



The Regions Party is due to win in the General Elections in Ukraine

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Results

As forecast by the polls the Regions Party of President Viktor Yanukovich won the general elections that took place on 28th October in Ukraine. It was the first election since the head of State came to power in 2010. The Regions Party won 30.99% of the vote . It drew ahead of the opposition forces which amongst others rallied Batkivshina (Mother Country), of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko (January to September 2005 and 2007-2010) and the Front for Change led by former Economy Minister (2005-2006) and Foreign Minister (2007), Arseny Yatsenyuk. This bloc won 24.84% of the vote .

The head of the opposition Yulia Tymoshenko, who was sentenced on 11th October 2011 by the Court of Petcherski to seven years in prison was not allowed to stand. Some days before the election, she called on the Ukrainians, by way of her daughter Evguenia, to *"chase the mafia from power"* and to *"reduce the risk of fraud"* on 28th October. *"Each of us must fight to counter this dictatorship as best we can,"* she maintained adding, *"if, because of your vote Viktor Yanukovich survives politically after these elections he will establish a dictatorship and will no longer relinquish power by pacific means."* *"I vote that my mother be free and for the freedom of political prisoners, for justice and so that we will not wake up tomorrow behind barbed wire,"* stressed Evguenia, her daughter.

The Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms (Udar, which means Strike) made its entry into parliament, after taking part in the elections for the very first time. Created in April 2010 by former world boxing champion Vitali Klitschko, it won 13.62% of the vote. Piotr Simonenko's Communist Party came fourth with 13.56% of the vote. *"Vitali Klitschko is perceived better by the electorate and corresponds better to the Ukrainian dream. And Batkivshina is handicapped by the absence of its charismatic leader, Yulia Tymoshenko,"* stresses Mikhaïl Pogrebinski, Director of the Centre for Political Studies in Kyiv. Ukrainian disenchantment with their political leaders undoubtedly explains in part the phenomenon of Vitali Klitschko, a newcomer in the political arena, who has not been involved in corruption affairs. *"Vitali Klitschko has won the support of the electorate who are disappointed by the old politicians,"* indicated Irina Bekechkina, director of the Democratic Initiative Foundation.

Another debut in parliament has been made by the far

right nationalist party Svoboda (Freedom), led by Oleg Tygnibok, which won 10.01% of the vote. *"Svoboda's entry is the most important event. Ukrainian bortsch is now slightly more spicy. There will be more pepper but its new flavour is still unknown,"* stresses analyst Vladimir Fesenko of the think-tank Penta who qualifies the vote in support of the nationalists being *"patriotic and also one of protest."*

Turnout totalled 57.5% i.e. 4.52 points below the figure recorded in the previous elections on 30th September 2007.

Many anomalies (pressure on the electorate, attempts to purchase votes) were noted in several polling stations. The Ukrainian general elections which were a major test for the country's democratic commitment, were monitored by more than 3,800 foreign observers representing 28 countries and 35 international NGO's and also 240, 000 local scrutineers. *"This is the most important mission ever deployed by the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe. From the Eu-*

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ropean Parliament to the Council of Europe via NATO and the OSCE, more than 800 international observers are being mobilised in Ukraine." indicated Neil Simon, Director of Communications at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The OSCE criticised a decline in democracy in Ukraine

after these general elections that took place without Yulia Tymoshenko, who is behind bars. It also criticises the abusive use of administrative resources, the lack of transparency during the campaign and in the financing of the parties, as well as an imbalance in the media coverage.

General Election Results on 28th October in Ukraine

Turnout: 57.50%

Political Parties	% of votes won
Regions Party	30.99
Batkivshina, Front for Change, People's Self-Defence; Reform and Order Party, People's Movement and For Ukraine	24.84
Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms (Udar)	13.62
Communist Party	13.56
Svoboda	10.01
Vote against everyone	637 185

Source : <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/vnd2012/wp300pt001f01=900.html>

Undeniably the Regions Party emerges strengthened by this general election. It campaigned on the movement from "stability over to well-being". Prime Minister Mykola Azarov had called on the Ukrainians to vote for "a party of people of action and not for a party of chatterboxes." "I voted for stability, economic development and an improvement in living standards," declared President Yanukovich after placing his slip in the ballot box. "I think that this election will lead Ukraine to greater unity," he added.

"I am convinced that we are going to succeed in rallying all of the opposition forces around us in the new parliament," declared Vitali Klitschko in an interview in the German newspaper *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*. "We are not planning to work with the Party of Regions and its Communist satellite but we do accept talks with the parties that offer a European, democratic path

towards development," he said in an interview on the TV channel 1+1.

The union of the opposition parties will however be difficult since they have a great number of differences. They vainly tried to rally before the election on 28th October. "Vitali Klitschko's refusal to sign an agreement on the creation of a democratic opposition force coalition is in the interest of the Regions Party. This decision has made it an ally of the Regions Party and is helping to dissipate democratic forces instead of strengthening their unity to fight the regime of Viktor Yanukovich," declared Arseni Yatsenyuk after this rapprochement failed to take place.

Ukraine, which is standing at a crossroads, will now have to make some choices. The country is subject to pressure from neighbouring Russia which would like Kyiv to join a customs union that it has created with Belarus and Kazakhstan. Moscow says that it is prepared to grant Ukraine

a reduction in its gas prices in exchange for this agreement: 160\$/1000 m³ instead of 425\$ at present. This would be a godsend for a country whose energy bill has soared over the last few years. But Ukraine hopes to sign an association agreement with the EU thereby establishing a free-trade zone. "The two things match with national inte-

rests" declared Prime Minister Mykola Azarov at the beginning of October.

The next government in Kyiv will have to face a sharp reduction in economic growth. Due to a decline in steel prices, the country's main export product, growth dropped to zero in the second half of this year.

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