

## **WHO ARE YUSHCHENKO'S TRUE ALLIES?**

**By Taras Kuzio**

Despite Ukraine's September political crisis and the subsequent fall of the Yulia Tymoshenko government, the Tymoshenko bloc in parliament is still a fairly reliable ally of President Viktor Yushchenko's People's Union-Our Ukraine (NSNU). Other allies from the Orange Revolution, including the Socialist Party (SPU) and Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (PPPU), may still be inside the government headed by Prime Minister Yuriy Yekhanurov, but they frequently vote against the NSNU on strategic issues.

The Tymoshenko bloc and NSNU will contest the March 2006 elections separately, a strategy that, ironically, is likely to bring them more votes than if they enter the elections in one bloc. Two recent votes reflect the re-emergence of de facto Orange Revolutionary unity.

On November 2 the Ukrainian parliament refused to ratify a Memorandum of Understanding with NATO regarding NATO use of Ukrainian airlift capacity. The Memorandum had been ratified with centrist support in the Leonid Kuchma, era because it brings tangible economic benefits to Ukraine. This time the vote failed because the SPU and PPPU, supposedly Yushchenko's allies, failed to deliver 30 of their 39 votes.

The failure of the Socialists and Industrialists and Entrepreneurs to support ratification of the Memorandum is a clear indication that their loyalty to the strategic domestic and foreign policy objectives of the Yushchenko administration is low.

The weekly Zerkalo Tyzhnia/Nedeli (November 5-11) complained that such a voting fiasco placed the Yushchenko administration in a poor light, as Kyiv could not follow through on its foreign policy commitments.

The Tymoshenko bloc also supported the NSNU over parliamentary opposition to the re-privatization of the Kryvorizhstal steel mill. Prior to the successful re-sale for \$4.8 billion, parliament had twice voted to block the re-privatization. The Tymoshenko bloc, Reforms and Order, and NSNU opposed parliamentary votes for a moratorium on Kryvorizhstal's re-privatization, a vote supported by all 39 SPU and PPPU deputies. In a separate vote, both the SPU and the PPPU backed a resolution calling for Kryvorizhstal to remain in state hands ([rada.kiev.ua](http://rada.kiev.ua)).

Regarding both the NATO Memorandum and Kryvorizhstal, the greatest cynicism came from the once hardline supporters of Kuchma, Regions of Ukraine (RU) and the Social Democratic Party-United (SDPUo). Both parties supported the ratification of the NATO Memorandum under Kuchma and privatized Kryvorizhstal in 2004 to two oligarchs for one-sixth of the price obtained last month.

The Social-Democrats' call for a referendum on NATO accession has been ridiculed by the Ukrainian media. SDPUo leader Viktor Medvedchuk did not protest when NATO and EU membership were included in the new 2004 military doctrine. And as prime minister in 2002-2004, Regions of Ukraine head Viktor Yanukovych led a government that had declared its intention to seek NATO membership in May 2002.

These votes on two crucial issues show that the September crisis did not irrevocably split the Orange revolutionary camp. The best chance for a pro-reform parliamentary majority is if NSNU and the Tymoshenko bloc come together after the 2006 elections.

This view is strongly backed by two factors. First, public opinion has not been willing to accept the permanence of the split. Second, neither NSNU nor the Tymoshenko bloc will have sufficient votes to independently create a parliamentary majority.

Calls for re-unification of the Orange Revolutionary camp have increasingly been heard from both the NSNU and the Tymoshenko bloc. Tymoshenko has initiated meetings on this subject with state secretary Oleh Rybachuk, but she has put forward two conditions.

First, the business entourage that surrounded Yushchenko must not be included in the NSNU election line-up. This demand is easy to accommodate, as Rybachuk has already moved to block Petro Poroshenko, the most criticized of this business group, from easy access to President Yushchenko.

Second, Tymoshenko wants to be prime minister again. This demand is unlikely to be met and could prove a major stumbling block (Ukrayinska pravda, November 3). Yushchenko would want to keep Yekhanurov in this position. Too many senior NSNU officials are uncomfortable with Tymoshenko, whose abrasive style is seen in a negative light by NSNU senior officials, such as parliamentary faction leader Mykola Martynenko (Ukrayina moloda, October 27).

Parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn, another potential NSNU ally, has called for "professionals" in government, and "not those who can shout at meetings," a clear jab at Tymoshenko (Ukrayinska pravda, November 6). Lytvyn has depicted his eponymous election bloc as one that stands for "compromise" and Ukrainian unity, not divisiveness, a jab at both Tymoshenko and Regions of Ukraine (Ukrayinska pravda, November 7).

The head of the NSNU political council, Roman Bezsmertny, is as distrustful of Tymoshenko's populism and personal ambitions as is Martynenko and Lytvyn. Nevertheless, he has accepted the need for unity negotiations after the 2006 elections to create a parliamentary majority (Ukrayinska pravda, October 27, November 1).

Constitutional reforms set to go into effect after January 2006 will transform Ukraine from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary-presidential system. This will be a major step towards democratization, as the presidential systems seen throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States have been plagued by authoritarianism and abuse of executive office.

At the same time, constitutional reforms will lengthen parliament's term from four to five years, prevent defections from factions, and force parties to compromise over creating a parliamentary majority that, together with the executive, chooses the government.

Of the six parties and blocs set to enter parliament, Yushchenko's NSNU can only create a parliamentary majority with one of the two other large forces: the Tymoshenko bloc and Regions of Ukraine. The cooperation and goodwill between the NSNU and the Tymoshenko bloc created in the runup to the election will facilitate a choice for Tymoshenko. In any case, they will celebrate the first anniversary of the Orange Revolution together on November 22.