and functions of the PT-script listed above: if the action plan, in this case, the film script, solves the tasks of preparing and organizing an election campaign, it becomes part of a PT-script. It should be added to this that the PT-script of the Ze! campaign included not only the TV series Servant of the People, but also a number of other productions of the studio, in particular, the political shows Evening Quarter and ChistoNews, which were released in the same years.

Let us briefly name the tasks and functions, that all these artistic productions of Zelinsky's studio achieved for his election campaign:

– launched a self-fulfilling scenario of his election campaign, first of all, the process of mobilizing voters for candidacy;

– made Zelensky's recognition as a candidate almost 100%;

– formed his image as a "man of the people" and "servant of the people";

– analyzed the situation in Ukraine and offered his vision of the desirable future;

– formed a system of values his electoral platform will be based on.

Since all the tasks above were solved by showing the production of Zelensky's studio, and first of all the TV series Servant of the People, we can interpret all them together as a PT-script.

The TV series not only created a scenario for the desired future, but also simulated its possible pitfalls and traps, and mistakes of the future president and his social base. It was a kind of training game course for the candidate and the population.

"Servant of the People" and the parallel theater performances in shows Vechernii kvartal modeled different game combinations, possible dead ends and promising moves for the new president, of his opponents and allies.

In the second season of the show, PT operations became the central theme in Goloborodko's election campaign, so the team of this series including Zelensky can hardly be suspected of a lack of experience in this area.

PT-script of the campaign "Ze!" is quite original and contains the following elements of novelty:

a) The script is written for voters, not for political technologists. It was made public ("published") instead of being an internal campaign document; by the very fact of its "publication" it launched the process of voter mobilization.

b) Zelensky's team did not work in the shadow of the authorities and the oligarchs and was not paid by any of them, as happens in the vast majority of campaigns. The team itself was both the client and the executor of the script at the same time, and Zelensky was just one of the members of this team. It did not use any kind of administrative resource, worked on a volunteer basis and represented only itself.

c) Zelensky's campaign, judging by the candidate's rating, won even before the supporters of the candidate organized themselves into a party; the party, created just before Zelensky was registered as a candidate, did not have regional structures and support groups, as well as its own faction in parliament. Based on the combination of these facts, Zelensky can be considered an independent candidate (self-nominated).

d) The script offered Ukraine a unifying, collective platform for all citizens concerned about the fate of their country, and this script in fact "sewed together" a nation torn by geography, generations, gender, and even political convictions. It formulated the values around which the healthy forces of the nation were able to unite.

e) The script addressed to new voters – younger people, a new Ukrainian generation that grew up in conditions of independence and greater civil liberties, with new values. "Ze" strategists heavily relied on public performances of Kvartal-95 and new social media, YouTube and Instagram, where Zelensky had more than 2 million young subscribers, and Petro Poroshenko had only 177 thousand subscribers as of mid-January 2019 [13]. Accordingly, Zelensky responded to the values of idealistic youth - to see honesty and responsibility in politics and politicians. The script changed the model of participation in politics: taking control of the government instead of revolutions and going to the Maidan; strengthening control over the parliament (Rada) by including in the Zelensky's program the demand of abolition of deputy immunity, the rights to recall deputies and to impeach of the president.

f) *Reverse countdown* of the script: the sequence of events in the show and the course of the real election campaign are reversed in time, i.e. the presidential campaign was started and won before the official registration of the candidate. The campaign itself was an innovation: it reveals itself to society when it has actually already come to life.

g) A complete rejection of the old traditions and canons of campaigning and political technologies, especially manipulative and "dirty", such as bribery of voters, falsification of election results, "election carousels", spoiler parties, registration of duplicate candidates (clones), anonymous leaks of compromising information, etc. Campaign "Ze!" abandoned not only "dirty" but also many "pure" yet outdated technologies: billboards, mailing lists, meetings with voters, commercials, etc. Instead, its political strategists have relied mostly on theatrical performances and new social media.

h) The script for the series offered a compelling narrative and contained strong dramaturgy. It was based on the game and laughter (carnival) culture.

i) Interactive and lengthy nature of the campaign, significantly longer than standard election campaigns. The campaign arranged a dialogue with the nation via anonymous questionnaires on all Zelensky's sites on social networks, where

everyone could choose five of Ukraine's primary problems from the proposed list: war, annexation of Crimea, rising food prices, low wages and pensions, utility tariffs, unemployment and emigration, the fight against corruption, the level of medical care, foreign policy, the quality of education, the level of crime, democracy, the language issue, business conditions, social protection.

j) High campaign effectiveness. It was won with a record low campaign fund and cost per voter. Yet, the campaign made Zelensky's name recognition 100% in the country.

Summarizing the above, we can say that the Zelensky team invented not just a new script, but a new type of script. The list of innovations is quite long, and in this article it is not possible to dwell on all of them in detail, so we will select only the most important ones.

Narrative and dramaturgy of Ze! campaign script

The script of elections in Servant of the People was built around an exciting plot with intrigues, surprises and an open ending. The plot literally drew the Ukrainian audience into its orbit, blurring the line between the stage and the viewers and inviting them to participate. With this script, it was possible to reduce the presidential choice, which included more than forty candidates, to a simple dilemma for voters: "Are you for or against Zelensky?" ("If you are against the collapse of the country, then vote for Zelensky").

As for the image of the main character (Goloborodko-Zelensky), it is also successfully expressed in the script: "I am with the people – against the old system".

Zelensky made a unique proposal to the nation: to replace in a legitimate way not only the entire power machine and political elites, but also the very archaic form of the state that Ukraine inherited from the Soviet era. He proposed to dismantle the old state and establish a new one - with a different system of power, with a new administrative structure, a new constitution, new cities and means of transportation and roads.

The TV series spoke to the society's demand for a full investigation of violations and crimes of the previous administration. The voters' mandate was interpreted in the script as follows: "Evil must be named, the perpetrators must be excommunicated and punished." Zelensky and his team took on the mission of reorganizing the system of power.

The script coined the main metaphor for the future election: the president of the country is a "servant of the people", that is, he proclaimed the responsibility of the elected persons to the country and voters. Zelensky's team both in the TV series and in the elections appeared as *selfless romantic heroes*. The opening to the series contains another metaphor: a puny guy is trying to pull himself up on the horizontal bar, from one episode to another he makes more and more attempts

and does not back down from his goal. This image speaks volumes of the team's readiness to continue their mission to a successful end.

The power elites are represented by four oligarchs in the Servant of the People script, they are the puppeteers of the parliament, the media, and through them, of the people. It was they who tried to seize the initiative from teacher Goloborodko, to impose their will on him. The oligarchs act as political technologists competing with each other: they decide the fate of the people by manipulating their tokens on the board of a Ukrainian version of "Monopoly" and at the same time in the Rada, organize another Maidan or radical nationalist movements, bring to power or remove from it. When none of their candidates win, they couldn't hide their surprise: "You want to say that the country is headed by a man who is not controlled by the oligarchs? Don't make me laugh!".

The series does not spell out clearly the role and the will of the very people that Goloborodko came to serve. The only full-fledged representatives of the people in the film is the president's father and sister, and we see that their brains have been zombified by television. It is no coincidence that when Goloborodko is imprisoned, the only people to act are the puppets of the oligarchs – radical nationalists. They go to the Rada to bring about a "final solution. The authors of the script are well aware that not only the parliament, but to some extent the whole country is infected with corruption and betrayal of national interests, that innovations and management signals from the administration of the future president will get stuck in a corrupt environment.

The script of the series built its own antithesis to Poroshenko's election slogans. The campaign slogan of the latter – "Army. Language. Faith" – was understood by the people, not without the help of the authors of Kvartal-95, as a slogan in defense of an authoritarian system: "Blood for blood. The intolerance of language and faith other than Ukrainian." Instead, the series proposed unifying values: dignity, transparency and openness of politics, civil liberties, the responsibility of the authorities to the people, and the readiness to defend the independence and integrity of the country. Zelensky refused to divide his citizens by their faith, language, territorial and cultural affiliation, as his predecessor did.

Understanding that the future president will need the support of the most educated, patriotic and active part of the electorate, Kvartal-95 made them the main addressee and interlocutor in the evening shows. It was in their midst that public opinion was formed not only about the power elites, their decisions and actions, but also about the everyday corruption lifestyle and double morality of "ordinary" people.

Some experts say that there was nothing particularly original in the Kvartal-95 show, nothing that they would not have heard "from taxi drivers." In fact, such a judgment is the highest assessment of the political technological quality of the script. It was not the scriptwriters who repeated the words of the taxi

drivers, it was the other way around. The authors of Kvartal-95 ridiculed self-ishness, greed and hypocrisy in all segments of the population for several years, it was on these shows (together with other sources of information) that public opinion was formed, and only then these assessments and opinions were repeated by taxi drivers.

The gaming nature of the script

The Servant of the People was not so much a self-fulfilling prophecy as *a self-fulfilling script-process.* The show launched the process of changing the national consciousness, putting a mirror in front of the nation so that it could look into it and raise the bar of life values for itself. Events in the life of President Golo-borodko and his team unfold in the script as a chain of events parallel to real life in the country. The Servant of the People tells us about the rise of an ordinary person to power, the reefs and pitfalls of the political struggle, the mechanism of the current Ukrainian power elite and how it betrayed the national interests. In parallel, Kvartal-95's political cabaret ChistoNews was having a conversation with the people in. Their shows are reminiscent of the Russian Taganka theater in its prime, combining "epic theater" with satire, jokes, and political cabaret entertainment. In the musical numbers and sketches of Kvartal-95, jokes are combined with ballads; they are more from Brecht than from Stanislavsky. Scenes and raps (zongs) were written as messages to the people, as a direct dialogue with them, as the theater's answer to the painful questions of the nation. These messages were not proclaimed once a year in a "direct line", a la Putin, of the government administration with the people, but responded to current events in real time. The authors and artists of Kvartal-95 themselves diagnosed the problems of the nation and came up with a satirical form of mobilizing people to address them.

Some believe that their shows, texts and performances were at the level of a student skit. They are probably right. But look at the real politicians of Ukraine, and indeed of any post-Soviet country, and you will see that their texts and execution are much worse. The scriptwriters of Kvartal-95 seem to have found exactly the right language that was understandable to the people. Laughter has become a means of mobilization, but mobilization not for elections as such, but for healing of the soul of the nation.

The campaigns of Poroshenko and Zelensky were carried out in two fundamentally different cultures. Poroshenko's political technologists used the entire arsenal of well-known manipulative tricks, including the dirtiest ones: "black PR" and compromising evidence, administrative resources, direct bribery of voters, attempts to split the country and society according to language, religion, territorial location, national identity. This technology with some qualifications can be called authoritarian.

Zelensky countered authoritarian technology with "showman" technology. Not only was he not ashamed of his showman past, but he literally imposed on Poroshenko the playful, theatrical culture of the campaign. Poroshenko continued to insist that politics and the presidency are not a game or a theater, but a serious business.

The process of deciding on the holding of debates, their date and place, and the form of debates themselves before the second round of elections were also turned by Zelensky's team into a national show. By this time, Zelensky had a significant advantage in the vote, and he could take the initiative in his own hands and impose his conditions. Poroshenko, a politician with twenty years of experience, has become a hostage to Zelensky's theatrical game. Poroshenko tried to seize the initiative and twice showed up for debates in television studios only to see that his opponent was not there. Zelensky insisted on taking their duel out of the studios, where Poroshenko obviously had an advantage as the incumbent president, into the public space. Zelenskiy recorded his pre-debate video in the empty space of the Olympic Stadium, challenging his opponent to a "duel". Poroshenko had nothing left to do but accept the rules of the game and answered "Let it be the stadium."

A few hours before the debate, a rally of many thousands took place on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, where Poroshenko, according to the old tradition, brought his supporters by bus, and then the participants of the rally marched in a column to the Olympic stadium. President Poroshenko used the administrative resource "to the fullest" measure: many people received a robocall with an invitation to visit the debate, recorded in a voice similar to that of the legendary Russian radio host Yuri Levitan. People also received SMS messages, even those who were already at the stadium. Where did the president get the phone numbers of thousands of Ukrainians? This clearly violated the Ukrainian law on the use of personal phone data.

The format of the debates at an Olympic stadium has no precedent in the history of elections, this new technology is also Ukrainian know-how. It lays the foundation for a new democratic institution, the Ukrainian Agora. In many countries, candidates gathered their supporters in stadiums, but no one debated their opponents there. The Ukrainian debates became a spectacular show and were broadcast on about 150 channels around the world. In an interview with the 112 television channel, one of the debate viewers compared Zelensky to Trump, who said he would build a wall, and who has built it; so Zelensky will do everything he promises. Maybe these people themselves came to such an understanding, or maybe The Servant of the People helped them to understand the basic ideas of direct and competitive democracy.

Trust as an antithesis to manipulative technologies

The musical intro-song of the series sets the tone for the entire show: "I have almost everything: dignity and honor, and even shouts of "bravo" ..." The list of what the hero has continues, but dignity and honor take the first place. They, in turn, inspire confidence in the main hero in the viewers. Trust is a very powerful political resource, hard to earn and easy to lose. As Abraham Lincoln said: "You can fool some people all the time, you can fool everyone some of the time, but you can't fool everyone all the time." As the last elections convincingly showed, Ukrainians did not trust former president Poroshenko and his elite. If people have confidence in a politician, (s)he does not need to use "hard" and manipulative political technologies. The viewers believed Zelensky's Goloborodko, (the camera often shows the audience during performances, their full involvement in the action).

It was the trust of the voters that helped Zelensky's party win an extraordinary parliamentary campaign after the presidential elections. Ukrainian voters mostly voted for candidates of the Servant of the People, a party unknown to them, people lost confidence in their leaders, who were more famous, wealthy and influential (they included incumbent mayors, a former deputy prime minister and a former prime minister). More than half of the total number of this party candidates was elected in majoritarian districts, which provided it with an absolute majority in the next parliament. In this sense, voting for Zelensky's party in the four largest cities of Ukraine and regions is very indicative: Kiev and Kiev region (21 out of 22 districts), Kharkiv and Kharkiv region (12 out of 14), Odessa and Odessa region (8 out of 11), Dnepropetrovsk and Dnepropetrovsk region (16 out of 17).

The Ze! Campaign began its desacralization of power long before the elections. In Kvartal-95 performances, there were no taboo topics and faces in politics. In campaign interviews, Zelensky defends the same values he declared from the stage: he promised to transfer the presidential palaces to public use; sincerely did not understand why the president needed three presidential planes; rode a bike and generally behaved like a "normal person".

During the campaign and already becoming a real president, Zelensky made the desacralization of power and its responsibility to society a conscious policy. He appears in public places not only without a tie, but also without a jacket, in a shirt with rolled up sleeves; he initiates laws on the impeachment of the president and the removal of immunity from parliamentarians and judges, proposes not to hang his portraits in office rooms and call him by his first name without a patronymic; he made an attempt to move his administration from a palace with golden stucco to a more modest building with a square in front of it, so that the representatives of the people have a place where to express their attitude to

power. As president, Zelensky continues to communicate with the people on social networks, filming his messages on the phone.

Ukrainian society, with its rich protest experience, is generally quite relaxed in its relations with the authorities; thus, it is impossible to imagine the adoption by the Rada of a law on punishment for insulting state officials. If a crisis situation arises in the country, society is not afraid to use revolutionary methods.

Reverse course of events

The sequence of events both in the TV-series and during Zelensky's election campaign is reversed in time: he won the campaign before it was started, before his official registration as a candidate. The same situation happened in the TV series Servant of the People. Goloborodko was nominated and elected almost without his knowledge, and Zelensky put forward his candidacy for the presidency when his rating already exceeded that of Poroshenko and other candidates. It can be argued that there were many candidates in history who had the highest rating at the time of the announcement of their candidacy, but they were all already well-known politicians, while people only learned about Zelensky's political ambitions before the third season of the show.

The inverted sequence of events has its pros and cons. The advantage is that Zelensky appeared unexpectedly in the political arena and that his rivals did not take him seriously for a long time. The downside is that the sudden appearance implies a lack of organizational support on the ground and a lack of experience of Zelensky's team.

The initial stage of any election campaign is the organizational preparation of the elections, in particular, the creation in the regions (if they do not already exist) of the party branches that nominate the candidate; these branches organize public events and mobilize citizens for elections. In addition to this, the headquarters of the candidate's party, as a rule, form public organizations and movements in support of their candidate, sometimes even opening new local newspapers, radio stations and television channels for the duration of the campaign. The classic example of a newspaper created during the Yeltsin election campaign is "God forbid!" («Не дай Бог!») in Russia, in which the Communist party led by Zyuganov was "killed" during the presidential elections in 1996. The oligarchs spent 13 million rubles on it, and it lasted only two months [1, p. 304]. The election headquarters sometimes organize counter-campaigns or protest movements [5, p. 16] in order to destroy the electoral efforts of competitors. All of these events are called in the political lingo with a phrase taken from the military jargon – ground game. President Barack Obama, for example, at the start of his first term, created a powerful Organizing for America infrastructure that helped him get re-elected for a second term.

Zelensky had nothing of the kind. He began building his party simultaneously with the nomination of his candidacy, in total three months before he won the presidential election. Zelensky was helped by the fact that Ukrainian voters fell in love with his character Goloborodko; and because Zelensky was even more convincing than his screen character, his party also won the parliamentary majority.

High efficiency of Ze! campaign

The effectiveness of campaign money spent can be calculated quite simply: you need to divide its budget by the number of votes received. The less money spent per vote received, the more effective the election campaign is.

Data on the expenses of presidential candidates vary in different sources. In addition, it is impossible to fully calculate the cost of administrative resources used by then president Petro Poroshenko. According to interim financial reports released by the candidates, incumbent president Poroshenko spent more than any of his competitors on the campaign three months before the end of the campaign. Compared to the showman Vladimir Zelensky, Poroshenko spent, according to the most conservative estimates, five times more money – $15 million versus $3.2 million [8]. Each vote cast for Volodymyr Zelensky cost him only $0.50.

The incumbent presidents and persons in elected and public positions have quite a lot of opportunities to combine the campaign with their current political activities and use the administrative resources. For example, in 2015, V. Putin spent less from his campaign fund on collecting signatures than his competitors, although he, as a self-nominated candidate, needed to collect three times more signatures than all other candidates [6].

What is the secret of the high efficiency of the Ze! team? There are several of them: the enthusiasm of its members, one hundred percent recognition of the candidate, the use of modern electronic means of communication with voters, the attraction of a huge number of volunteers and, most importantly, the support of the people, who saw in Zelensky the leader who could meet their expectations. All members of his election team, including political technologists, worked on a volunteer basis. Volunteers also worked at his national and local election headquarters; there was no built vertical structure, i.e., local headquarters had a maximum of initiative. Moreover, until the victory, the team members were not given any promises about future positions or promotion to the Zelensky's administration or Rada.

More than 500,000 people registered on the site of Ze! campaign who expressed their desire to sincerely and freely help, spend their time as observers and members of election commissions. Relying on volunteers is not something new, they do it all over the world, but Zelensky set a record here in his country.

"You want to say that the country is headed by a man who is not controlled by the oligarchs? Don't make me laugh!"

During the election campaign, Poroshenko's supporters, and not only them, pressed on the fact that oligarch Igor Kolomoisky and his 1 + 1 TV channel stands behind Zelensky's back (Igor Kolomoisky, the owner of this channel, was also one of the shareholders of Kvartal-95 and a customer of Zelensky's studio). However, this is not the only version of events, others were also named: a protege of the West or an agent of the Kremlin.

The question "Who is behind the candidate?" arises in every campaign and fits perfectly into the genre of political technology script: if there is a script, then there should be its authors, sponsors and producers.

Russian journalist Georgy Birger believes that "it is viewers who promote ideas with their demand (in this case political ones - I.Zh.-B.), sitcoms and candidates' programs just address these demands" [2]. Without a corresponding public demand, the image of President Goloborodko would hardly have become so popular. And certainly the people of Ukraine, and not Kolomoisky, made the political cabaret Kvartal-95 the most popular show in the country, whose rating was confirmed by sold-out shows at their live performances throughout Ukraine.

Among the numerous versions, the one that Zelensky insists on and which is the most important for us in the context of this article is almost not considered: behind Zelensky, there was a close-knit team of like-minded people. His coming to power is a rare example when a group of citizens, united by the same values, and who had never been involved in politics before, became the independent political actor, came up with an innovative technology of political struggle and brought their candidate to power. This group only retroactively took shape as a party, and that because these are the rules of the game prescribed by law. It was his team that wrote the scripts for his films and performances, it was with them that Zelensky was friends with from his student days, it was they who he led and directed in Kvartal-95 and other projects.

However, other customers and sponsors could well have been behind Zelensky and his team. Let's remember that oligarchs often sponsor not one party or political force, but several. They lay their eggs in several baskets and wait to see which one will hatch the winner. As the political experience of many countries shows, in the long run puppeteers lose their influence sooner or later.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter who invested in Zelensky's campaign. Social scripts and social projects are launched by some people, and captured, lived and rewritten by others later. Most often, the script written for the political actors is appropriated by them, and they begin to reshape it for themselves. Thus, according to the initial strategy of the Kremlin team, which selected a successor

to Yeltsin and created high ratings for him, Putin was to become "first among equals," "princeps," as political technologist Pavlovsky put it [7, p. 113]. However, Putin became de-facto president for life and made sure that there were no more equals to him. At the beginning of Putin's rule, oligarchs and a team of political technologists from Voloshin and Pavlovsky to Belkovsky and Gelman also stood behind him. And where are they now? They are happy that they were allowed to leave the country. This happens in almost all social scripts - their end result falls far from the apple tree.

Talk about "who was behind Zelensky's back" died out by itself after the first month of his stay in power. Zelensky knew that he is a legitimate president, elected by an overwhelming majority, and does not owe anything to any of the oligarchs.

The Zelensky team has, in at least one respect, surpassed the Kremlin team in its political technological prowess. The authors of the Servant of the People project laid down an interactive script of the unfolding model, i.e., constant interaction between the "stage" and the "audience", and adjusted the script taking into account the reaction of the electorate. This is the fundamental difference between the Zelensky team and the Kremlin political technologists, who from the start excluded the people from active participation in the elections and built their project on hard manipulative techniques. According to I. Krastev and G. Pavlovsky, "... for the first time in the Russian democratic environment, the question was directly raised: how to gently remove the population from influencing the authorities" [7, p. 198] and "how to deprive the people of the their vote without depriving them of their right to vote [Ibid., p. 14]". It was the Kremlin's team of political technologists that laid the foundations for today's authoritarianism in Russian politics. The formula "servant of the people", proposed in the TV series of the same name, is fundamentally different from "princeps formula". A servant can be fired by his master, which was shown by the recent elections and the introduction of the law on the impeachment of the president in Ukraine to the Rada.

Ze! campaign as a social innovation

Zelensky's participation in the election campaign mixed the cards for all other participants. The term "Zelensky effect" even arose, i.e. the appearance of a non-systemic candidate in the elections, who ousted all the systemic ones. However, the "Zelensky effect" is much more than an innovative campaign strategy. In terms of its scale, this is a bid for a systemic renewal of the entire Ukrainian society, or, in other words, a claim for a peaceful social revolution.

Many metaphors of the show and the Ze! presidential campaign, such as "new time", "new generation", "transparency of power", were not just election campaign slogans, but have already been brought to life in the first steps of president Zelensky and his party in the movement for change they started.

A major systemic innovation often presents itself to society when it has in fact already happened, without prior notice, so as not to attract premature attention from those who are disadvantaged by it and who may resist, and to complete and transform the innovation as it matures and adapts to a changing situation.

Zelensky had additional reasons for not revealing his plan: the law on presidential elections in Ukraine allows the election process to begin only 90 days before the vote. This gives an obvious advantage to those who are already in power, i.e. systemic candidates. There was one more obvious reason not to reveal the cards in advance: the series actually played the role of an exploratory committee, that is, an organization that assesses the potential of a candidate and his social base. This democratic institution has not yet been registered in Ukrainian or Russian politics. The TV series also helped shape Zelensky's future program.

Zelensky, according to his associates, took two years to see the support of the people and come to the decision to run for president. The format of the series and its accompanying shows also allowed the Zelensky team to stretch the process of educating and mobilizing future voters for almost four years.

From TB to reality: PreZe!dent convincingly wins the third round

The first two seasons of the TV series provided high support for Zelensky, which allowed him to run for president. After Zelensky made the decision to run, the authors released the third season in early 2019. It described the first year after the inauguration of president Goloborodko. The third season was the first attempt of the team to transition from sitcom to drama.

The tone of the TV series has changed strikingly, becoming full of pathos. By genre, this was no longer a sitcom, but rather a docudrama: It didn't try to entertain the audience, but to frighten them. President Goloborodko does not ride a bicycle, but is in prison. He has perpetually inflamed eyes and clenched fists. In this season, the authors simulated all sorts of negative outcomes of the upcoming real elections:

a) falsification of voting results;

b) illegal persecution of the newly elected president;

c) the split of Ukraine into many states and the external management of the country;

d) clan wars;

e) the crisis of people's confidence in the authorities and the need for a "Ukrainian de Gaulle" who will unite the nation;

f) nominating a "dark horse" for a new president who needs a professional jockey.

The 3rd season of TV series creates grim portraits of the president's closest rivals and the corrupt parliament. Unlike the first two seasons, Ukrainians

are not so much entertained as they are got warned: six Maidans have passed in a year, six presidents have changed, twenty-eight independent states have been created at the territory of Ukraine, a regime of international governance has been tacitly introduced, which in the end helped to restore Goloborodko's presidency. It is not clear how many Ukrainians managed to see the third season, but it clearly influenced some of them and helped prevent some (not all) negative outcomes for Zelensky's future presidency.

Much of the script "Servant of the People" turned out to be prophetic. The oligarchs, who used to be at war with each other, have united against President Zelensky. Igor Kolomoisky, supposedly the new president's "gray cardinal", openly clashed with his policies. The old administration merged into the united opposition bloc in parliament. On the very first day, the old Rada refused to pass a package of laws proposed by the new president.

The political technological support of a candidate usually does not end with elections, especially in those cases when an inexperienced debutant wins. A team of political technologists took care of President Putin for a long time. Putin finally said goodbye to the last political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky from this team a full ten years after coming to power. In the case of Zelensky, politico-technological support means more than just preventing him from failing at an early stage. His political technologists are also associates and ideologues of his perestroika program and are vitally interested in its success. Each of the tasks announced in his election campaign needs its own strategy for its realization and promotion in public opinion. President Barack Obama created an example of such politico-technological support for the decisions, it was he who transferred the headquarters of his election campaign Organizing for Obama to the headquarters for supporting his presidential undertakings - Organizing for America [15, p. 106–109]. This fact alone refutes the conclusions of the British political scientist Andrew Wilson, who believes that political technology is typical and flourishes mainly in the post-Soviet space, and is practically not needed in developed democracies [14].

The logic of the TV series continued by inertia to dominate the elections to the Rada. Everyone was wondering what would happen in the next series. The inertia of the series has been enough for one more episode of real life – elections to the Rada. The Servant of the People party gathered the largest faction in it and ensured for itself at the initial stage full control not only in parliament, but also in the executive branch of power. However, the struggle was just beginning. As predicted by the series, a long fight for power in parliament and within its own administration began, only partially controlled by the team. Politico- technological support at the stage of coming to power differs significantly from work in the normal mode; both Zelensky and his new team had to learn everything all over again.

In his post-election strategy, president Zelensky imposed a high pace of game on everyone, he constantly took the initiative into his own hands and continued to break the old rules. Having decided to dissolve the old Rada and suggesting that the old government resign on the day of his inauguration, he deliberately aggravated the situation, creating a powerful opposition. All this was done according to the laws of the theater. The camera showed the full range of emotions of the old leaders when the president publicly invited them to resign of their own free will: shock, contempt, irony, anger... The old elite immediately turned into an opposition. Political confrontation regarding the legality of election of the new parliament ended with the decision of the Constitutional Court in favor of the president. Zelensky also launched a campaign against officials from the old government: he fired a number of governors and proposed to replace the heads of all regional local administrations.

The Servant of the People party considered the parliamentary elections as the third round of elections. Popular protest against the old system turned out to be sharp, deep and conscious. *This was the first successful attempt in the recent history of Ukraine to express a popular protest in a legitimate, constitutional form.* The convincing victory in the parliamentary elections proved that the election of Zelensky as president was not only a protest vote against the old political class, but also support for the new course of the Ze! movement, an expression of confidence in his party.

The most difficult of all the tasks solved in the script of the TV-series, but not yet solved in life, are two: the real unification of Ukraine, including the annexed and uncontrolled territories, and the separation of civil and political institutions of power from big capital (oligarchic structures). Zelensky "sewed" the Ukrainian nation so far only as makeshift repairs', as evidenced by the vote for the Servant of the People party in parliament. The losing side tried to divide the country back again, to pull it apart into opposing camps. The victory of representatives of the old elites in the parliamentary elections in Western Ukraine and in the east of the country means that the new government will have to look for a new solution to this problem.

When selecting candidates from single-mandate constituencies (majoritarianism in Ukrainian) for the parliamentary elections, the Servant of the People party put forward several criteria, including the requirement that a candidate had not previously been elected to the Rada. This solves several problems at once: a radical renewal of the political culture (and morality) of future deputies, their rejuvenation, and the search for new allies. However, it is fraught with many problems, and above all, the inclusion of random and inexperienced people and "covert agents".

As mentioned above, Zelensky made a unique proposal to the nation - to replace the entire political class, the entire power machine and elites in a legitimate

way. Both in the show and in real life, he opposed the solution of state problems on the Maidan and created platforms and real opportunities for the participation of the people in politics. He not only has kept his word [1], but also did everything possible to rebuild the power in the country, while remaining within the framework of existing laws.

Before everyone's eyes, the reformatting of the Ukrainian state has begun. The full scope of the planned innovations is still unknown to anyone, including Zelensky, but for the first time in Ukraine, the president has reduced his administration, and it will no longer stand above the government. After the parliamentary elections, it became clear that the revolution in Ukraine has begun, but it is still not irreversible. The old parties lost their ratings, and many of them did not get into parliament. The old elites were falling out of power, new criminal cases were being brought against them, and the old ones were being set in motion. The demolition of the old model of the state and the system of government, which led Ukraine to a dead end, began. Zelensky got a chance to form his own government and adopt a new, revolutionary package of laws. All this simultaneously imposed a great responsibility on his party and himself.

After elections, the president and his team faced new political technological challenges and tasks, and first of all, the task of increasing the number of like-minded people among the active part of society. Reliance on the people can only work if citizens are actively involved in the process of change. Zelensky in his inaugural speech called the entire healthy part of society into allies, naming every citizen "the president of the country". He also addressed the Ukrainian diaspora, according to experts, numbering up to 20 million people, with a call to return home [2].

Lessons for the future: anything is possible!

Above, I described the main elements that contributed to the novelty and effectiveness of the politico-technological script of Zelensky's election campaign. It outweighed all the counter-propaganda of his rivals and the criticism of political observers and ensured that Zelensky won a landslide victory at a record low cost. During the entire election campaign, a huge amount of lies and compromising information was poured on Zelinsky: the presence of a business registered in his name in Russia, as well as offshore businesses and accounts; accusations of links with the oligarch Kolomoisky, alcohol and drug addictionъ; evasion of his duty as a volunteer in the ongoing war, etc. Despite all the negativity, Zelensky managed to increase his rating throughout the campaign and win a convincing victory in presidential and parliamentary elections. Using American terminology, he can be called a Teflon candidate (this term was first applied to President Reagan, and then to others) [12].

The definition of "teflonism" reflects the degree of commitment and trust of the electorate to the candidate, his mission and mode of action. The faith of the people in their hero was transformed into a colossal success of the party in the regions, which none of the Ukrainian analysts predicted. We can say that Zelensky woke up on July 22, 2019, the day after the parliamentary elections, if not a dictator, then the sole political leader. However, this is only the appearance of autocracy. Next to Zelensky is a team of like-minded people and his party who will not only share power and responsibility with him, but also serve as an instrument of checks and balances. This is how the role of the team in the show was spelled out, it is these values that the "new generation", brought up in conditions of independence and democracy, should bring with them.

The expert community was divided in their forecasts for the future of the president and his team. Some call what has been happening in Ukraine a struggle of epochs, a farewell to the old management elite. Others talk about the victory of political technologies and means of communication over common sense, about populism, about another false start with dangerous consequences for the country. No one yet fully understands who came along with Zelensky and how resistant his team will be to the traditional diseases of power – corruption, nomenklaturization, authoritarian management style. Or, as "The Servant of the People " says: "Why this fuss, if it is unlikely that anything will change in the country?" [4].

Does the new Ukrainian president have a chance to stand side by side with Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa and bring about a regime transformation in his country? Can an innovative scenario of coming to power be the key to successful reform? Will the people of Ukraine be able to make collective responsible decisions and uphold new values together with their new elite? There are many conflicting predictions about this, but there are no and cannot be ready-made answers, since this experiment must be done and lived in real time.

Celebrating his victory in the presidential election, Zelensky delivered a speech whose last sentence echoed in neighboring countries, especially in Russia: "Look at us. Everything is possible".

Zelensky swung at a revolution from above, rebooting the entire system, not yet having a built-in hierarchical power structure, friendly media, economic stability in the country, external support, etc. His entire asset at the time consisted of a dedicated team, a hastily put together party and the trust of three quarters of voters, issued to him on a short-term loan.

Regardless of whether Zelensky's attempt to launch his political start-up for the country is successful or not, he has already managed to contribute to the history of democracy and to the tool box of political technologies. He proved by his example that not only government officials and big capital can be political

actors in the country; that a political campaign can be carried out with a minimum of funds; that the original PT script plus people's trust is stronger than the administrative resource; that the winner is the one who manages to unite the nation by common values; that the public demand for renewal is giving rise to a new team ready to "fight the Goblins" and risk their stable present for the sake of a better future for their country.

After Zelensky's victory, there might be many clones of his script and his PT innovations, but direct repetitions are unlikely to work. This script has already worked out this material, such as, like changing the shoes into green sneakers by Ukrainian politicians, or transferring them from cars to bicycles. However, future candidates for presidents to succede may adopt the basic principles and tactics of Zelensky's election campaign: get out of the shadow of power and big capital, write a script for themselves and for their social base; formulate the values that will unite the country; take responsibility for the future of the country; rely on volunteers, new forms of communication and mobilization; include playful and interactive models in one's campaign script; to offer their supporters new forms of participation in the campaign and in politics.

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