

INTERVIEW WITH LEONID KOZHARA

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Interview with Leonid Kozhara, deputy of the Party of Regions in the *Verkhovna Rada* and foreign policy adviser to the Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovic. Kozhara has been Ambassador of Ukraine in Sweden and also Presidential Administration Office's deputy superintendent and Chief of the Presidential Administration Office's Main Foreign Policy Agency created by the former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma.

Mister Kozhara, regarding the political crisis that is now having place in Ukraine, which is the actual position of the Party of Regions? And how do you think you will be able to get out from this situation?

You know the situation we have now is different from the situation we had one month ago.

After the President issued the first decree to dissolve the Parliament, there was a sort of common view between the President and the Prime Minister, because when President Yushchenko was in Brussels, having a press conference with the President of the European Commission Barroso,

he said that he was going to respect every decision of the Constitutional Court and the Prime Minister said the same thing. It means that we were going to follow every decision of the Court.

But at the moment we have a different situation because it looks that the President violated both the statement so I think it will be more difficult to do that now.

Moreover new parliamentary elections should not be implemented not only because of the political differences but also because of some technical difficulties: to prepare new electoral lists, for example, we will need at least three months.

So we do not understand why the President is saying these "no-sense" things.

Regarding the impartiality of the Constitutional Court we can of course discuss about it,

we do not know if some judges are corrupted, we have not proof of this, but we should remember

that the Constitutional Court is the only constitutional and legal mechanism that is able to make a decision about this. There are not other constitutional and legal ways to go out from this situation.

We have also understood that this crisis is not about elections or not, but it is about power: some political forces wants back their power, like Yulia Tymoshenko that wants to get her government back. But the question is: the Ukrainian people will benefit from this? Ukrainian people are tired to live in permanent elections, because for more than 3 years they were living in permanent elections. The government of Yanukovic has produced positive economical results differently from the government of Yulia Tymosenko and we are looking now to what could benefit to the Ukrainian people.

What is case of new elections?

The Party of Regions of course does not want new parliamentary elections, the opposition wants in fact to reshape with these elections the Parliament. We do not exclude this situation, we do not exclude that we will reach a compromise with the opposition and there will be new parliamentary elections, but we insist that, if there will be new elections in Ukraine, we want Presidential elections too.

And what about the tentative made by some deputies of the majority to convince the deputies of the opposition to pass with the majority? And what about the attacks made by the majority against some ministers appointed by the President like the ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Tarashuk?

I do not think that this political crisis is about democracy, it is about distribution of power in this country, the opposition, of course, says good slogans but the reality is different: they are fighting for the power. About Tarashuk, he just refused to play in one team with the government, he said he wanted to stay with the opposition and we understand this position, but if a Foreign Minister is nominated by the President, but is also part of the government, does not want to work with the government and to stay in the opposition, he should resign.

For this reason we decided to vote against him and we voted unanimously for Yanseniuk as a Minister of Foreign Affairs because we know he will cooperate with both the majority and the opposition, which is much better for the benefits of Ukraine. We also appreciate the statement of European Union that was published in today's press that said that the conflict in Ukraine should be resolved in a peaceful way, based on the Constitution of Ukraine.

What about the relations of Ukraine with the EU and with Russia? Which will be the future foreign policy of your country?

Regarding EU and Russia it is our firm position, I mean the position of the Party of Regions, that the strategic course of Ukraine regarding the European integration remains unchangeable but, at the same time, we understand the Ukraine should have good neighbours and especially to have good relations with Russia because Russia is a great country who possesses enormous natural resources and we want to have Russia as a friend not as an enemy.

And you know when the Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi visited Russia last year he said that it is in the interest of the European security that Ukraine and Russia have good relations, that concerns firstly the transport of the Russian oil and gas through the Ukrainian pipelines to the EU. That's why the Party of Regions considers that, while moving to the EU, we also should preserve good relations with Russia because this is not only a matter of the Ukrainian national security but of the European security as well.