

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV INTERVIEW

by Paolo Mondani

PAOLO MONDANI

Last December the 10th, France's highest administrative court cancelled Kazakh banker Mukhtar Ablyazov's extradition to Russia. French judges refused to hand over the banker because the request had been made for political reasons: in their opinion, the request could have hidden an effort from Kazakhstan to attack a famous political opponent of the Kazakh President Nazarbayev.

Ablyazov, who was charged of fraud, has already spent 3 years in prison.

PAOLO MONDANI

If France had accepted the extradition request, would you have been scared of ending in a Russian jail?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

People who do politic as I did can even be killed. I know the Kazakh methods.

PAOLO MONDANI

Kazakh Government accused you of stealing \$6 billions from the Kazakh bank BTA, of which you were the former president. How do you respond to this accusation?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

I've been slandered with this accusation for 8 years. They could have presented evidences in a trial, but they never did. It is absolutely false.

PAOLO MONDANI

In May 2013 Ablyazov's wife Alma Shalabayeva and their daughter Alua were expelled from Italy. Later Italy went back on its own action, but 7 policemen, a justice of the peace and 3 Kazakh diplomats are now under trial in Perugia for kidnapping.

While Ablyazov escaped few hours before the blitz, the Italian police took Alma and Alua.

PAOLO MONDANI

Let's talk about your last days in Rome. Who did inform you about the arrest?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

No one told me. I felt someone spied me and I was always on alert, so I realized I was in danger.

PAOLO MONDANI

Before the police hold of your wife, there was an Israeli investigative agency around your house. Who did send that agency?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

I am sure that there are Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev behind them.

PAOLO MONDANI

After your escape, the police took your wife and your daughter. Our Department of Domestic affairs allowed Kazakhstan to hold your family hostage. In your opinion, who is responsible for that?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

I believe it is right to wait for the Perugia court to answer those questions. Besides the executors, I do hope that they will tell us who the instigators were. Kazakhstan was able to exercise influence on powerful men in Italy.

PAOLO MONDANI

Do you see a responsibility of our Government and of our pro tempore Domestic Affairs secretary Angelino Alfano in what happened to your wife and daughter?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

Italian government is absolutely guilty. However, it would be important to understand who gave the order. I don't know if it was Secretary Alfano, but I know he decided to become an instrument in Nazarbayev's hands.

PAOLO MONDANI

Do you think that our oil public company Eni has anything to do in Alma and Alua's event?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

I don't have any proofs. However, I know how Nazarbayev works and I'm sure he asked for help to Eni for my wife and daughter's extradition.

PAOLO MONDANI

Do you know that some Italian politicians have unique relationships with President Nazarbayev?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

I know that a few Italian politicians have personal economic interests with the Kazakh regime. Nazarbayev helps them and vice versa. I perfectly know how the corruption works in Kazakhstan.

PAOLO MONDANI

When you were Secretary of Energy in Kazakhstan, you had a dispute with Nazarbayev. Why?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

Nazarbayev put his relatives in the key roles of the oil business and they did illegal business to make him richer. He kept saying that we were building a democracy but he was making his own private company with the country instead.

PAOLO MONDANI

How does the corruption between oil companies and President Nazarbayev work?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

Here it is an example. The Magnistau Munai gas is one of the most important oil companies in Kazakhstan. By using the debts excuse few years ago, it was sold at zero to Nazarbayev's front men. After a while, Kazakhstan re-bought it for \$ 3billions. A large amount of that money ended up in the President's pocket.

PAOLO MONDANI

Do you know of any western oil companies such as the Italian Eni who offered a bribe to President Nazarbayev?

MUKHTAR ABLYAZOV

Eni, Shell, Chevron, Mobil and Chinese companies have big oil extraction projects in Kazakhstan but it is not all that clear in that business. They don't have to pay taxes, no one ever saw their agreements, no one knows how much do they extract and how much do they obtain. Could all of this happen without giving something back?