



TO THE TRUTH?



There was a disaster on a universal scale 16 years ago, yet they did not go on rallies; instead, they went to the site to protect the life and health of their country's people and also those of the residents of Europe. Then they began to sicken and die in increasing numbers, but they let the authorities get away with their crude lies. A disaster on a universal scale could have become a moment of truth and a lesson of truth for us. Had it been so, today the passport issuing authorities within the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine would have been issuing passports to Ukrainian citizens not those only born after Chernobyl, but also those raised in a different environment - consisting of more honest, open, trustful and mutually supportive relations between society and state.

However this scenario never happened. Judging by the outcomes of the election, almost eleven years after gaining independence, the government has the closest and most friendly relations with Ukraine's citizens currently in ... jails, preliminary detention centers and psychiatric clinics. It was in those enclaves of "common love and solidarity" that 80% , 90% or even 100% of voters supported the party of power. I would not like this result reflect a major trend in the development of country's political system and in the harmonizing of relations between the government and society. Neither would I like to see the country's administrative reform turning Ukraine into a huge Donetsk oblast with its unprecedented electoral unanimity and "united" team of "observers".

Different people evaluate the election results in different ways. Some are licking their wounds and blaming political technologists. Others are relaxing and celebrating their victory, i.e. victory after the first round. Others are also celebrating their victory, but after the second round, wittily called "additional election". The election is not over yet. Court trials are still under way, which, in principle, is a common event for a lawful state. Tough political strife is still going on accompanied by torrents of lies in the government-controlled media, something that is rather unusual. The country needs much more than a mere election result to function as a fully-fledged democracy. Today it needs hope, too.

Given the variety of election evaluations, experts and politicians agree on one thing: the people proved to be the wisest and most dignified participant in the whole event. They made their choice in the first round and this was an informed and conscious choice, for the most part. The second round is the authorities' fault as they continue to play unfairly with the people and to conceal the truth. I can't help quoting one famous person who says "lies and falsehood everywhere". By the way, he is an MP now: he will be sitting in the next Parliament together with the former "minister who lies" (to quote the early, pre-election TV host Dmytro Kyseliov), former SBU Chief who cannot be blamed for extreme frankness either, and with many other former officials hosted by the bloc that claims to have won the election. Claims, because wise people believe the other force to be the winner. And it is not the second round winners on whom they pin their hopes.

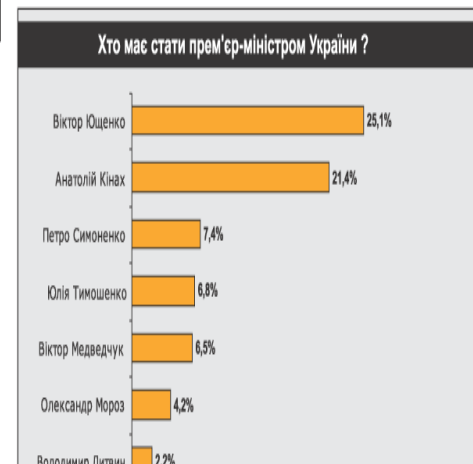
During this latest election the government behaved as if the end of the world were looming on the horizon and there would be no more elections ever. As a Council of Europe representative noticed, "all rules that could be violated were violated" in the course of election. Even the CPSU could not afford to behave like this during the 1989 and 1990 elections - in a country with a single party and entirely state-owned mass media. And even despite these total and massive violations, the voters sent a clear message to the government that they need changes. However, after this clear message being sent, the government persists in pretending it has won. It persists in assuring the public that a parliamentary majority is a possibility, moreover, that it is an achievable task for it (this power).

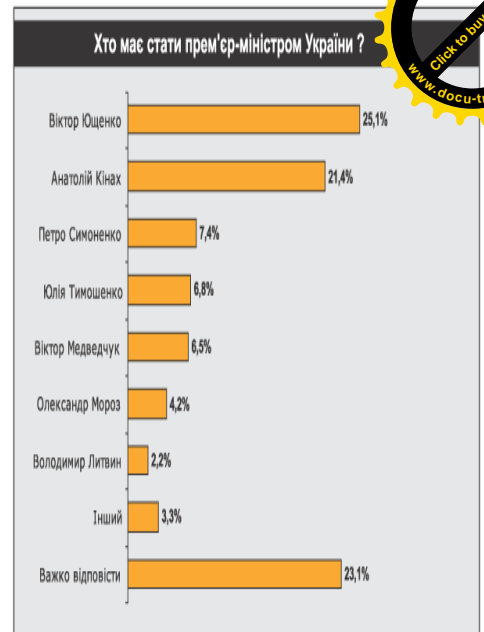
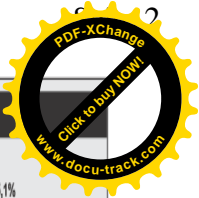
Nevertheless, according to the results of last week's survey, the public does not perceive the party of power as the winner. And this is the mildest conclusion to come to on analyzing the tables and diagrams. Other conclusions may be painful for some "public" politicians, simply because this very public states openly and straightforwardly that it does not see these politicians in high official positions, even if they replace all the news programs in all the channels with their own talk-shows. It means that the government, having concentrated in its hands the control over practically all the media, has nevertheless lost its capacity to limitlessly manipulate public opinion and the citizens' trust. It also means that the next election is likely to be a real election rather than a variation on the theme of the 1999-2002 elections and referendum. In the major (presidential) election, being a member of the pro-power party can be detrimental to a candidate. It is evident from the low presidential ratings shown not only by Volodymyr Lytvyn and Volodymyr Semynozhenko, but also by Serhiy Tyhypko, who stands head and shoulders above his fellow bloc members for his authentic status as a public figure, his sincerity and ability to discuss tough issues without hysteria or giving political labels to his opponents. Besides, it is a warning signal for those MPs who respect themselves, their business and their future, but who, for various reasons, could not muster enough courage to say "no" in the second round that took place in the country's most important office. Understandably, the Parliament elected on 31 March has a more promising future than the presidnet, since it will outlive him politically. Therefore, right after the "additional election" the third round will be launched, defying the control of the country's major elector. And finally, the winners who are perceived as such by the people and who are dreaming of becoming the government should be even more, than the incumbent power, attentive and sensitive to the opinion of these people expecting greater honesty, greater integrity and greater transparency from them. There is no confidence, on the people's part, that the new winners would not learn from their predecessors soon. The people are still afraid to make a mistake...

Outcomes: what is there in this dry residue?

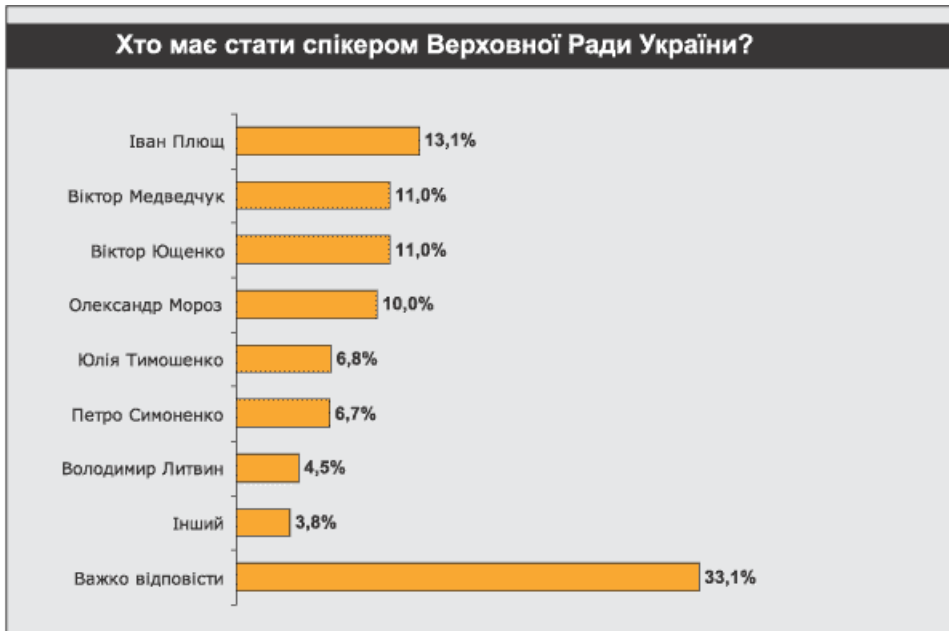


The first outcome. The government failed to convince the citizens of Ukrainian that the election of 31 March was the utmost manifestation of democracy, fairness and transparency: the majority of respondents (58.6%) consider the election to be neither fair nor transparent. Yet our people did not expect it to be any other way, which is testified by the poll results ZN published long before the election. The enthusiastic reports of the CIS observers did not affect public opinion, genuine as their enthusiasm might be. The thought that things can be "even more democratic and transparent" in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan does not seem to console our fellow countrymen and countrywomen any more. We have changed. We want to feel happy because life is good here, not because it is worse elsewhere. Nowadays we rarely compare our country with the West where our President does not go on visits any more. Yet even looking at our closest Western neighbors (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland) we can see how far behind we are. It is hard to imagine the authorities in those countries treating their political opponents in the way ours do, or, say, an "additional election" taking place under the patronage of their constitution guarantors. A small distance that used to exist between us at the beginning has grown into an abyss about 4 or 5 years ago. They went forward, and we went our own way.



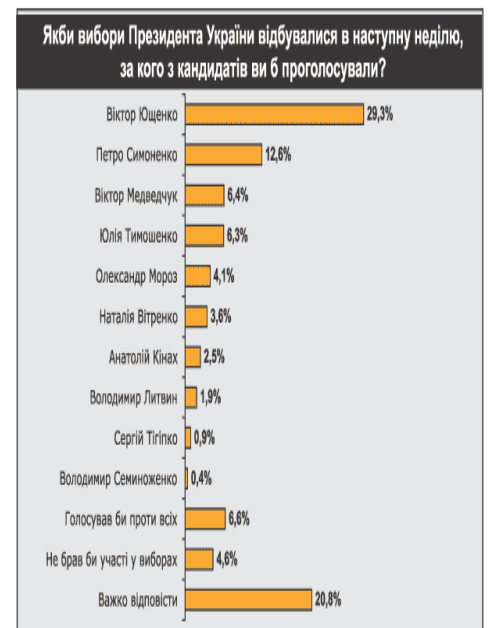


Over a third of respondents participating in the election admit that they witnessed violations of election procedure, primarily, the people's filling in their bulletins outside the booths and extraordinarily long queues preventing many people from casting their vote. Every ninth respondent (11.5%) encountered illegal campaigning on the voting day; every thirteenth (7.7%) was encouraged to vote for a certain candidate or party. Our respondents confirm the observers' conclusions about the cases of organized "migration" of voters, offers to buy or sell one's bulletin and local election commission clerks' denying bulletins to those entitled to them. Even allowing for a survey error, these are not individual cases, there were millions of such cases. The CEC failed to hear their voices, and the people themselves are not competent, able and wealthy enough to seek protection of their rights in an institution the power keeps referring them to - in the court of justice. Therefore, not only do the leaders of the party of power (for the internal use) but also Susanna Stanik at the Council of Europe rostrum (for the external use) repeats the same unassailable (for a lawful state!) argument: no citizens' appeals to court have been registered (a couple of filed suits can be disregarded), hence, there was no abuse of administrative resource, it is not a problem at all.



The second outcome. The power that had promised to do its best to guarantee fair and transparent election embarrassed itself. Only every fifth (20%) respondent believed it intended to do so; 22.4% of those surveyed refused to evaluate the authorities' commitment to the ideals of democracy, whereas the majority - 57.6% - stated that the authorities did not facilitate a fair and transparent election. Notably, it is not 5% or 15%, but a MAJORITY of respondents who think so. Then what victory and trust to power shown by the people in the election are they talking about?

The third outcome. And yet our compatriots proved much more patient and tolerant in their attitude to the government than the people of Zimbabwe, for instance. Although up to 8.5% of those who did not take part in the election could not possibly do so because of the long queues at their polling stations, they did not demand that the election should be prolonged for several days, as was the case in this African country during their recent presidential election. It is true, at some polling stations the voters would not let the authorities lock them out till late at night, but that was it. Who lost these million of votes? We think it was the party of power itself, or, more exactly, the parties it hoped to have as allies to the bloc "For a United Ukraine!" in the future Rada - the Green Party, "Women for the Future", Winter Crop Generation Team.



The fourth outcome. The party of power failed to win as well as to convince the people that 11.8% of votes received by "For a United Ukraine!" is more than 23.6% gained by "Our Ukraine". Notwithstanding the party of power's victorious fanfares, and its leaders' bold promises to recruit 180 or even 186 members into their mega-faction, and the