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UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SCRAMBLE TO COLLECT MORE SUPPORT AHEAD OF RUN-OFF

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On November 10, the Central Election Commission issued the final results of the October 31 Ukrainian presidential election. The final tally gave challenger Viktor Yushchenko a slight lead of 0.55%. This edge was challenged by exit polls that gave Yushchenko a far higher lead of 6.8% and by parallel vote counting, undertaken by the Yushchenko camp, that gave him a 1.29% lead. Now Yushchenko and Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich must scramble to collect additional votes for the run-off on November 21.

Yanukovich's latest move was to increase salaries, on top of doubling pensions last month. Salaries of employees in the justice system have risen by one-third since November 1 (*Ukrayinska pravda*, November 11). Such pre-election bribes have not always succeeded. The Collegium of Lawyers in Donetsk city, Yanukovich's home base, still voted to back Yushchenko (maidan.org.ua, November 15). The Yushchenko camp criticized the latest government payout for again eating into Ukraine's national reserves, which have declined from 15-18 billion *hryvni* (about \$3 billion) in early September to only seven billion *hryvni* today.

Yanukovich has also targeted Ukraine's rural voters. The November 12 issue of *Silski visti*, which normally supports the Socialist Party, was filled with pro-Yanukovich materials. Yanukovich has also asked coal miners to boost voter turnout in round two.

Yanukovich sacked officials in regions where he trailed in round one, promising to reinstate them if he is elected (*UNIAN*, November 12). Meanwhile, Yushchenko appealed

to state officials to be impartial in round two: "Do not violate the law. Do not execute illegal orders by the authorities" (Channel 5, November 12).

Yanukovich has deliberately targeted the Interior Ministry (MVS), which was not impartial role in round one. The Yushchenko camp denounced a snap national meeting of district MVS officers, held on November 12 in Kyiv, as putting pressure on the police ahead of the second round. They complained that MVS units are actively engaged in agitating for Yanukovich and are being prepared to counter post-election civic disturbances by Yushchenko's supporters (*Ukrayinska pravda*, November 15). Starting November 15, MVS officers will only follow verbal instructions in order to minimize the potential for leaks (maidan.org.ua).

Yanukovich has also sought to deflect the damage caused when failed first round candidate Anatoliy Kinakh, head of the Union and Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, threw his support behind Yushchenko. The directors of 40 eastern Ukrainian plants cobbled together an "Industrial League of the Southwest" to support Yanukovich. A threatened "warning strike" in solidarity with Yanukovich by these plants on November 13 failed to materialize.

Besides Kinakh, Yushchenko has also attracted support from Leonid Chernovetskyi, head of the Christian-Liberal Party; the parliamentary Center faction (consisting of defectors from the pro-presidential majority); and the Unity Party led by popular Kyiv Mayor Oleksandr Omelchenko. Yushchenko's most significant support has come from Socialist leader Oleksandr Moroz, who came third in round one. Some western and southern Ukrainian branches of the Communist Party plan to ignore their leaders' advice to vote "against both" and instead will support Yushchenko.

Defectors from the pro-presidential camp to Yushchenko include the Green Party and the Democratic Platform of the People's Democratic Party (NDP). Some southern Ukrainian branches of Viktor Medvedchuk's Social Democratic United Party have also declared their support for Yushchenko. The only candidate from round one to endorse Yanukovich is Progressive Socialist leader Natalia Vitrenko. However, her 1.53% support is far lower than the combined 7.67% obtained by the four candidates who have endorsed Yushchenko.

Traditionally apathetic young voters have come out to support Yushchenko. Among their ranks are leading athletes, including boxers Vitaliy and Volodymyr Klichko, who are from Yanukovich's Donetsk base. Ukraine's two best-known rock bands -- Okean Yelzy and VV -- have played at Yushchenko's rallies. Okean Yelzy lead singer Sviatoslav

Vakarchuk agreed to become Yushchenko's adviser on youth policy. But when the rock bands playing at Yanukovich rallies invite the crowds to show their support for the prime minister, the audience often shouts "Yushchenko!" instead (maidan.org.ua, November 15).

Yushchenko has also attracted support from Ukrainian intellectuals, academics, and writers, who are mainly based in Kyiv, which resoundingly voted for Yushchenko in round one. This intellectual support is coupled with the caricaturing of Yanukovich in numerous web sites (yanukovich.nm.ru and ham.com.ua).

To the surprise of most, Yanukovich has increasingly stressed his religious convictions. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOCMP) has come out in favor of Yanukovich, with parish priests openly agitating on his behalf (see EDM, November 15).

Outside Ukraine, Yanukovich has continued to focus exclusively upon obtaining Russian support. On November 12-13, Russian President Vladimir Putin again visited Ukraine, after traveling to Kyiv to attend a military parade three days before round one of the elections. Ukrainian and Russian television showed Putin hugging Yanukovich and wishing him success in the elections (see EDM, November 15). Putin was noticeably more guarded on this recent visit, and following round one the Russian Ambassador to Ukraine, Viktor Chernomyrdin, stated that Russia would be willing to work with either of the two remaining candidates.

Yushchenko, meanwhile, has sought support from the West while not ignoring Russia, where he unveiled his "How We Are To Live With Russia" plan on November 15. President Leonid Kuchma and Yanukovich ignored a visit to Ukraine by Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, who did meet Yushchenko. Cimoszewicz is in Kyiv as part of the Council of Europe's monitoring mission.

Yushchenko also met with the president of the European People's Party (EPP), Wilfried Martens, on a visit to Kyiv. The EPP unites 68 conservative and Christian Democratic parties in Europe and is the largest faction in the European parliament. Martens expressed support for Yushchenko's candidacy, because he is "promoting the same values in Ukraine that we are defending in the EU" (Channel 5, November 11). Prior to its split in 1999, the Ukrainian Popular Movement (Rukh) had been a member of the EPP.