

'Manifesto of the communist party':1997

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'Soviet Power to Workers! Socialism to the Society! Voluntary Union of Equal Brother Peoples to Ukraine!' Election platform of the Communist party of Ukraine

On December 30, 1997, the Communist Party of Ukraine and other left-wingers celebrated the 75th anniversary of creation of the USSR by singing 'The International' and calling on brother Communist parties of the former 'united and mighty' to restore the Soviet Union.

The first step towards implementation of this goal, Communists believe, is Ukraine's admission to the Russian-Belarusian Union. Commenting on prospects for Ukraine's independent statehood, coordinator of the Kyiv-based Bloc of Left Forces and member of the Socialist party Vasyl Arestov described the demise of the former superpower as 'history's temporary grimace' and predicted that 'the working people' would rebuild the Union in the near future.

According to leader of the newly-established Union of Communist Parties - CPSU (for Communist Party of the Soviet Union) Oleg Shenin, Ukrainian Communists and their post-Soviet comrades from across the CIS are planning to hold the 'Assembly of Peoples of the USSR' and sign a new 'union agreement' on February 1997 in Kyiv. Meanwhile, Ukrainian communists are facing a major challenge of the post-Soviet time represented by this country's first multi-party elections. The III (XXXI) congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine adopted the party's political agenda for the forthcoming race for seats at all levels of the legislative branch.

The manifesto, full of messianic ideas and accusations of 'international capital, first of all the USA, and their fifth column in the USSR and Ukraine' and 'anti-popular, pseudo-democratic, nationalist forces, promised to return 'happy childhood and well-provided old age', free health care and education, jobs and stable salaries, claiming that 90% of Ukrainians live in 'horrifying poverty', the number of population has decreased by 1.5 million within the recent years, and 40% of adults are unemployed. The facts, as well as proliferation of disease, drug and alcohol abuse, are blamed on the economic reform course, announced by President Kuchma in 1994. The executive power is also accused of the economic collapse, transformation of Ukraine into a 'banana republic without a future', and a 'puppet of NATO and Western financial institutions' (no distinction between political, military and financial institutions seems to be made).

According to the communists, 'restoration of capitalism' in Ukraine has resulted in 'unprecedented split-up of the society', 'terrible genocide of the people', 'destruction of production and de-industrialization', 'loss of independent supply of food', 'total criminalization of politics, economy, management, services', 'spiritual decay', 'destruction of unity of the state and the nation' and 'general crisis of state power and authorities'. Paradoxically, most of collective claimants of seats in the parliament point out to the same evils but, like communists, offer no credible solutions for them.

The communists cannot resist waving the banner of fighting corruption - the hottest slogan of this campaign. Routinely regretting the fate of 'talents' who are forced to 'either live in misery or emigrate', the comrades hypocritically omit Soviet-time facts of repressions against dissidents. On behalf of 'the people', Communists condemn the 'gang of information predators' who 'daily rape the country, killing intellect, will, memory, honor and dignity' (one might add 'of our epoch' to complete the Soviet propaganda catch-phrase).

Trying to justify their failures to implement the pledges made during the previous campaign, the manifesto claims that Communist, Socialist and Peasant members of the parliament have only one third of the vote and, therefore, cannot make a critical impact on the decisions adopted by the legislature. Meanwhile, unlike in the 1994 parliamentary elections, when the communists were the only united political force, their chances to win are less definite. Though, the communists do not give up. In their

election agenda, they set out the term - three to four years - they need to complete the transfer 'back to the USSR' from the 'policy of colonization, destruction and poverty'.

Specifically, the agenda declares that only a 'radical change of political and social-economic course will save Ukraine and its people.' According to the manifesto, conditions of salvation of this country are as follows: 'liquidation of the anti-popular regime and giving the power back to the working people in the form of Councils of working people's deputies; transition to the Socialist way of development, restoration of the society of justice and humanism; voluntary creation of an equal Union of Brother Peoples.' These populist slogans do not bother to hide the calls for liquidation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

Furthermore, the comrades call for abolition of the Ukrainian constitution (adopted with so much struggle in June 1996 and viewed as one of major achievements of the current power) and adoption of a new constitution based on principles declared by Communists to be 'true'. Note: the constitution as the Fundamental Law never used to be perceived as something constant, and had been changed three times during the Soviet rule. Other plans of the 'global improvement' include giving political and election rights to 'working collectives', redistribution of power and positions by means of 'removing all bureaucrats, bribe-takes, reducing the apparatus and cancel their benefits'.

In order to restore 'sound spiritual life', Communists demands to 'stop the spree of anti-Communism, propaganda of nationalism and chauvinism'.

According to Communists, the way to overcome the economic crisis is rather simple: it includes 'stopping privatization', 'inventarization of privatized property and giving them back to the state property', 'priority of public ownership of means of production', 'constitutional recognition of the land as the national asset and prevention of turning it into an object of sale'. As the utmost remedy for the ailing economy, the communists propose to return to central planning. The proposal is accompanied by obscure references to 'directive planning' for the state-owned sector and 'indicative planning with inclusion of it into the national plan of economic and social development' for the independent sector.

Other ideas are likely to set anxiety among all Ukrainians whose earnings exceed the official poverty level and deter any business initiative: 'nationalization of the banking system and other credit and finance institutions', and a possible version of prodrazverstka (forced expropriation of any products produced by peasants over an established minimum during initial decades of the Soviet power): 'to ensure the adoption of a system of measures, up to repressions, to ensure the return of hard currency, stolen from the people and smuggled from the state.

A number of other economic pledges - like the vow to 'repay indexed (i.e., multiplied in accordance with inflation rates) labor-generated savings to all', 'establish socially affordable fixed prices for food, medicine, communal services' are simply unendorsable. 'Raising labor-generated incomes of the population simultaneously with introduction of unchangeable and decreasing prices of basic products, goods and communal services.' These benefits, borrowed from the Stalin era, are possible only if the state possesses immense resources (like selling Soviet oil in 1970s) and/or uses slave labor (like unpaid work of collective farmers and millions of political prisoners in 1930s-1950s).

The alternative to the current situation in Ukraine, proposed by the communists in case they do come to power, looks rather gloomy. Political parties that do not subscribe to the Communist ideas will be outlawed. Accusations of 'nationalism' will open the way to persecution and political repressions against any group that does not meet the communists' understanding of 'internationalism'. The 'national manufacturer' will be defended from 'foreign intervention' by the state. "Speculation" (i.e., resale for making profit) will be banned, and production and consumption will be put under strict state and "working people's" control. State owned enterprises and kolkhoz's will be granted subsidies, loans, taxation benefits, state-sponsored investment and state orders for their products. Private businesses will be forced to finance the communists' commitments of fixed low prices and boosted social benefits. The right to exist will be given only to 'private manufacturers who do not exploit others' labor'. Ukraine's participation in the Partnership for Peace and the Ukraine-NATO charter will be annulled. 'Criminals guilty of breaking down the state, robbing the working people and stealing the public property' will be prosecuted. In direct violation of the freedom of speech, the communists promise to 'establish people's control over the mass media, particularly over television and radio broadcasting'.

Who do the communists see as their allies? The 'Leninist Communist Party of Ukraine' extends an invitation to join it under the red banner to 'left-wing parties, trade unions, patriotic, veterans', youth, Chornobyl, Afghan, scientific, creative and other organizations' in order to create a 'salvation front' against the current executive branch, as well as 'Rukh, the Agrarian party,... the People's Democratic Party,... the Liberal party and others'. The above parties are known for their pro-presidential positions.

As Ukrainian political analysts often put it, in order to secure massive support of voters and the West in the elections, Leonid Kuchma needs a proper Ukrainian version of Gennady Zyuganov. True, Zyuganov's Ukrainian counterpart Petro Symonenko displays neither charisma nor zeal of the Russian Communist leader. And yet, although the communists' victory in the parliamentary elections is unlikely, the new version of the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' shows that they mean serious attack on Ukraine's emergent democratic and pro-market gains. Being practically banned from the national electronic media and aggressively attacked by parties of almost the whole political spectrum, the communists have to radicalize their agenda. Otherwise they will face the threat of losing their voters to other left-wingers and even left-centrists who are in better financial and operational position to support populist slogans with pre-election gifts to their constituencies like refurbishing schools, donating medicine to hospitals and serving free lunches to the elderly and the poor, which are far more convincing than the bare vows to save.