**INTERVIEW SPOTMEDIA/ Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament**

**Magda Grădinaru: What does Western support for Ukraine look like? Can EU and member states do more for Ukraine without going to war directly with Russia?**

**Roberta Metsola:** The European Union has proved itself united and resolute. We have spoken with one voice when it mattered the most. I am proud of it, I am proud of us.

We have supported Ukraine from day one of this unlawful and unnecessary war. This includes humanitarian and financial aid as well as military equipment, in order for Ukrainians to fight for our common values of freedom and democracy. Furthermore, we have imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Kremlin.

Nevertheless, we need to do more. We have to send more military equipment and weapons urgently. We also have to implement the sanctions that have already been approved, and we can still go further.

We are starting to tackle our energy dependence from Russia to avoid indirectly financing this war. The European Parliament’s clear position is that the aim should be for zero gas, coal, oil and nuclear from Russia.

**2. Who can stop Vladimir Putin? Is there such a force in the Russian state - oligarchs, generals, civil society?**

We are doing every day our part to stop Putin. We must accelerate a policy of zero dependence on the Kremlin, separate Europe from Russian energy supplies and implement even stronger sanctions, including on military personnel, oligarchs and other enablers of this war. The impact on Russia's economy must be proportional to the unprecedented atrocity we are witnessing.

The political pressure of the European Parliament is very intense. We permanently denounce the atrocities of the Russian army. And we stand with the Ukrainian people, this is the main message I delivered with my recent visit to Kyiv. We will not stop until the war is over and Ukrainians can return to their land, their homes and their lives.

We also need to push back against the narrative that confronting Putin makes Europe somehow anti-Russia. There are Russians standing up to Putin despite the threat of jail, they are on the right side of history.

We should do everything we can to ensure that the Russians have access to the real information -in Russian- about what is going on and that has to be our immediate objective as far as Russian citizens are concerned.

**3. What does Viktor Orban's victory mean for the European Union? He won with a very different message from the EU’s position, by saying that the war in Ukraine “does not concern us”, it is a local problem, “a war between Slavs”.**

If we have learned anything from globalization, especially during the pandemic, it is that what happens in the remotest part of the world affects us all. What has happened in Ukraine, on Europe's doorstep, can unfortunately be repeated tomorrow in any other country, even on EU soil.

The values of the European project, that we have commonly agreed upon, are in danger. This is why we must stand united in the face of Putin's atrocities. Unless we stay firm, Putin will not stop at Ukraine. I expect Hungary to remain united with the rest of the Union.

**4. Will the EU go any further with blocking European money for Hungary, because of the state of democracy and the rule of law, in this context? Isn’t this just the kind of action that feeds the Europhobic feelings that Viktor Orban has promoted?**

As every EU Member State, Hungary signed up to common values such as rule of law and solidarity and these must be guaranteed. The European Parliament has been very clear in its support for the budget conditionality mechanism, and I am convinced that this is also strongly supported by the European public opinion. Our citizens want to know, and have a right to know, how their tax money is spent.

The respect for the rule of law is non-negotiable in the EU.

**5. Poland has taken a firm stand against Russian aggression in Ukraine, moving away from Hungary in this regard. How will this impact the EU resolution to sanction Poland over rule of law?**

It is fundamental that all Member States adhere to the Treaties they all signed up to when they joined the European Union. The rule of law is the fundament upon which trust between Member States is built.

I am also impressed by the efforts made by Poland, its communities, mayors and its citizens, in receiving millions of Ukrainians fleeing the war. And this is why I have called for more help for Poland and other countries bordering Ukraine and welcoming people fleeing the Russian invasion.

The one does not exclude the other. I think it is absolutely compatible to support the rule of law and at the same time support the people who are welcoming Ukrainians fleeing the war with open hearts and homes.