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## A Comedian For President?

Jim Kovpak

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Realistically speaking, I do not have too much concern as to who Ukraine's next president will be so long as it isn't Yulia Tymoshenko (I don't know enough about Yuriy Tymoshenko to have an opinion). There are, in my opinion, some rational arguments for Poroshenko's reelection. Continuity and stability may not be the best arguments in his favor, but they are logical and fully understandable. He also does seem to spend a lot of time visiting the front, which is admirable. However, beyond this I see no strong, rational arguments in favor of Poroshenko. Perhaps that is why so many of his most vocal supporters seem to have some financial stake in his reelection.

At the time I am writing this, it seems Volodymyr Zelensky has a strong lead in the race. It appears many lobbyists among the Ukrainian diaspora and «pro-Ukrainian» community in the West are very upset about this. We in the English-speaking world are routinely bombarded with rants about how he is a just comedian, as though that is some kind of disqualifying attribute in this day and age. I wonder if this shock and outrage is genuine, however, because if it is, it seems those individuals haven't been paying attention to the news outside of Ukraine since 2016.

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Over here in America, having a comedian for a president sounds like an improvement. What we got instead was a reality TV star who is apparently suffering from some sort of cognitive disorder (I'm betting on late stage syphilis), which becomes apparent if one listens to him speak on any issue for thirty seconds. But whether the president is a billionaire oligarch «chocolate king,» a comedian, or in America's case a man who cannot put coherent thoughts together, all these people can serve a useful purpose. They teach us about the absurdity of the liberal bourgeois state.

This is the one major positive thing about President Trump. Back in the 1990's, one could imagine a cheap family comedy film with a title like *Baby President*. It's an extreme version of what Hollywood calls a «fish-out-of-water» story. The comedy derives from the idea of buttoned-down professional politicians and military officers who suddenly need to answer to a Commander-in-Chief who is a literal infant. Typically this kind of lazy comedy is satirized as an example of Hollywood's lack of ideas. And yet thanks to Donald Trump, we now understand that while the President cannot actually be an infant, this is only due to the age restriction. In reality, we now have a man with the mind of a child in that office, and all his aides, advisers, and generals must scramble around trying to understand and carry out his orders. The formulaic Hollywood premise of «What if the President of the United States were an infant/a ninja/a dog?» has become reality. Compared to a syphilitic idiot like Trump, the idea of Ukraine having a comedian for a president seems almost utopian.

But of course the truth is that it is pointless to speak of this or that president saving Ukraine; presidents, as representatives of the corrupt system, are in fact one of the causes of our present problems, in Ukraine, in the United States, and pretty much everywhere they have them. Sure, the so called «peace-loving» crowd thinks they will end their problems by voting for a candidate willing to negotiate with Russia. In reality, such a pres-

ident won't accomplish anything because Putin cannot be negotiated with. He demands subservience from Ukraine or partition, nothing less. The liberal centrists will find that their hero Poroshenko will simply maintain the status quo and not regain an inch of Ukrainian soil that isn't in the so-called gray zone. And the far-right, which no doubt imagines that Ukraine could achieve victory if only it were ruled by «true patriots» would be every bit as disappointed; they would merely give even more power and authority to their leaders, enabling them to create an even more corrupt system without any dissent and turning Ukraine into a weaker version of Russia.

Ultimately salvation will not come from a president or any politician or party. The principle problem be it in Ukraine, Russia, or the US, is a question of authority without accountability, democratic or otherwise. In the United States, a seemingly democratic system veils a totally unaccountable government that shields decision makers, many of whom are unelected, behind several layers of bureaucracy, such that one can never know who is truly responsible for a certain rule or action. In Russia, the consolidated power of the state allows the small ruling class to steal with impunity while increasingly cracking down on dissent. In Ukraine, the state is used as a cash machine as well as a cover for all manner of criminal enterprises, giving people with connections the ability to call on the state's inherent monopoly on force to achieve their goals.

What is the solution then? There are no easy answers, but there is one word that provides a good starting point—accountability. Authority without accountability is a highway to tyranny and corruption. And from where should this accountability come from? From a population that has been educated and trained for self-government, one which directly decides policy at the local level but can also exercise full control over its delegates to higher structures. At the same time, as society's defense is entrusted more and more to the wider population rather than being concentrated in the

hands of traditional state organs of legal violence such as the police force and military, it becomes even more difficult to abuse elected positions of authority, all of which ought to be subject to recall at any given time, naturally. Ultimately the republican form of democracy by unaccountable proxy must be replaced with government of the people under rule of law that safeguards everyone's rights.