

Tymoshenko's Bad Advice

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Yulia Tymoshenko's comment published in the Feb. 7 issue of The Moscow Times titled "The Orange Revolution Betrayed" clearly revealed Tymoshenko's most striking character trait: She is a born revolutionary.

"A revolution has a start, yet a revolution never ends" are the lines from a famous Communist march. These words sound very much like her political manifesto as well. Indeed, revolutions sometimes inevitably break out as the only way to fulfill society's overdue and neglected needs. But they can't and shouldn't burn forever. This is a simple truth that is oddly hard to realize for people who enter the political stage by revolutionary means, but become clueless and helpless once they have to construct something. Revolution is not a universal answer to every political problem, just like a defibrillator is not a universal healing to every health predicament. This has been very evident in Ukraine during the five years of Orange rule.

What Ukrainians really need is peace, stability and at least a modicum of pride in their country. The sad truth is that the five post-revolutionary years brought Ukraine neither of those. Moreover, the initial revolutionary intoxication and euphoria turned into a

prolonged hangover. Judging from Tymoshenko's comment, the country's problems are the work of some anonymous "enemies of freedom" who betrayed and reversed the revolution. And this is another side of a true revolutionary: They are always surrounded by would-be traitors. And when things don't work out their way, it's always someone else's fault, not theirs.

With this reasoning, it's no wonder that despite the devastating record of her Cabinet in Ukraine, Tymoshenko has the gall to give advice to Egyptians and Tunisians. After all, she still has the insolence to doubt the will of her own people — who dumped her at the last presidential election that was universally recognized as fair, transparent and democratic.

Tymoshenko claims that democratic elections "do not make a democracy." Of course they don't. A true democracy is a combination of three main elements: the rule of law, civilized political process and plenty of hard systemic work. Typically revolutionaries like Tymoshenko don't mind the rule of law as long as it doesn't concern themselves, their friends and relatives.

Just like Che Guevara probably wouldn't have made a good plumber or construction worker, Tymoshenko did not do a good job as prime minister. She was unable to institute systemic reforms because, like a true revolutionary, she constantly confused the economy with a barricade. She was caught unprepared by the world economic crisis because she couldn't think big in economic terms. On the top of that, she didn't delegate duties because she didn't trust anyone and saw only potential traitors around herself.

In her comment, Tymoshenko tried to give Tunisians and Egyptians advice. I would like to give them some advice of my own:

- First and foremost, don't trust revolutionaries with building democracy. Some people are great at building things and some only at terminating them. Revolutionaries make the world's best terminators, but they are generally incapable of hard systemic work.
- Second, remember a successful transformation of any country depends on its ability to bring bright people to the government and those who can deliver on their promise, not simply political activists with their own personal agendas. The people's quality of life will depend directly on the type of politicians who are elected to power.
- Third, don't listen to the sweet-voiced "Sirens" who promise you paradise tomorrow, yet have been proven to benefit only themselves in the past.

This certainly doesn't mean that Ukraine's current government is beyond reproach. Every revolution is filled with polarization and partisanship. True statesmanship is about taking these toxins out of the political process. In the end, a government leaves its positive mark on society not by succeeding politically, but by succeeding historically, and this is achieved through bipartisanship.

In this sense, Ukraine's government is ready to cooperate with every opposition group or member as long as they are ready to think in terms of the nation's interest and not petty political bickering. The tactics can be negotiated, but strategy has to be the same: pragmatic reforms to benefit Ukraine's future. Unfortunately, it took Ukraine five years to reach this post-revolutionary period of stability. I hope it will happen sooner in Egypt and Tunisia.

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