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**UKRAINIAN PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER TO BE PROGRESSIVELY MARGINALIZED**

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While President Viktor Yushchenko remains outwardly confident that his Our Ukraine party, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's bloc, and parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn's People's Party (NPU) will enter the 2006 parliamentary elections as a coalition, this scenario is now unlikely (Ukrayinska pravda, July 25).

As a condition of joining Yushchenko in the 2006 election, Tymoshenko has demanded that Lytvyn be excluded. Lytvyn's unwillingness to support the adoption of WTO legislation was the straw that broke the camel's back for her. Tymoshenko accused Lytvyn of playing the opposition against the authorities and of advising factions not to vote for the WTO legislation as a single package.

During a recent joint meeting Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, and Lytvyn discussed the need for the "harmonization of parliamentary processes" (Ukrayinska pravda, July 25). This is a reference to not repeating the problems found in parliament in June and July, when it discussed the WTO-required legislation. After parliament failed to adopt a large proportion of the bills, the government issued a resolution condemning parliament and Lytvyn in particular (Ukrayinska pravda, July 13; Zerkalo Nedeli/Tyzhnia, July 16).

The government statement accused Lytvyn of being in league with "destructive political forces in parliament" (kmu.gov.ua, July 13). First Deputy Prime Minister Mykola Tomenko accused Lytvyn of working with former president Leonid Kuchma to destabilize parliament and discredit the new authorities (ERA TV, July 14).

Tymoshenko's dislike for Lytvyn is magnified by her equal dislike for Petro Poroshenko, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council who acts as Lytvyn's lobbyist within the Yushchenko camp.

Their enmity has only grown since the release of an audiotape secretly made in Kuchma's office by former presidential guard M y k o l a Melnychenko.

Poroshenko denied the authenticity of the tape and, in his usual fashion (see EDM, July 27), claimed it was part of a "konspiratsiya" by former Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, who funded the transcription of the Melnychenko tapes. Poroshenko claimed that Berezovsky is working with Kuchma to divide the Yushchenko coalition (Ukrayinska pravda, July 7 and 21).

The tape recorded a conversation between Poroshenko and Kuchma on July 7, 2000, and contains two unpleasant moments. First, Poroshenko swears his loyalty to Kuchma: "I am a member of your team! I will obey any of your orders!" Poroshenko declares. "I have made a choice once in my life and there will be no change" (Ukrayinska pravda, July 6).

Second, and far worse for Poroshenko, the recording also provides details of Poroshenko and Kuchma's discussion on how to undermine then First Deputy Prime Minister Tymoshenko (in Yushchenko's government) and her parliamentary faction. After criminal charges were filed against her, Tymoshenko was arrested and imprisoned briefly in February 2001.

It is not coincidental that very soon after the tape became public, Security Service (SBU) Chief Oleksandr Tyrchynov, Tymoshenko's right-hand man in her Fatherland Party, disclosed that the SBU was authenticating the Melnychenko tapes. This is the first occasion that the tapes have been officially examined in Ukraine. Melnychenko told EDM that he believes Poroshenko is blocking the authentication of his tapes because he fears further details will emerge regarding his, and Lytvyn's, dealings with Kuchma in the 1990s. This, in turn, is holding up progress in the investigation into the murder of journalist Heorhiy Gongadze in fall 2000.

Copies of Melnychenko's tapes were obtained from Hryhoriy Omelchenko, head of the parliamentary commission to investigate

the Gongadze case. Omelchenko is himself a member of Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party.

Lytvyn has already predicted, and Melnychenko has privately confirmed to EDM, that further disclosures of Lytvyn's abuse of office under Kuchma will be made public this fall. These will include excerpts dealing with the alleged involvement of Lytvyn, who was then head of the presidential administration, in the murder of Gongadze.

The final nail in the coffin of the alliance with Lytvyn will be the annulment of constitutional reforms agreed in December 2004 as part of a "compromise package" during the disputed presidential elections. These constitutional reforms would transfer some executive power to parliament, a move Lytvyn supports. Tomenko advised Lytvyn to remember that Ukraine had only one president, Yushchenko, and not himself (UNIAN, July 14).

In the fall the Yushchenko-Tymoshenko coalition is likely to file an appeal with the Supreme and Constitutional Courts to annul the constitutional reforms. They will argue that the adoption of the reforms was undertaken unconstitutionally in only one parliamentary session. Changes in the constitution are required to be adopted over two parliamentary sessions, the first time with a minimum of 225 votes and the second with 300 votes.

The annulment of the constitutional reforms would lead to a rift between the Socialist Party (SPU) and Lytvyn's People's Party of Ukraine, which support reforms and Our Ukraine, Tymoshenko, and First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoliy Kinakh's Party Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (PPU), who oppose them. Poroshenko is therefore becoming increasingly isolated within Our Ukraine by continuing to support the constitutional reforms and an alliance with Lytvyn.

Hostility to working with Lytvyn in the 2006 election runs deep among local branches of Our Ukraine, which accuse Lytvyn's NPU of becoming a haven for former Kuchma officials afraid of being

charged with criminal offenses. This opposition to working with Lytvyn and members of the former Kuchma camp has also pushed national democratic parties who were members of the Our Ukraine bloc in the 2002 election closer to Tymoshenko.

A break with Lytvyn over constitutional reforms, coupled with Tymoshenko's refusal to countenance entering a 2006 election coalition with him, will prove to be a crisis for both Lytvyn and Poroshenko, his main lobbyist in Our Ukraine.