Russia Needs Its Own Cattani

The problem of fighting corruption is one of the most pressing in Russia now. Russia President Vladimir Putin and RF Minister for Internal Affairs Boris Gryzlov emphasized several times that it's important to focus on counteraction to corruption. On March 19, a round-table discussion on the subject "On development of legislation on counteraction to illegal money laundering" was held in the Federation Council. The Russian People's Party launched a large-scale campaign in Russian regions for support of a new bill "On counteraction to corruption". The author of the bill, a parliamentarian from the People's Deputy group, member of the Duma committee on struggle with corruption Sergey Shashurin expressed his views on the problem in the interview below.

What measures on struggle against corruption does the bill suggest?

Although our party passed the bill on struggle against corruption, I think these are insufficient measures, because as of now the bill is of purely populist nature. Effective measures on struggle against corruption will be taken only when responsibility will be determined for high-ranking officials, functionaries in law enforcement structures, in the Ministry for Internal Affairs, prosecutor's office, at courts for the failure to take measures in connection with economic crimes and criminal offences. For the time being, nothing of this kind may happen as in fact Russia's courts, prosecutor's offices and police are protected with some legislation acts that don't allow to determine responsibility of high-ranking functionaries for their faults. So, although the new law appeared under the aegis of our party, my opinion is that it is still weak. Russia's law enforcement system is enormous, but it's not responsible for anything to anyone. If would be effective to make it possible to call to criminal account those officials upon whom observation of law depends but who don't observe the legislation themselves. Now there are courts of arbitration and regular courts that consider conflicts between criminal groups and other cases. The Prosecutor's Office has been turned into an agency of attorneys to large-scale criminals. It is frequent that the Prosecutor's Office decides to imprison people for stealing a jam-jar, but at the same time thefts of several billions, or even scandalous contract assassinations may remain unpunished in this country, although it is often perfectly evident who is guilty of such crimes.

There are dossiers in the Prosecutor's Office on high-ranking officials involved in corruption. I myself go to the Prosecutor's Office often and know about such dossiers not from some other people; I myself witnessed large-scale financial frauds and criminal offenses. The struggle against corruption will be effective only when all officials, starting from the president to an average citizen will be accountable to the law.

How can this be realized?

It is necessary to introduce a clause in the RF Criminal Code for the failure to take measures in connection with economic and criminal offenses. I mean that now any prosecutor can restrain investigation of a crime although it would take a month or two to investigate this case completely. There are lots of files on scandalous crimes piled on shelves of prosecutor's offices, they may remain untouched within many years, and no measures are taken even upon termination of these cases.

Is there any hope that situation may change in Russia?

The struggle against corruption in Russia must be led by a man not intimidated by mafia, a man who can take strict decisions and has enough self-control to guide the struggle. At present, our government is completely inert, it can do nothing. Practically all law enforcement institutions are paralyzed with corruption, all officials are connected with financial crimes or bribe-taking. Everything I mention I can supply with actual documents proving offenses in the Prosecutor's Office, in the Ministry for Internal Affairs and in police, and partially in the judicial system.