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YULIA TYMOSHENKO TO BECOME UKRAINIAN PRIME MINISTER

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One day after he was inaugurated as Ukraine's third president, Viktor Yushchenko appointed a powerful and radical triumvirate. Yulia Tymoshenko, of the eponymous bloc, was named prime minister; businessman Petro Poroshenko secretary of the National Security Council; and Oleksandr Zinchenko, the head of the Yushchenko election campaign, became state secretary. Zinchenko's position replaces that of head of the presidential administration. Of the three positions, only Tymoshenko's requires parliamentary approval, and parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn expects her to obtain a large majority when she is proposed this coming week.

Why Tymoshenko? One reason is that a secret agreement between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko stated that if Yushchenko won, then he would propose her as his prime minister. The Yushchenko camp denied that such a document existed (*Ukrayinska pravda*, January 20), but it was leaked to the anti-Yushchenko web site temnik.com.ua (January 24) by the Viktor Yanukovych team.

Another reason for Tymoshenko's nomination was that alternative candidates were unpalatable. Poroshenko had angled for the position but, as a major businessman, this would have undermined Yushchenko's policy of separating business and politics. Poroshenko is often labeled as the "oligarch" in the Yushchenko camp.

A third, more pertinent factor rests on Yushchenko's policy aims. Tymoshenko is ideally suited to be a radical prime minister during the short period between now and the implementation of constitutional changes either in September 2005 or March 2006.

Tymoshenko has anti-oligarch credentials. In the Yushchenko government of 2000-2001, She was instrumental in efforts to eliminate loopholes in the energy sector that had been exploited by the oligarchs; the move returned over \$2 billion to the budget. She has stated, "The oligarchs are cowards. As soon as they realize that the system has changed, they will be forced to change their methods or go to jail" (*The Independent*, December 7).

Finally, Tymoshenko was chosen to reward the maidan, the protestors in Independence Square who supported the Orange Revolution. Many of its young participants are ideologically closer to the more radical Tymoshenko than to the more moderate Yushchenko. During the Orange Revolution she was labeled the "Goddess of revolution" (*AP*, December 3).

Her newfound hero-like status completes the evolution of her image. The process began in February 2001 when, as deputy prime minister responsible for energy issues in the Yushchenko government, she was arrested. She was later released, and in subsequent years some courts attempted to indict her while others dismissed the charges. Tymoshenko's future rested on a Yushchenko victory. If Yanukovych won the elections, she would have to flee abroad or go to prison.

Government attempts to remove this key Yushchenko ally came to a head in mid-July, one week into the presidential campaign, when pro-presidential parliamentary factions began discussing a motion to have her arrested. The entire pro-presidential bloc supported the motion, including moderates who now seek to ingratiate themselves with Yushchenko (*Ukrayinska pravda*, July 16, 2004). The Prosecutor-General's office then issued fresh indictments (*Ukrayinska pravda*, September 15, 2004). Also in July 2004 Russia issued a search warrant for Tymoshenko and placed her on Interpol's wanted list (Interpol.org).

This step backfired, because now Prime Minister Tymoshenko cannot travel to Russia. Russian political technologist Sergei Markov, who worked for the Yanukovych side, predicted that Russian prosecutors would soon drop their case against Tymoshenko. Markov also has changed course, asserting, "People have said Tymoshenko is a radical politician, that Russia is at war against Tymoshenko and that her nomination will be negative for Russia. I think that is absolutely wrong" (*Financial Times*, January 25).

Markov's apparent shift might be attributed to Tymoshenko's confusing politics. In an op-ed piece written for the Russian newspaper *Vedomosti* (January 11) she talked in language that ought to make Ukrainian nationalists shudder. Ukrainian-Russian relations are "rooted in our common history," she said. Both peoples belong to the "same civilization" and the "same geo-economic zone." Furthermore, she wrote that Putin and Yushchenko have similar goals in removing oligarchs from power and that both states will re-join Europe together. Ukraine may join NATO but only with Russia, with whom Ukraine should unify its military-industrial complex.

Despite these Russophile views, Tymoshenko remains the darling of the right populist and nationalist camps. Crowds numbering tens of thousands rallied in Lviv in support of her bid to be nominated prime minister. Yet, her radical, anti-Kuchma, and anti-oligarch views outweigh both her own oligarch past and her Russophile views.

Tymoshenko first entered politics with the dissident oligarch Hromada party, led by Pavlo Lazarenko. After Lazarenko fled Ukraine in early 1999, she created her own Fatherland Party, which merged in 2002 with the populist-right Conservative Republican Party led by Stepan Khmara.

Tymoshenko took a leading part in the anti-Kuchma protests during the Kuchmagate crisis, when the opposition created the National Salvation Front (NFS). At that time, then-Prime Minister Yushchenko opposed the anti-Kuchma protests. Most of the political parties that made up the NFS, apart from the Socialists, later joined the "Yulia Tymoshenko bloc," which finished fourth in the 2002 elections with 7.26%.

Tymoshenko has views similar to those of Yushchenko and Socialist leader Oleksandr Moroz on the need to implement radical democratic reforms, remove the oligarchs from power, and combat corruption. But she will differ from Yushchenko on some aspects of economic reform because, as she pointed out, "I am not a market fundamentalist" (The Independent, December 7).

Her parliamentary faction was the only one to vote against the December 2004 compromise package that includes constitutional changes. Tymoshenko has always supported strong executive powers. In contrast, Yushchenko's Our Ukraine differed from the left and the pro-presidential camp only in the schedule for introducing constitutional changes (i.e. immediately after the 2004 presidential elections or after the 2006 parliamentary elections).

Tymoshenko's nomination will send shivers down the spines of Ukraine's oligarchs, particularly those that are grouped around Viktor Medvedchuk's Social Democratic United Party.