

In the current election campaign it seems more effective to be a democrat than a European

Vol. 4, No. 103, February 23, 1998

Election programs of the election bloc "European Choice of Ukraine" (Ukrainian Peasant Democratic Party and Liberal-Democratic Party of Ukraine) and of the "Bloc of Democratic Parties - NEP" (Democracy. Economy. Order.) - Democratic party of Ukraine and the Party of Economical Revival. Comparative Analysis.

Two independent institutions - "Democratic Initiatives" Foundation and Socis Gellup organization - have recently conducted sociological polls, the results of which were published in Ukraina Moloda on February 12, 1998. According to their data both analyzed electoral blocs have little chances for victory. According to the "Democratic Initiatives" "NEP" can count on 1,9% of the votes, and the "European Choice of Ukraine" - only on 0,1%. More optimistic forecast for "NEP" suggests Socis Gellup's poll - 2%, but they contain no information on the "European Choice of Ukraine". Indubitable leader is Communist Party of Ukraine - communists attain around 17% of the vote so far. Obviously, the results of sociological polls are not final yet and a lot could change till the elections take place on March 29, 1998. It reminds of the situation around presidential elections of 1991, when the fragmentation of the democratic forces brought the former nomenclature leader into power. Nowadays this situation has worsened - the variety of the democratic forces increased immensely. Among the parties and election blocs, running for the seats in the parliament, seven contain the word "democracy" in their names. It has been said long time ago already, that an average voter will have a lot of trouble understanding who is more democratic.

While comparing the election programs of the "NEP" and the "European Choice", one can see the overall similarity of their aims. Even their slogans, being put in different wording, are similar.

At first sight the "NEP"'s program, written in more popular style and arranged in the parts, seems to be more realistic. The "European Choice of Ukraine" bloc's program evidently was formulated according to the old communist pattern, it strongly reminds "Appeals of the Central Committee of the CPSU" on 1st of May event, or on the next anniversary of the October upheaval. Besides, numerous fashionable, however, hardly understandable words are overwhelming this program. While "NEP" states that "Only united people of Ukraine are able to win", the "European Choice" starts its program with the story about "The only possible integral (uniting) idea for Ukrainians..." One can be sure, that most of the voters do not understand that the parties mean the same.

Both parties' program provisions devoted to the administrative and judicial reform seem to be written by the same person, who worked hard on the different wording of the same thoughts and ideas, to make sure that nobody understands the "trick". To be accurate, it should be mentioned that the "European Choice" promises to intensify control functions of the parliament over the government's activities, and also promises to "re-orientate the power vertical on the implementation of the representative, supervision, control and initiative functions" (do authors themselves understand what they are talking about?). At the same time "NEP" emphasise the law observance by all citizens regardless of the position occupied, ensuring the freedom of the press and true assertion of the rights of the Crimean autonomy. Both blocs pledge to implement the judicial reform and grant the local self-governance the status of full value, according to the provisions of the European Charter.

Both blocs necessitate to end the demagoguery about economic reform and start the real work. The voters are promised to benefit from the simplified tax system, land privatization and assurance of the payment (settlement) and budget discipline at all levels. The "NEP" and the "European Choice" pledge to introduce minimum wages at the following rates: the "European Choice" - 1 hryvnya per hour and the "NEP" - 1.5 hryvnias per hour (may be, this is the reason of the "NEP"'s prevalence over the "European Choice"?). However, none of the candidates points out the way and the costs they are going to employ to fulfill their promises. In this sense the "NEP" program substantially contrasts the program of their competitors - the authors hint that they have the idea how to implement their promises. This is the part where the most engaging difference in the programs of both parties could be noticed. It's not

the difference in the approach to the issue. The variance is purely philological, but at the same time it could ensure more votes for the "NEP" than for "Europeans". The key verbs of the "European Choice" party program are formulated in imperative infinitive - 'to overcome', 'to guarantee', 'to abolish', while the "NEP" program comprises of the verbs in the 3rd person of the future time - 'we will provide', 'we will conduct', 'we will fight for', 'we will create', etc. According to the psychologists and philologists, this particular verb form is close to the most attractive for the potential voters, especially for that part of the electorate, that is not a priori hostile and is still undecided whom to give the vote for.

Notwithstanding the name of the bloc, the "European Choice" failed to allocate enough attention in its program to the foreign policy: only few generals and vague phrases at the very end of the program define their views in this realm. Such final clauses as 'United Ukraine in united Europe!', '...Let us give the nation the possibility to become a real European entity' provides for less essence, than the authors themselves would like to embed in these statements. This does not add anything new to the 'pro-European' Ukrainian West, while missing clauses about 'closer ties with Russia' (requisite in the East and South of Ukraine), might result in the loss of votes for "Europeans" in those regions.

"NEP" has more explicit foreign policy theses, and what is particularly important, their program contains balanced statements: the assertion for 'drawing closer to the EU countries' compensates with the provision of 'strengthening Ukraine's role and influence in the CIS, Baltic and Black Sea regional cooperation'. One can claim being more catholic than Pope himself, proving one is "pro-European" inclinations, but this will doubtfully work in current election campaign, unless supported by 'pro-Russian' statements.

The closing part of the "NEP"'s election program advantageously differs from the final clauses of the "European Choice"'s, which mostly are vague and hardly reasonable. Introducing eleven prior draft laws, that will be initiated by the deputies from "NEP", substantially strengthens their program. It's worth stressing that none of the blocs points out the ways of fulfilling their election promises. And... they are absolutely right doing so - it's well known that voters do not care how pledges will be kept or how the tasks will be fulfilled. The most important for the voter seems to be WHAT is seen as the aim. Presumably, the aspiration of MP's (to be) from the "NEP" to initiate the consideration of such priority draft laws as 'On Payments', 'On Pensions', 'Tax Code' and (!) 'The Law on the Crimean Autonomous Republic' will allow them to go beyond the western Ukrainian traditional framework, typical for national-democrats. This might well be one of the aims of Mr. Yavorivsky and his colleagues within the "NEP" bloc.

Regarding the "European Choice" the perspective seems to be less attractive: Ukraine is not ready yet to go for this specific 'European choice' today.