

December 02, 2004

LETTER: Ukraine deserves a new president

I was very pleased to see Dr. Konobeev's comment on Ukrainian Presidential elections in the Nov. 30 Daily. It clearly reflects the misunderstanding of processes in Ukraine by a minority of Russian people and a majority of its government. I believe this is the direct outcome of listening only to the official Russian media and not hearing what others have to say. Let's consider several aspects of the issue.

I believe the comparison of the United States and Ukrainian societies is inappropriate because they have several major differences. The American people trust the election system, have a balanced representation of candidates in the media and are free in their choices. In the Ukrainian election, government officers from the top to the bottom participated in massive fraud.

The state media devoted 90 percent of the total time to showing the prime minister in a good light or the opposition leader, Yushchenko, in an awful light. Government officials on all levels openly forced their subordinates to vote for Yanukovich. Also, Yushchenko was poisoned by his opponents several weeks before the first round.

If a fraction of this happened in the United States, the entire country would stand up and defend the basic right to vote. Ukraine has this right too.

Konobeev is not right stating that Yushchenko "has lost two rounds of elections in a row." His victory by 0.55 percent in the first round was recognized even by the Central Election Commission. This happened on the 10th day after the elections took place. In 10 days, or half the time between rounds, the Commission counted 3 percent of votes to keep Yushchenko out of the race.

Members of the Iowa State Ukrainian Club also participated in the elections. They drove six hours to Chicago to cast their votes and returned the same day. Twelve people went the first time, and 21 went the second time. It was a real celebration of freedom and freedom of choice. A vast majority of the voters in Chicago voted for change.

People on the streets in Ukraine protect their rights for freedom and pray for peace. The color orange, a symbol of this revolution, means a peaceful but inevitable change. People buy tickets to get to Kiev with the last of their money to join protests. Others contribute significant amount of money or bring food, medical supplies and clothing to help the people on the streets.

I believe Ukraine deserves Yushchenko as its leader. I am very proud of my nation and its ability to protect the basic rights. I hope our people will defeat the crooked government peacefully and fast. This revolution is not about going East or West. It is about freedom and self-identification of the Ukrainian nation. Only under these conditions will the "beauty" so admired by Alexey will flourish, and will the "potential" develop.

From the bottom of my heart, I hope Konobeev will be able to take the opportunity of being in the United States and see the other side and not blindly follow the "official" Russian media, controlled by President Vladimir Putin. I also trust Konobeev will find the inner strength and analyze issues from several angles. If we have a re-vote, I offer Alexey to join members of the Iowa State Ukrainian Club and go to Chicago to see the inspired and determined people voting for their future.

Mykola Sarazhynskyy

President

Iowa State Ukrainian Club

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