

TRANSCRIPT

"TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS, AND TANTALIZING POSSIBILITIES IN THE NEW UKRAINE"

A Conversation With Svitlana Zolishchuk

Moderator: Leonard Benardo

ANNOUNCER:

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LEONARD BENARDO:

Thank you all very much for coming. I'm Leonard Benardo with the Eurasia program and the Open Society Fellowship and other stuff. And it's a real honor to be here with Svitlana Zolishchuk from Kiev. Many of you have heard, perhaps incessantly, (NOISE) George Soros talking about Ukraine as the new Ukraine. And we're gonna talk a little bit about what that means, this-- this new Ukraine.

But, if anyone embodies-- is an exemplar of-- the new Ukraine it is-- it's-- it's Svitlana. And it's-- it's-- it's wonderful that she's able to-- to speak with us about the, sort of, recent goings-on in Kiev. On-- Svitlana, as you saw from her bio-- has been in the first sector, the second sector, the third sector, the fourth estate, she's done it all. But, what's really interesting is how she's transitioned as someone who was a founder of Centre UA, who was-- an anchorperson-- covering the events in the Maidan.

In 2004, the Orange Revolution for channel five-- who's done so much is now a member of Parliament-- is now a member of Parliament, the Rada-- in Kiev, as are a number of other very significant journalists and civic activists. And this is something different, frankly. You don't find in most revolutionary situations-- activists who are able to, with full confidence and integrity, join the power structure. And that transition is a profound one. It's a profound one for a variety of reasons that-- that

we will discuss.

And I thought that-- Svitlana and I would just have a, sort of, maybe 20 minutes or so where we would discuss-- events of the day and some of these larger issues at hand. And then, we would open it up to, I'm sure, the surfeit of questions from all of you. So, welcome Svitlana.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Thank you so much for this kind introduction.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Absolutely. So Svitlana, maybe we start just with this question of the new Ukraine. George Soros has written abundantly, passionately, obsessively (LAUGH) about this thing, the new Ukraine. Do you buy into what you think he's calling the new Ukraine? Is there a new Ukraine? What-- what-- what's it all about?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

First of all, I'm happy that I'm not standing in-- in between-- you and lunch. So I (LAUGHTER) don't feel this pressure. Well, I think that in order to explain this concept of what is new Ukraine, the best way is to, probably, describe it through it's-- it's-- my personal example.

Last year ago-- one year ago, I was running (UNINTEL) that was prosecuted. And in December, the President, the last government, (COUGH) (UNINTEL) government, opened a criminal aga-- a criminal case against us. One year ago, we was the organization that was making a documentary film about the biggest-- biggest symbol of corruption in Ukraine, which is a presidential residence, called Mezhyhirya.

It's a palace, huge palace, one of the biggest, I don't know, that was stolen by the president from the Ukrainian state. One year ago, we lived in a country where the leaders of a positions were imprisoned. Now, they are my colleagues in the Parliament. One year ago, I was one of the activists that was-- advocating for a number of the reforms, legislations that were, mostly, devoted to our European integration, to our new strategicals.

Now, I'm a person that is sitting in the Parliament and, actually, have an opportunity to vote on them, finally. After ten years of lobbying, advocating, campaigning for-- for example, road custom system, public road custom system and-- which we believe, as journalists-- I'm a former journalist, that it had become an (UNINTEL) for our independent journalism-- in Ukraine.

So I think, this is part of it, a part of-- new Ukraine. And I have to tell you, it's even more that now, just recently, we had Parliamentary elections, basically, five month

ago, four month ago. And 56% of those people who made it to the Parliament is for the first time (COUGH) in politics. Also, we have 11% of women in the Parliament. It's only 2% more than in the previous Parliament, but nevertheless, it's a small increase. And we also happy about it.

I also have to say that-- 30% of those people, who used to be the candidates for the Parliamentary elections, they were under 35. And this a impressive generati-- generational shift that you feel even-- that you feel everywhere, basically.

In-- and now, we are with a delegation of Ukrainian members of the Parliament in U.N. On the 59th session that his devoted to women issues. And most of our delegation speak English. And this is also one of the shifts that we were expecting as-- as a new generation in Ukraine, to have our leaders be-- internationally-- inclu-- engaged, to be internationally-- (NOISE) represented. I will start with that.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Fantastic. Those-- that's all good. So 11% women?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah.

LEONARD BENARDO:

I think, for sure, that's more than the U.S. Senate and, maybe, even the House of Representatives.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Maybe.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I would agree-- but, I don't know.

LEONARD BENARDO:

It's probably. Svitlana, thank you for that. Basically, then, your answer to my opening salvo (?) about what is this new Ukraine, you just described it. Right? 56%-- new members in the Rada. (NOISE) The-- the other 44% are really terrible. But, the 50-- (LAUGHTER) as we know. But, that 56% new members-- fantastic. What is it

like, then, for you?

I remember, Svitlana was at a dinner we had in Kiev a couple of months ago in which there were all representatives-- this, sort of, (UNINTEL) from all different sectors, many of who are now in Parliament. What is it-- one question that Mustafa Nayyem raised at the dinner was this question of how one affords to be in Parliament. Right?

The salary of a Rada Deputy-- is not significant. And the salary of-- a journalist, or as you were (NOISE) both-- an investigative journalist, an anchorperson, clearly, or even as the Executive Director of Centre UA, was clearly-- is clearly-- significantly higher. And since corruption remains such a profound, malevolent force in Ukraine, how does that all work? How do these incredible activists, like you, passionate, who led this, some call it a revolution, some call it other-- whatever, sort of, reform movement, how do-- how do you make that happen?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

I have to say that, you know, in Ukraine, we are talking not about-- not about progress even. But, we are talking about survival on these days. We're in war with Russia, with one of the most powerful countries in the world, in the East. And at the same time, we are also have another front, and this front is with our old system. Because I have to tell you that it's not up to the new President and new government and new Parliament to change the country. It's about how civil society, how citizens can change the country. And it's the most difficult part, you know.

Just by-- p-- putting the-- electing a new President, and by having new Parliament, who's voting a new legislation, it doesn't mean that the culture has changed and the mentality and the-- all this Rada institutions starting working from the very same day differently. That's not true. And it will take, probably, decades to overcome this soviet gravity that we had-- to overcome this old culture and to teach people-- with new skills, new knowledges, new approaches.

Because when-- you know, when I come to our communal services office and I say, "Excuse me, my water doesn't work." And they don't say, "Oh, really. Oh, okay. Let me help you." They would, (LAUGH) "Okay. So what's-- it's-- you know, it-- the Maidan-- Maidan didn't change that particular approach. And this is what our life is about-- is about these small pieces that is creating the whole picture.

But-- at the same time, the burden on our sh-- on our shoulders is very heavy. And the responsibility, actually, is, (NOISE) and this is what-- how we understand it, it's either-- this is our big opportunity to build our new country and to succeed and to-- to realize our European idea. Because I have to remind you (NOISE) that this is the only nation in the whole European Union who died for European values. I mean, we were standing with eu-- European flags and we-- with European slogans, with European stickers on ourselves, ready to sacrifice with our lives because we b-- we believe in it, even probably more than-- some-- some European countries-- countries do.

So talking about the-- the salary. It's an interesting fact. I'm getting-- I'll tell you, it's \$180 per month now. Why? Because the depreciation/inflation cycle is-- is horrible. Our currency devaluated-- let me say with-- four times--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Four hundred-- 465%

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly, in recent months, so I was getting, I don't know, ten, 20 times more-- being in my prev-- in my previous capacity. So taking this choice, it was a very clear understanding that it's my-- I didn't-- financially, it's a big sacrifice for me.

And I don't know-- I wouldn't be able to find, probably, in the United States or somewhere-- somewhere else in Europe, young people having several languages with they-- having their fellowship in Stanford, who would say, "Okay, now I'm ready to-- to-- to get 20 times less just because I-- I-- I want-- so-- but, I-- I just want to underline with that. (NOISE) That, yes, for many of us, it's just a clear understanding that it's our country that f-- we were waiting for this window of opportunity for years and years, that we were-- we have experienced censorship and we chose freedom of speech, that we have experienced political persecution and we chose political ex-- freedom of expression, that we have experienced-- I don't know.

When we were-- put into the prisons, many activists were, and-- and we chose-- political competition. So this is how it works. It works on the-- on this huge enthusiasm of people in politics-- the new people in politics, (NOISE) but also in society. Just giving you one small fact that our army in the beginning of this military conflict was completely, I don't know, (NOISE) non-existent I would say.

It was-- devastated. It was robbed. It-- it was not-- it was not there. But, with volunteers all around the country, who decided that they want to be soldiers and who voluntarily went into the army, with many, many citizens who donated, maybe for the first time in their life, a lot of money to support the army. Now, we at least can say that we are an-- have an army that can fight with Russian (BACKGROUND VOICE) Federation.

And really, I know that the culture here in U.S., it's completely different. And it's difficult to believe that, probably, in Ukraine for 20 years of independence, it was the first time when people donated so much money for different kind of causes, for wounded, for those who-- families who lost their-- their members of the families, for-- to support army and for-- for other issues.

LEONARD BENARDO:

And-- and-- and how-- how is it, in your estimations Svitlana, that people can, at the same time, like you, go about their daily activities, in this case, working as a Parliamentarian, working on reform legislation, trying to create-- a sort of, non-corrupt, more accountable.

(NOISE) More transparent government, but at the same time, there's war. How d-- how d-- I mean, it's w-- from an outsider's perspective, it seems improbable how you're able to, kind of, juggle those realities and still be able to suc-- succeed.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Well, you're right. We are-- as I've said, we are fighting on two fronts. One is in the East. Another one is internal fight. But, these two battles, they are independent. I mean, yes, we've-- having this humanitarian crisis and military conflict in the East. It's much more difficult to implement the reforms because it gets all the resources all the time or attention or people's minds and so on.

But, at the same time, the only way, this is what we believe, to win this war is to make our European idea succeed. Because in the-- it's, you know-- in fact, Putin doesn't want to control just eastern part of Ukraine, Luhansk and Donetsk region. It's about making European idea fail in the country.

And so, (COUGH) we believe in the longer time perspective, that reunification-- reuniting of the-- of people, territories, Crimea, eastern part, if you have a base on the-- people's will to live better life. And it's up to us to ensure that there is this better life. And it's up to us to make it with our legislation, with our accountable government, and-- with all this reform process that we are talking about.

But, at the same time, the role of international community is absolutely crucial. And I'm not just talking about finance because I believe that money doesn't have to be the ransom for a real leadership. And as we know, since the World War II, they-- it's for the first time, when the-- the international security system, the-- the principle-- the core basis of the international system were violated by Russian Federation.

And I'm talking about this (THROAT CLEAR) sacred cow, as we call it, I mean, this redline. And it's a territorial integrity. But at the same time, we see that not in United Nations, nor Council of Europe, nor-- organiza-- OSC can, actually, help it, nor NATO, by the way. Right?

So we are-- we feel that we are in front of this big, big challenge. And sometimes, we're alone there. And--

LEONARD BENARDO:

But have they failed to live up to their mandate, whether-- I mean, NATO, obviously

doesn't have a mandate in Ukraine. But, these organizations you mentioned, OSC or Council of Europe, UN, are they-- are they failing to do what's necessary for Ukraine? Certainly, George Soros thinks that. Do-- do-- do you also?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

They're opportunities-- their opportunities and they're missions are very respected. And, you know, having (COUGH) the aggressor-- in the seat of the security council, who has veto on all of the decision, I'm talking about Russia in security-- council of United Nations-- does not-- cannot help-- cannot help-- the situation.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Right. But, just in terms of, say, (NOISE) the European Union or the U.S. government, they have the capacity-- political challenges to one side to-- allocate an extraordinary amount of money to support-- (NOISE) a country, whose economy, as I think you very fairly said, is-- is imploding.

They also have the capacity to political-- challenges to one side-- provide weapons-- to allow Ukraine to more effectively-- some might argue, defend itself. H-- has the U.S.-- has-- has the European Union, in your estimation-- not lived up to-- what it should be doing?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

I remember it's-- Roosevelt who had this-- foreign-policy mantra. He said that you have to speak softly and carry a big stick. And I think that this is what that does to Ukraine, but just reversed. You know? And-- (BACKGROUND VOICE)

LEONARD BENARDO:

Small stick.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah. (BACKGROUND VOICE) And speak loudly. (LAUGHTER) Yeah. Express a lot of-- a lot of disturbance and--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--other-- other things like this. But, yes, you're right. I mean, economically, we-- we face huge challenges in-- in economy as well. As you know, we have-- we have the biggest economic crisis since-- all right-- in decades. And-- I just prepared these numbers. But recently, (THROAT CLEAR) IMF, International Monetary Fund assessed Ukraine's total budget deficit at 10% of GDP.

And the bubble debt is skyrocketing and-- from 41% of GDP at the end of 2015. And now, we have-- approximately closer to 70% of GDP debt. And-- the bank system is collapsing. A lot of banks have been closed. Me, personally, I have two accounts in different banks and they bankrupted. (LAUGH) But--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Not-- not (UNINTEL).

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

No. Not through us. (LAUGH)

LEONARD BENARDO:

You know, why don't you put your money in (UNINTEL)?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Well, it's--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Okay.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

I was not-- I was not that progressively th-- thinking. (LAUGHTER) However-- however, there was-- as you know, there was a positive news from IMF and-- two weeks-- ago, I believe, IMF-- made the statement that they are ready, together with other countries, the U.S., European Union, to give Ukraine, approximately, \$40 billion of support in the form of-- extended-- extended-- facility-- I forgot this-- (UNINTEL) extended fund facility, yes-- program for four years.

And-- this money considered by government to be enough to start the reforms and to

be able to survive in this-- hostile economic-- situation. Talking about the weapon, absolutely right, as you know, this discussion is very-- very important for Ukraine in the moment. As I said, our army was-- a weak-- a weak place in our-- in our government-- in our state system.

And-- but, to-- to-- today, in the morning, I read the news that Obama met Merkel and he publicly made a statement (COUGH) that he will not going to give a lethal weapon to Ukraine after this conversation with Angela Merkel. Because they want to keep-- more space for peaceful negotiations and-- political dialogue.

At the same time, as you know, Ukrainian political leadership, together with Parliament, me personally, I was voting-- an appeal to U.S.-- Congress-- Senate and to also White House so that they consider to give Ukraine-- state weapon. And first of all, it's-- I'm ta-- we are-- your talking about defensive weapon, not-- offensive, but defensive weapon, which is also very important.

I'll tell you that after Minsk Agreement, it was the-- agreement that was done a couple of weeks ago, together with Russia, (UNINTEL) with-- (UNINTEL) and-- Putin. And everyone signed after-- this Minsk agreement, which is-- has to ensure further peaceful making process. But-- after signing this agreement, we lost (UNINTEL) and it's a very important territory, which has this (UNINTEL), not (NOISE) (UNINTEL) possibilities for Separatists, both Pro-Russians-- forces to bring in more weapon on this occupied territories.

Why did we lose it (COUGH) after already signing the peaceful agreement? Because we just didn't have enough of the weapon to defend this territory. (NOISE) We had our soldiers there. They were controlling the territory. But, in three days after the peaceful agreement, that was a key point, key area for Separatists.

And they managed with-- by the way-- it was a statement done by American Ambassador. Just probably the next day after this peaceful agreement was signed that after this s-- after this signing-- Russian Federation brought more heavy weaponry, the most modern weaponry in the world was delivered into that territory in order to help Separatists to-- fight for the territory. So dep-- defensive weapon is crucial.

And we still keep on asking-- the West to help us. Because in the end, el-- I-- I believe that whether-- we will be able to succeed, only with the help of international community. And moreover, I would say, I'm not sure that this is-- we are the last country who suffered from this soviet gravity, which is embodied in this Russian ambition of building (NOISE) Eurasian economic union. And-- without-- we are on the front line, of course. But, once again, there is Estonia. There Latvia. There is (UNINTEL). There's Lithuania. We're still keeping-- worried about their futures as well.

LEONARD BENARDO:

So-- so, maybe, Svitlana, just-- you can-- you can speak more pragmatically for a

second to talk about some successes that you, as a Parliamentarian, have seen-- participated in over the course over the last number of months, to get some sense that despite all this abiding, and sadly, en-- enduring tragedy-- in the East with Crimea.

What happened with the (UNINTEL) et cetera, that in fact, life has not only gone on, but the reforms that-- so many-- active-- and engaged citizens and parliamentarians are working towards have come to fruition. Maybe if you just wanna share some-- some good news with us.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah. Thank you. It's-- important to deliver also good news. First and most important, as after Yanukovich, after we kicked off this former President out of our country, we managed to conduct, finally, free and fair elections. And we-- elected our new President, Petro Poroshenko. And also a couple of month ago, we conducted Parliamentary elections that was also acknowledged by the international community that it's our free and fair elections.

It's very important record for Ukraine. I know, but maybe, it's different and it's strange to hear from many of you who are sitting here, but in-- for the 20 years in Ukraine, it was probably-- not those of many's who were really fair and-- and fair.

Secondly-- in last several month, (THROAT CLEAR) we also managed to adopt number of the packages of the revolutionary or-- and very important legislation. First of all, I will be talking about anti-corruption package of-- of-- of laws. They started-- the department started to vote in it-- in Summer. And just recently, we-- finished this anti-corruption reform that is one of the best, actually, in terms of how it's written on-- on paper, at least. It's one of the best in Europe.

Now, of course, it's not the end. But, it's just the beginning. The paradigm shift that-- before, as an activist, for example, we were thinking about the legislation in terms of its avocation-- advocating-- avocation. (THROAT CLEAR) Because we could advocate for the laws for years and years, for example, as for freedom of-- for-- of information bill. We were advocating it for five years let's say.

But now, we are at the point where it's not enough just to advocate and to vote in it. But, the most important phase will start to implement it. Well, but-- together with that, I have to also say that we established anti-corruption bureau in Ukraine, which had-- will be elected. Once again, it's for the first time in the modern history of Ukraine. It will be elected by an independent commission that was formed out of, let's say-- the biggest authorities in our country, I mean, civil society activists and some professors and some-- some investigative journalists that are well-known and-- not corrupt of course-- and independent.

So it's for the first time on this had-- of so-- a high ranki-- so-- so-- important institution as anti-corruption bu-- bureau will be elected not based on the loyalty to the President or to the Prime Minister or to someone else. And it gives us hope that--

LEONARD BENARDO:

But, there's still-- there's still no director yet?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

They d-- promised that it's gonna be-- he's gonna be appointed next week.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Next week, okay. (UNINTEL)--

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yes. So it's-- it's a process. They elected-- four candidates already. It's the last phase of this competition.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Because it's very open. Once again, I-- I'll tell you, it's probably sounds as something small and-- not small. (LAUGH)

LEONARD BENARDO:

Not small.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

But, for us, it's really-- it's like a new reality. Because we have never experienced this kind of-- policy making and this kind of appointing of the key positions in the country in such-- an open and transparent way, where-- where anyone can see, can control, can check the information. This is what gives us this independent (NOISE) leadership that would be able to find, finally-- this corruption. So, for me, this anti-corruption package is the key. Because it's the-- it's the strongest glue that kept this old system together in our country, it was corruption.

Now also-- we managed to adopt a couple of very important laws in-- in the media-

sphere (?). as I've said, it was freedom of information bill and also public-- public road customs system and-- some other legislation, some other laws. Whether it w-- whether they work or not, I will tell you a small example (LAUGH) which would give you an understand of what-- how-- how it-- how it works like. So for five years as an activist and-- (THROAT CLEAR) and journalist, we were fighting so that our members of the Parliament disclosed their declaration on assets, like-- I don't whether you have that-- income statement-- right.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Oh, yeah, definitely have that.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

So (UNINTEL) close information for the public. You could never-- you-- you-- we were suing MPs because in-- in accordance with legislation, they had to, sort of, do it. But, finally, when we were running during these Parliamentary elections it was our demand and huge campaign. And finally, we achieved the point where all MPs disclosed their declaration. And that's so you can easily open our site of our Parliament and-- (NOISE) and conceit (?) victory.

But, we have the head of our (UNINTEL) over whole new Rada-- of-- of the Parliament, who is the key-- bureaucrat, the head of all this-- I mean, system. And once again, for years and years, he was refusing to do that, together with f-- even-- even-- ignoring journalist's-- information requests.

And so, he did just a couple weeks ago, by violating all the legislation by not (UNINTEL) actually-- a little bit different type of (UNINTEL) political (UNINTEL). So what I did when journalists told me that, I wrote my MP-- (UNINTEL) I do not know how to translate it correctly. But, it has, sort of, a stages where he can't refuse me to open this information.

But, he also ignored it. So then, I called his staff and I said that if tomorrow morning, I don't have this (NOISE) information, I'm-- we're gonna to-- consider this situation on our anti-corruption committee. And it'll set the motion for the resi-- re-- resignation of-- of this-- of this per-- of this person. Next morning, (SNIFF) the papers were on my table. And finally, we disclose this to media and it was a huge news all over the Ukraine immediately, finally, finally (LAUGH), we won this small battle.

But, what I'm tell-- what I'm trying to tell, even laws that we are adopting in the voting hole, sometimes, are not being implemented in the neighboring room, (LAUGH) you know. And it's ridiculous on the one hand. And you have to invest a lot of efforts (SNEEZE) and energy in getting this-- even this piece of information that, logically, you would expect that all of them would be ready and-- willing to give you.

Because they-- once again, they're living in different country. They're living in a country where people sacrifice their lives for having this-- for having this different-- different life. So this is-- a little bit about how it's working.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Svitlana, right on. That's phenomenal. Could I just-- before we, maybe, move to-- to questions from our colleagues and comments, just-- ask you one difficult question.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Please. So those were easy, right? (LAUGHTER)

LEONARD BENARDO:

No. No. No. I meant difficult as in, sort of, maybe impossible to answer. You know, (LAUGHTER) well-- once upon a time, you know, in Central Ameri-- in, like, the Central American countries--

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah.

LEONARD BENARDO:

--there were-- there were people, whether it was-- whether it was in-- (NOISE) El Salvador or-- or-- or Honduras, Nicaragua, people would say that these countries, the only way for there to be any-- actual-- change for the better required a revolution. Like, revolutions were over-determined.

So what happened with, like, FML, and FSL and-- these were over-determined revolutionary movements in order to sweep away the vestiges of the past that could never be done by reform. And people who are-- revolutionaries by this position or orientation or mindset or whatever, are those that, often, believe that change, theories of change, have to come by virtue of full-on transformation.

The reform will never work because it will always be stolen back by the structures, corrupt or otherwise, that pre-exist that change. Right? Some-- in some-- in-- in some democratic societies, of course, you know, reform is the order of the day. You don't need a revolution because there is enough-- maneuverability to be able to change-- policies or statutes or regulations or laws through a process.

So my question then is, in Ukraine, at the end of the day, do you, actually, need to so sweep away the vestiges of that old order, so that those oligarchs-- whose names we

will not-- except for Kolomoyskyi, Pinchuk, Akhmetov-- and Firtash, (LAUGH) do we need to, actually, find some capacity to-- laboto-- to-- to just cut off their heads and to cut off their-- their-- their-- their-- their, sort of-- that-- that evil carapace (?) that they control, that-- that will continue to distort and malign the system and all the profound work that you and your colleagues are doing, will always be interrupted. Or can we just do it by reform?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Well, (SIGH) you know, I really believe that this is enhanced of our President and Prime Minister (NOISE) and leaders of our parties of the coalition in the Parliament. And if they don't understand it or underestimate it, it's their heads that will be cut off, even if not-- I mean, politically.

Because it's the only way to ensure these reforms, is to, basically, divide-- take out money from-- of-- oligarch money-- oligarchy money from-- from politics. This is the only way to start this-- to ensure this new reign that George Soros-- is talking about. (NOISE)

But, talking about revolutions, I think we are done with the revolutions in Ukraine already. Because we had it in 1991, when Soviet Union was collapsing. And our students from many Universities-- we had so-called-- revolution on the granite, on the stones. When people were sitting just on the pavements and were protesting, were striving for-- for independence of our country.

We had this revolution in 2004. When we supported-- free and fair elections, where we were fighting for-- for our free choice. (THROAT CLEAR) And finally, (THROAT CLEAR) it was-- the last one-- revolution, last year-- so-called, Euromaidan.

And I have to tell you that the biggest difference from previous revolutions probably, that this time, people were standing not for the new faces. And in fact, there was very difficult relationship between the state, where opposition of leaders were standing, and people in the streets. And it's not necessarily that the way-- went into the street, because of the leaders of opposition. But, they were rather, delegating-- and-- delegating (THROAT CLEAR) their voices so that, "Okay, we hire you for this positions, but you have to deliver."

So I'm trying to say that people were standing, not for the new faces, but for the new rules, even if-- I-- the worst people will be there. Whoever is there, they have to play not with the rules, but by the rules. And that's the-- the key characteristics. (NOISE) But, you're right. Now, we have to make these rules working. And I'm-- I'm-- I'm sure that you can ensure those rules only through good legislations, transparent and accountable pros-- process of reforming, and then, implementation.

We will have a lot of mistakes. But, as I think it's (UNINTEL) who used to say that it's better five years of mistakes than 50 years of sabotage, you know. So we will make a lot of failures. But, then we have to speak to people, y-- "Yes, this is-- we didn't know how to do that. And there are a lot of flaws in that process. But, we are ready

to try again and change it and, probably, fix it and go further." So reforms and political rule.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Svitlana, very inspiring, very, very inspiring. So if it's okay with you-- we have until around (THROAT CLEAR) 12:45, so we have time for questions and-- and comments (NOISE) from our-- friends and family. And also, we have people on the phone.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Great.

LEONARD BENARDO:

So-- I think Laura Silver, my colleague, who directs public affairs here.
(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

LAURA SILVER:

First of all, I just like to say that-- I got the latest stats on women in Congress. And it's-- 19% in the House and 20% in the women.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Twenty?

LAURA SILVER:

I know. It's crazy. Who would of thought? (LAUGH)

LEONARD BENARDO:

When did that happen?

LAURA SILVER:

Okay-- (BACKGROUND VOICE)

LEONARD BENARDO:

It's-- it's the Gillibrand effect. (LAUGH)

LAURA SILVER:

Okay. (BACKGROUND VOICE) I've got a couple of questions for you. Thanks, this has been fascinating. Svitlana, there's-- you're in fighting for rights and for-- although maybe not for progress because of the-- s-- situation in the East.

At the same time, do you feel that you come under pressure from people within Kiev, who say, "Wait a second. We can't worry about these problems of reform right now. We-- at stake, is our survival." So does that seem, almost, like a luxury to people? And do you worry about over time, if the situation remains this critical, how you'll be able to sustain the momentum? That's one question.

And the second question is-- on a different note, people who are critics of giving-- military support, even if their defense is weaponry to-- Ukraine, say, "You know what? It's just gonna make it the Russians angrier if-- if we do that, even if we're friends of Ukraine, we're actually gonna end up-- Ukraine's gonna be in a worse place.

Because, they-- they can't fight against-- they can't even protect themselves if-- Russia were to seriously-- to try an launch an attack." Say, "That they can't-- that there's nothing that Ukraine can do militarily. And that-- defensive weaponry-- weaponry won't function as a deterrent."

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Thank you so much. It's very good question. Well, first of all, about people's perception and people's attitude. I have-- we experience it with the previous revolution. When-- while you're going through this-- very dramatic and-- situation where-- during Euromaidan, we had 104 people-- were killed. And many of them were wounded, of course. Enough to that people's expectations are so high that it's impossible to satisfy with any political-- will and any progress that you have.

Because there's nothing to satisfy-- to satisfy or justify this loss of life, you know. And people are thinking-- in-- in-- in a different-- terms-- in a different-- on-- on-- in different way now. Because they expect from you (THROAT CLEAR) everything. And at the same time, everything is not enough. So for example, when I said that I-- for me, it was a sacrifice to go into the Parliament. Because I-- well, I don't get my salary normal. So my-- family has to support me financially. But-- I don't even say to people, because for them, it would be-- it would be still-- it's not an argument.

Because-- yeah, everyone is suffering financially. We are-- we are t-- facing a different type of challenge. So yes, there are a lot of critics, that a lot of misunderstanding. They-- I think that the rates of all of the politicians going down. And they will be. Because-- especially because of the situation in the East. And-- because of many

families have to send their sons and husbands and brothers. And they're afraid of their lives.

And at the same time, (THROAT CLEAR) as I've said, you expect changes. But, changes don't come fast. And even having this very well-- very well-done anti-corruption policy, the next day when you go to, I don't know, let's say, some-- business institution-- some authority that have to register you or to give you a license, it's those people somewhere in the regions on (UNINTEL), they will, probably, ask you for a bribe. Because they don't care what is going on there on the national level.

And these changes didn't reach up to that level. So people would say, "Okay, so what's the difference? We are paying more. They-- there is a division of (UNINTEL) and of our currency. And we lost four times the power, everything, of our assets. There is a war. We are sending our children to the war. So what is different?"

Just new faces on the screen? It's not-- it's not an argument for us. So I'm just trying to say-- in how-- in what kind of ambiance (?) we are-- we are leading. But, at the same time, we can't-- the only way to-- cope with it is to talk to people and explain. And it's very difficult. But, it's very painful sometimes.

They criticize you for everything, w-- even what you can't influence and you can't change and you can't impact. But, you have to understand that this is your work now. With regards to second question, I have to say that, personally, myself, I was, often, thinking about it. And in terms of whether this Western support-- support, in different-- ways, will escalate. And then, we'll have to-- to do that. But, (NOISE) at the same time, talking about hyb-- (UNINTEL) hybrid war in Ukraine. We underestimate hybrid part-- over-estimate and under-estimate war part. Because the level of the human deterrent disaster in Ukraine is enormous.

And even being in Kiev, you can't understand what kind of challenges you face. And I will give you a couple of example and a couple com-- comparisons. We lost Crimea, which is-- it was illegally annexed by Russian Federation. And it is half of-- it is a territory-- of-- half of-- the territory of Estonia, let's say, the whole country. And we have 250,000 Crimean Tatars living in Crimea that are living in constant fear and under all kind of repression, religious, economic, political, social.

To be a Crimean Tatar, it is a danger already itself. They lost their mother-- motherland again. Now, we're talking about the Donbass area. We have one million IDPs inder-- internally displaced persons. And one million people, it's-- one-third of Lithuania, for example, right. And one day, all these people lost their houses, their jobs, their properties, their essess-- just everything.

And they had to move somewhere. And they had build their life from the scratch. We have two million people in the East that live on this occupied territories by Russian-- by pro-Russian Separatists, (COUGH) two million people.

LEONARD BENARDO:

The size of Latvia?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah, well, Latvia's a little bit bigger, I think.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Of (UNINTEL)--

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yeah. Yes, exactly. And-- these people live under the threat-- in the situation, where-- many areas are being-- being shelled-- highly populated civilian areas have been just shelled. And so, it's life threatening. And people in these areas, two million people-- have challenges, have-- this-- go through the trials of not having gas, electricity, food, very open access-- very, often, access to just water, food, and so on and so forth.

Why I'm telling that, we are in war. We are on front line of that war. And we need help. We need this defense in-- defensive factory (?) to protect ourselves. Because, once again, it's about millions of people's life that is there in the-- on the-- on the-- on the s-- in-- on stake-- at stake.

And (THROAT CLEAR) we are just saying it publicly that, "Yes, our army is weak. We don't have enough of resources-- to help ourselves." So that's why I think talking about escalation and-- and our ability to face these challenges, I-- I think that, even Radars, that can be given to Ukraine-- that went-- used during the night to, basically-- identify those shelling, (UNINTEL) in the day, use it in the area so that it protects people. That would be already a huge, huge help.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Thank you. Thank you. Svitlana. Let's say we--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

You've talked about the military situation and how Ukraine is at a disadvantage. But, it's, perhaps, even at a bigger disadvantage in the information war. And-- I'd like to hear your thoughts on how Ukraine can respond, if at-- at all to the Russian propaganda blitz and-- that is still on-going. (NOISE) And how the government can

better frame its message. What can be done? What can the government do? And what-- help does it need from abroad?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

TANYA:

I wanted to ask-- (BACKGROUND VOICE) thank you very much for your presentation and your answers so far. I wanted to ask-- I don't know if it's possible to step outside of your-- sort of, representative position of the government, et cetera.

But, it would be very helpful to hear your actual prognosis, most realistic-- like, what you really think is gonna happen in the East. Probably, counting for if you get lethal aid or if you don't. But, just realistically, what do you think is the best outcome there?

And I also just wanted to ask-- I'm surprised y-- I didn't hear you mention-- I was a few minutes late, but you didn't mention the justice system, at least since I've been here. And-- you know, that's something we spent a lot of resources and time discussing here-- rule of law, et cetera. So just-- what is happening with the justice reform, which is-- you know, much needed in Ukraine. And if it is possible to reform it without, let's say, firing all the judges. Like, what do you think-- is the best way to proceed there. Those are my two questions.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Thank you.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Excellent.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

SANJAY PATEL:

So my name is Sanjay Patel (PH). I'm with the public health program. And my question links to Tanya's (PH) question about the justice system. Mine is, specifically, with reference to the police. And I just wanted to build upon something that was exchanged earlier in terms of, you know, the credibility of the revolution, and-- how people interface with the State.

The police are, actually, often times, the-- the-- the face of the State that people most directly-- deal with, whether it's the traffic stops or whatever. And the level of corruption is significant, (NOISE) or at least was, with the police. And I'm just

curious (NOISE) what are the specific plans for police reform in Ukraine? I know Sakach (?) really-- you know, when he was in Georgia fired all the police post-res-- revolution, at least the traffic police. Is that in the cards now that he's now with the-- consult-- as I understand (UNINTEL) Ukrainian government. So-- just thoughts on that.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Thank you.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Okay.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

So tried to be shorter this time. Talking about (THROAT CLEAR) information war. You're absolutely right. In this hybrid war, information war is one of the main-- weaponry that is used by Russia. But, talking about our possible advantages, let me just give you an example, that Russia Today, which is a Russian main TV propaganda channel, they have access to almost one billion of people all around the world who is watching this-- TV channel.

It's the third biggest TV channel in Great Britain. And it-- it's-- (NOISE) you know-- they level-- just the level of their access is enormous. And compared it to Ukraine, I was talking to-- yesterday, with a girl who's a producer of our Ukraine Today, which is-- (BEEP) we started this channel just a couple of month ago. So they have access to, like, online to 30,000 of-- people (LAUGH) every day. It's just, incomparable, you know.

But, we are trying. We are in a position where we have to do everything together. And we established this channel. We are working on another channel that will be able to give-- more into-- do even more English-speaking (THROAT CLEAR) contact information, abroad especially. The-- one of the problems we face as well, that in the Eastern part of Ukraine and in Crimea that was annexed, there's no Ukrainian channels in the Ukrainian radio or Ukrainian media at all.

Because pro-Russian Separatists, it's the first they did, they cut off the channels. And any kind of information cannot be delivered by Ukrainian government to these people. So they don't have any kind of information, even when it is so ess--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Except on--

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--essential.

LEONARD BENARDO:

--except on-line.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Except on-line, of course, internet. But, often, internet is-- not--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Of course, spotty.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--ex-- yes, that's right. Even in the situation-- but, it's-- so important as about-- evocation, for example, right. So many people don't-- don't have this information, that there was centralized evocation from the-- territories. Because they-- they can't get this information. But, yes, you're right. It's-- one of our tasks.

And I think there was a good initiative done by-- started by European Union. They want to do this intra (UNINTEL) European-- information platform-- with-- Russia's content that will be available for members of European Union for 500 people live in European Union, but speak-- Russian, which is a good initiative.

Now, about-- if-- what's gonna happen. Really, it's so difficult to answer this question. And I think that, even if you ask President Poroshenko or President Putin, I think wouldn't be able to answer that question. Why? Because I believe that the war will be lost until Putin wants to lost it. And he will go as far as we will allow him to go.

Because-- I'll repeat myself. And-- this is not about Lugansk (UNINTEL). This is not about Crimea. The Putin's aim is-- and he was very genuine in it. He said, "I want to build Eurasian economic union. And this union-- has to be with Ukraine. Because without Ukraine, it's just impossible. So we're not gonna give it like this." And his battle is not with Ukraine. His battle is with West, with the Western system of-- values.

And he is also genuine with it, probably with-- listening to him carefully. (COUGH) To give you one short story, in 1994, he was-- at the security conference in Munich. You know this is a very famous security confer-- con-- conference. And the head of the conference, m-- told me that in 1994, there was a man sitting in the room. And he stood up and said, "You know, I'm thinking that the whole security system has to be reconciled. And-- because the Crimea cannot belong to Ukraine," in 1994. And no one knew that man. He was from Saint Petersburg.

Later on, the-- the-- head of the conference found out that he was, actually, Vladimir Putin. In those days, he was not (SIGH) known, you know. So it was long prepared, long-term-- long-term strategy. I don't believe in this (UNINTEL), it's very fragile. It's under threat of-- of collapsing every day.

This is where I had to start three days after the as-- as-- s-- signing it. But now, s-- after the signing, we have six to eight people killed, six to eight. One of them is journalist. Three of them are children. So-- there is a slow progress. They started today to withdraw some weaponry. And even President of Ukraine, recognized some partially withdrawal of the-- of the weaponry from the-- from the lines. But at the same time, from different resources, we get the information that there was-- a re-- a reinforcement in other places of the Russian weaponry.

So we don't know to what extent this is genuine process. With justice, I'm sorry I forgot that. You know, it was my third point with regards to reform. And I'm very happy to say that it's-- a big piece of legislation that we voted three weeks ago, finally. And it was a, really, very (NOISE) inclusive discussion. I have to say that it was righ-- rather even painful debate between different political forces, different parties. And-- it was not very easy and-- smooth. But in the end, we voted for that. And we believe-- I mean, everyone now, the political-- the coalition of five parties in the Parliament are happy with what we-- voted on.

Now you're right, it's-- it's time to implement those things. And first of all, to change those judges who are still there, who were imprisoning-- the activists during Euromaidan. Now, they-- they will have to go through all those examinations and all those procedures that are now embodied into the new legislation.

Talking about police, yes, you're also very well-- (NOISE) acknowledged-- very well informed. We have number of people that we hide from Georgia, who've already managed to realize some of the reforms with regards to police-- in Georgia. And in particular, I'll name--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Eka?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Eka Zguladze, thank you. Eka Zguladze, she's responsible for-- police reform-- first

on Kiev level, and then on the-- on the national level. She's very well perceived by all the political forces. And her reform, her-- her approach is also well regarded. And I think we will succeed with that in particular. It will be one that-- this is my expectations, once again. But I think it will be first tangible result that people will feel that it's happening. At least this is my feem-- of-- feeling-- as for now.

Also, the big reform of the police-- was of interior, basically-- reform, was int-- introduced by the Minister of Interior Avakov. But the main problem in it is that he-- well, which is logical. He says, "In order to kill corruption, you need to give people big salaries so that people don't need to bribe anyone. Because they have to feel secure that they can bring some money back home and feed their children."

Because it's impossible. So far, it-- it-- it's miserable. Because at the same time, you don't have this money where to take them from. Because, as you know, econ-- you-- economically, Ukraine is-- is in a huge, huge crisis. So, it's a vicious circle (?), you know. It's-- it's t-- catch 22. When you need money to kill corruption, but-- you don't have-- you-- and-- well-- and you don't have them.

So, it's-- it's this vicious circle. But anyway, the-- there are-- there are some expectations. And there are, at the moment-- we-- we believe that the reform that has been-- supported-- proposed by the minister of interior will have some results. Probably not during the first year, but second year, third year women have-- will have more resources to invest in this system.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Phenomenal. Madeleine, and then I think Katja (PH). We have maybe, like-- d-- Dana great. Let's go ten, 15 minutes. So, please.

MADELEINE CROHN:

I'll speak very fast.

LEONARD BENARDO:

No, take your time.

MADELEINE CROHN:

(BEEP) My name is Madeleine. I work with the Justice Initiative. And-- some of my colleagues in Budapest (NOISE) are working or have been working both in Georgia and in Ukraine on some aspects of police reform and access to (UNINTEL) and-- reform the procedures. So, thank you very much for your presentation.

Allow me to ask a contrarian question, which I think you may have answered

(NOISE) in part. So, maybe my question is not only contrarian but inappropriate. There was a big push very early on after the Euromaidan to-- in-- integrate Ukraine into the European Union and possible also into NATO.

And some have wondered whether this push helped escalate-- the paranoia of Putin-- and threat. And he's indeed-- he's-- y-- Europe and Asia-- economic package. Had these not been pushed, perhaps, in part by the West-- but rather, taken more time, might this escalation have been-- avoided and/or to what extent this escalation as a result threatened the values and (UNINTEL) at Maidan?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Thank you for this question, Madeleine. Well, I think that-- first of all, history doesn't know conditional mood, you know. And it's very (LAUGH) difficult to judge--

LEONARD BENARDO:

That was nice.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--what would happen. But-- I also believe that from what I've said already with regards to Putin, for example, it was a long-term strategy on building this European-- Eurasian, this--

MADELEINE CROHN:

Eurasian.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--economic union, which is impossible to build-- without Ukraine. So, either it was-- a push from-- from Europeans, although I don't think it was a push from Europeans. I think, first of all, it was the clear choice of Ukrainians. It was about our identity.

For many years, Ukraine has been called a swinging country that counters, basically, between the West and the East. And that what stall us in a gray zone. That's why we were-- promising, but at the same time-- this country-- where Soviet (UNINTEL) worked-- very well, very strongly. But once we made our decision, we made our choice that this European integration, that it is this European idea that-- that is--

MADELEINE CROHN:

Driving you. Yes.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yes, that is driving us, that-- that is-- make-- that is-- that is a future for us, it was, I think, in-- irreversible or in-- impossible to-- to-- to have a different trajectory. Because-- Putin has his own plan and his own scenario of how these geopolitics h-- have to-- have to develop.

So, I don't think that it would be possible to avoid-- this escalation. It could happen sooner or alter. I'll tell you also that-- in 2006, I was reading a report of one of-- Estonian-- expert that came to Crimea to study of how it is exposed for Russian potential annexation. And her reports-- her report was very well done. And it was very cl-- it gave a clear message that sooner or later there will be an-- annexation.

Because all the structures, starting with menia-- media, political institutions, economic approaches in terms of buying the assets, in terms of-- investing into the economy of Crimea, in terms of building the social networks, in terms of supporting the (UNINTEL) and civil society on this (UNINTEL) gives the clear understanding that Putin is buildin' his-- future territory-- future territory there.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Thank you. So, we'll take-- if it's okay--

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Yes, please. Yes.

LEONARD BENARDO:

--Svitlana, two more questions before we close. So, we have Katja and then-- and then Dana.

KATJA:

Sure. I was just wondering. I wanted to go back to 54 firs-- 54% time MPs and 46% who were terrible. I actually was wondering if you could talk about what it's like to be a part of the new guard? And what are some of the biggest fights that-- that you have fought and-- and how-- how it works, (LAUGH) sort of how-- how-- how you feel about it.

And then, the other question I-- I had was about-- maybe anticipating the answer, actually-- some of the anticorruption measures. There are some that are happening in the-- in the parliament. There's a probe into the mining sector, I guess, right now, the-- (UNINTEL) or whatever. Very hard to follow from here, I think. But-- some-- some of-- some-- anticorruption stuff-- obviously is happening beyond just the president's-- administration. And I was wondering if you could say a few words about that.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

I don't understand about the anticorruption measures in-- in--

KATJA:

I think there's-- isn't there a probe right now into mines that have been privatized and-- and then sold off, something like that? I was trying to follow it. But-- I'm just curious. Earlier, you said it was really up to the president's administration. But is-- are there other kind of initiatives that-- that are happening in the parliament as well, or-- or elsewhere?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Okay. Thank you.

(LEONARD BENARDO: INAUDIBLE)

DANA:

Sure. My question pertains to something you said earlier about-- a bigger challenge for Ukraine is separating the politics from the oligarchic money. And I was hoping you could speak to-- how you see that currently shaping, especially given that Petro Poroshenko is, in fact, like, a very large oligarchic figure. Do you think he has done-- a good job ascribing to that idea of separating his money and assets from the politics? And do you think that's something that will or can be replicated throughout government going forward?

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

Thank you. Well, first of all, I would like to commend about your-- y-- y-- your comment, that forty-four-- 46% is-- horrible--

LEONARD BENARDO:

No. No.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--they're not. They're not, actually. In fact, many of them--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Fair enough.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--from old-- from old times-- still, there are a lot of decent people that were--

LEONARD BENARDO:

Of course.

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

--in a position during Yanukovych time. (LAUGH) So, it's important. Now, talking about how does it feel like. It's exciting and also very challenging. Because now you feel that it's actually everything on your shoulders. And-- you either succeed or you fail.

And if you succeed, you will succeed together with your country. And if you fail, it's gonna be the same. So-- there is a huge responsibility on-- on the new generation now, not just-- not just-- you know, not just v-- vote for the legislation in the parliament, but to think in a long-term perspective, and to think of how to ensure the continuity-- continuity of this political leadership from Euromaidan. Of how to build sustainable political institutions, of how maybe to build new parties that would be ready and able to take the lead and to continue.

Because despite the fact that there are so many nice people in the parliament, nevertheless all of us ran through the list of the old parties. So, me, for example, I'm an independent candidate. But I was running through Poroshenko list. So, it was him who took me and-- in his list. And I was campaigning, basically, for his party.

So-- and it's a huge challenge for-- for this new generation to build this sustainability-- of this political leadership from Euromaidan. I think this is the key challenge that we have to build. And I really think that we'll-- there will be a lot of disappointment and mistakes and-- flaws in the process. And it will take time. But, at the same time,

it will give at least potential, that this car, this vehicle is moving. And this is the most important thing.

(BUZZ) Now, talking about some anticorruption-- measures, right, that-- well, as I've said-- we are happy that we have this new anticorruption reform on the central level. And-- a lot of new institutions-- new-- some new institutions, like Anticorruption Bureau and also preventing p-- Corruption Preventing-- Agency. It's another new institutions that gonna work-- in Ukraine. At the same time, you arrived on the middle level, on the original level, on this-- in this-- on the spot.

You have a lot of-- corruption that-- that is happening. And we have a lot of investigative journalists that are disclosing this information and-- writing-- making these materials. Because of-- it's one of the results of one the new general prosecutor-- was changed. Because people were not satisfied with his progr-- progress, with his results of his work.

Because after many people died and-- because of the war, people expect, as I said, there is over expectations to the-- the new political leadership. So-- whether we are dealing with it, I mean, new-- new-- prosecutors, there are some good results of the investigations. But it's not-- from what I would say, there's no-- process that I would say-- w-- that would be-- satisfied, and that you can be proud of, and that you can show as a tangible result, even on the international level.

Now, separating money from the politics, whether it's going well, it's not. And I think that it's the biggest problem of-- of our politics still, and of current political sh-- leadership in particular. Because we all know, and I'm saying not only here but in Ukraine as well, that all the parties that made it to the parliament, they were supported by big money. And until we separate it, it will be impossible to change the whole scheme.

What we can do, it's to change, first of all, electoral system and-- to make an so-called open list together with budget finance and other parties. This reform has been realized in Lithuania, in our-- western neighbors in-- or eastern countries in the European Union. And need-- from what we know, we made (BEEP) some studies. It gave-- it was pretty successful. It gave some results. Of course, not right away, but it was in j-- it was some foundation that gave the possibility to-- to divide this money from politics.

As for the moment, I see that-- without money, you can't get the power. But when-- and you need this money to c-- to (COUGH) withhold-- your power. And-- no one from big political leaders are ready to refuse from-- from this drug, I would say.

LEONARD BENARDO:

So, with that sobering note-- Svitlana, thank you so much for your inspiring and eloquent words, and for coming here to Open Society Foundations. And-- we just wish you only the-- the-- the best of luck and-- and looking forward to seeing you in Kiev next. So (FOREIGN LANGUAGE).

SVITLANA ZALISHCHUK:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE). Thank you so much. (APPLAUSE)

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *