

Yushchenko Facilitates Yanukovych's Election and Buries the Orange Revolution

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President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko

Two major myths promoted by President Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine's 2010 presidential elections were that there was no difference in policies between the two main candidates, Viktor Yanukovych and Yulia Tymoshenko, and that both were "pro-Russian." These myths helped defeat Tymoshenko by 3 percent in an election where every vote counted.

Several pieces of evidence point to the Yushchenko-Yanukovych alliance that facilitated Yanukovych's election. For instance, the lack of criticism by Yushchenko of Yanukovych preceding the elections (Ukrayinska Pravda, February 10). Yushchenko never criticized Yanukovych's pro-Russian policies on energy (gas consortium, return to non-market subsidized prices, and revival of the corrupt RosUkrEnergo); Russian as a state language; the extension of the Black Sea Fleet base beyond 2017; opposition to NATO membership, and the Party of Regions alliance with Russian extremist nationalists in Odessa and the Crimea. Yushchenko and the presidential secretariat levelled daily abuse at Tymoshenko, accusing her of "treason" and vetoed a record number of government policies.

Moreover, a draft agreement was leaked in December 2009 by a staff member in the presidential secretariat that revealed plans for a Yushchenko-Yanukovych alliance (UNIAN, December 25, 2009; EDM, January 5, 6). The Ukrainian media discussed the issue of Yushchenko becoming prime minister under President Yanukovych (www.comments.com.ua, December 4, 2009).

In the event of a Our Ukraine-Peoples Self Defence (NUNS) – Party of Regions grand coalition being formed, the Yushchenko loyalist Yuriy Yekhanurov might be offered the post of prime minister (Ukrayinska Pravda, February 8-10). Prime Minister and Our Ukraine leader Yekhanurov led the negotiations with the Party of Regions after the March 2006 elections for a grand coalition that collapsed. Yekhanurov was the head of the State Property Fund in the 1990's and the oligarchs are his creation.

The Party of Regions and the NUNS faction, together with the Communists and Volodymyr

Lytvyn bloc, sought to remove pro-Tymoshenko Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko. The vote was supported by NUNS deputy Petro Yushchenko. Similarly, between rounds one and two Yushchenko vetoed the cabinet's December 16, 2009 decree appointing General Hennady Moskal as Crimea's police chief (UNIAN, February 2). Moskal, who is a deputy in the pro-Lutsenko Peoples Self Defense group in NUNS, was praised for halting election fraud in favor of Yanukovich in round one. "The Party of Regions, who is as thick as thieves with Yushchenko, controls the administrative resources on the peninsula," Moskal said (www.zik.com.ua, February 11). The Tymoshenko campaign found evidence of fraud in the Crimea in round two (www.vybory.tymoshenko.ua, February 10).

Meanwhile, between rounds one and two Yushchenko removed the Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk governors who had expressed support for Tymoshenko and had refused to provide administrative resources for Yanukovich's campaign. Yushchenko also removed six ambassadors where there had been few votes for Yushchenko in round one (Ukrayinska Pravda, February 10). The Tymoshenko campaign will contest in the courts the election results in the Crimea, Donetsk, Zaporozhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk (www.vybory.tymoshenko.ua, February 10).

Only five days before the second round the Party of Regions, the pro-Yanukovich wing of NUNS and the Communists, passed changes to the election law. President Yushchenko quickly signed the law, ignoring a plea to veto it by the Committee of Voters (www.cvu.org.ua, February 4), independent experts, and Tymoshenko (Ukrayinska Pravda, February 3, 4).

These changes were widely condemned because they changed the electoral rules in the middle of the elections. If the changes were deemed so important, they should have been demanded by Yushchenko prior to round one. Yushchenko's actions proved that he had forged an alliance with Yanukovich, Kyiv expert Volodymyr Fesenko said (www.politdumka.kiev.ua, February 4).

What was left of Yushchenko's reputation, in Ukraine and abroad, was effectively destroyed by his support for the electoral law changes, because they undermined his role as the constitutional guarantor of free elections and his election campaign slogan of having brought democracy to Ukraine, Kyiv expert Ihor Zhdanov said (www.politdumka.kiev.ua, February 4). Oleksandr Tretiakov, a long time ally, resigned from the Our Ukraine party in which Yushchenko is its honorary chairman.

Most controversially, between the election rounds Yushchenko signed two decrees giving hero status to Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist leader Stepan Bandera and to honor members of various Ukrainian national liberation movements in the twentieth century (www.president.gov.ua, January 28). The decrees, immediately condemned by Russia, helped to additionally mobilize pro-Yanukovich voters in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Professor Myroslav Popovych claimed the decrees "disorientated" Eastern-Southern Ukrainian voters and mobilized them against the "Orange" candidate, Tymoshenko (Ukrayinsky Tyzhden, January 29-February 4).

The timing of the two decrees was odd, as they were not issued prior to round one, when they could have given Yushchenko additional nationalist votes from supporters of the Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok. The decrees could have been issued at any time during his presidency, as he

did with an October 2007 decree giving hero status to Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) leader Roman Shukhevych (EDM, October 23, 2007). A decree in honor of Sich Sharpshooters, a Ukrainian unit in the Austrian army in World War I, was issued on January 6 before the first round.

Finally, Yuriy Shukhevych, the son of the UPA commander, led a campaign in Lviv with other nationalist leaders in support of Yushchenko's call to vote against both candidates in round two. Evidence was provided by Tymoshenko in an appearance on Inter television (February 5) that these appeals were published in Lviv newspapers with financial assistance from the Yanukovych campaign.

Anti-Semitic leaflets appeared in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk (witnessed by this author) urging voters: "Do not vote for that Jew," a reference to Tymoshenko's father's alleged ethnicity (the leaflet was reproduced on www.rferl.org, February 3).

The irony of Ukraine's 2010 election campaign is that the nationalist candidate, Yushchenko, long vilified by Russia, likely facilitated the election of the pro-Russian candidate, Yanukovych, Moscow's favourite in the Ukrainian elections (EDM, January 22, 27, 29). Yushchenko, brought to power by the 2004 Orange Revolution, effectively destroyed the Orange Revolution himself. The Revolution, long the personal object of hate by the former Russian President Vladimir Putin who saw it as one of his personal policy failures, was buried by that very person (Yushchenko) so despised by Putin.

No better final epitaph could have been written for Yushchenko.