

The Switch from Comedy to Tragedy for Ukraine's President Zelensky. Rapprochement with Putin?

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The recently-elected Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky keeps saying there was “no blackmail” in a July telephone call with President Donald Trump that caused an impeachment inquiry in the USA.

He made the comments recently during an all-day press marathon held in a food court in Kyiv, while he was conversed with hundreds of local and international reporters.

Questions have been raised about the Trump administration frozen military aide to Ukraine around the time of the July 25 phone call between the two leaders and whether that was related to Trump's request to Zelensky to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden for alleged corruption tied to his son Hunter Biden's job with a Ukrainian gas company Burisma.

“This has nothing to do with weapons and the Burisma situation,” Zelensky said. “There was no blackmail; it was not the subject of our conversation. The call could have no impact on our relations with America.”

“But if it happens, we will learn about that from Twitter,” he added, jokingly.

It is a natural thing to make fun of the serious themes for Zelensky who is known for his salty comic performances and a TV series, *Servant of the People*, where he was playing the country's president in dodgy situations.

Yet the comedian-turned-leader seems to be growing more and more serious with every new day.

In these recent times he is gearing up to hold negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin in an effort to put the stopper on the five-year pro-Russian conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Critics are receiving the move as capitulation to Russia. So Mr. Zelensky's efforts to pull back Kiev forces and separatists troops from the frontline apparently would trigger another mass riots in central Kiev on October 14, when the Defender of Ukraine Day will take place.

Everything is according to the well-trodden old path. The Ukrainian media are pumping hysteria right now. The crowds of thousands with national flags and combative slogans are ready to storm the presidential administration. The former combatants such as Azov and Beletsky militants acclaim that there will be no pullback of troops in the Donbass, and if there is, they will take up the relinquished positions of the Ukrainian Army. Nationalists, protesting against Mr. Zelensky's peace plan, called the him a “traitor and a puppet” — not

for obsequiousness to Mr. Trump, but for his capitulation to Mr. Putin.

The next few days will show us how the situation develops, but the Ukrainian leader is obviously inclined toward the extreme choice — complete cease-fire and the end of the war. Thus his confrontation with the anti-Russian movement is almost inevitable. Is the “Servant of the People” ready to fighting against the people?

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