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Newsletter for the international community providing views
and analysis from the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT)

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Tymoshenko Vows to Stay On



▲ Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has vowed to stay on in office to serve her country. She is pictured greeting her Polish counterpart Donald Tusk. Ukraine and Poland will co-host the UEFA EURO 2012 soccer tournament.

Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has vowed to remain in office, reminding people that it was not her faction that quit the governing coalition. Yuriy Lutsenko, Interior Minister and leader of the People's Self-Defence faction within the president's bloc, has decided to do the same, while the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada (parliament), Arseniy Yatsenyuk, followed rules governing his position and resigned.

Ms Tymoshenko confirmed her intent to stay on as prime minister saying, "We support stability in the country at a very high level, and will do everything possible for the government to become the single bulwark for peace and balance, stability and constructive work."

Meanwhile, Mr Lutsenko said, "I am not about to send in my resignation." He added that the break-up of the coalition was provoked by the secretariat of the president, and that his faction opposed the withdrawal of the Our Ukraine - People's Self-Defence (OU-PSD) bloc from the governing coalition.

Parliamentary Speaker Resigns

Mr Yatsenyuk's resignation was dictated by a clause in the coalition agreement between the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) and OU-PSD, which specifies that the Verkhovna Rada chairman (speaker) must resign after the official break-up of the coalition that appointed him to the job.



▲ Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the OU-PSD Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada who resigned.

What Happens Next?

There will be many smoke-filled room meetings as politicians try to ward off what would be the third parliamentary election in as many years.

BYuT believes that the best course of action is to re-establish a democratic coalition with OU-PSD and the centrist bloc of Volodymyr Lytvyn. An outline agreement already appears to have been reached with the 20-seat bloc to bring it into a new coalition if formed.



Meanwhile, the Party of Regions has announced that it will hold talks with everyone but OU-PSD. Its leader, Viktor Yanukovych, said, "We decided to form negotiation groups with BYuT, the Communists and Lytvyn. Our Ukraine - People's Self-Defence are up in the air. But I think we have no chances with them, so what is the point to start."

Earlier, Mr Yanukovych was reported as saying that his party was ready for a snap-poll. "It's impossible to trust any force from the Orange team," he said. Yet many within BYuT would proffer the same of the Party of Regions and see a reconstituted democratic coalition as the only viable alternative to pre-term elections.

Meanwhile, Ms Tymoshenko made it clear that whatever happens, her intention is "to continue to follow a reform agenda in Ukraine and maintain our European course. We will not be deflected."

Mood of the Nation

What follows is a snapshot from the latest public opinion poll undertaken for the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 1-7 September, 2008. The poll was conducted in every administrative region in Ukraine and involved 2,036 respondents.

Should Viktor Yushchenko Stand for a Second Term?

Yes, Stand 16.2% Do Not Stand 72.5%

Do Not Stand by Region

West 56% Central 68% South 79.9% East 86.7%

Who Would Win a Presidential Election Today?

Yulia Tymoshenko 34.1%

Viktor Yanukovych 25.6%

Viktor Yushchenko 6%

Support by Region

Yulia Tymoshenko

West 51.5% Central 40.9% South 24% East 19.7%

Viktor Yanukovych

West 8.1% Central 19.6% South 33.1% East 42.3%

Should Yulia Tymoshenko Stay as Prime Minister?

Should Stay 54.5% Should Resign 24.6%

Support to Stay as Prime Minister by Region

West 71.5% Central 58.6% South 44.3% East 44.5%

If a Parliamentary Election Took Place Today?

BYuT 24.1% Lytvyn Bloc 3.4%

Party of Regions 23.3% People's Self-Defence 1.1%

Our Ukraine 3.8% Nationalist Svoboda (freedom) 1.1%

Communist Party 3.8% Progressive Socialists 1.0%

Don't Be Fooled Again

If you ask people in the West what the Orange Revolution was about, it is likely they will tell you it concerned a fraudulent election and the future orientation of Ukraine. Many still believe it was a tussle between East and West and the self-determination of the people to finally break free from Russia's yoke. This of course was never true, but the line was often reported in the western media.

Ukraine government collapses over Georgia war

The ruling coalition is near collapse as the president and the prime minister spar over whether to treat Russia as foe or friend.

Central to the Orange Revolution was the simple demand for justice – ordinary people fed up with being deceived and standing up for democracy against autocracy.

With the collapse of the democratic coalition, some headline writers are once again putting two and two together and coming

up with six. Several headlines last week pinned the collapse of Ukraine's governing coalition on the recent war in Georgia. What is disturbing is that the Bankova Street spin machine appears to be in overdrive, doing everything it can to propagate this curious positioning.

It is true that the coalition partners were not in full accord in their response to the Georgia-Russia conflict. Although analysis will reveal they agreed on many points of principle, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko took a measured response, refraining from the tough-talking language adopted by President Viktor Yushchenko. Nevertheless she did condemn the unilateral actions and disproportionate use of force, calling for Russia to "respect the sovereignty of Georgia and its territorial integrity."

A major bone of contention was the president's hard-line policy restricting the Russian Black Sea Fleet's use of Sevastopol. Ms Tymoshenko believed that Ukraine should honour its contractual obligations – Russia has leased use of the port until 2017 – and cited that the president's policy was unworkable as it lacked the necessary procedures to verify breaches of the new rules.

Not missing a trick, the presidential secretariat then accused Ms Tymoshenko of kowtowing to Russia in return for the Kremlin bank-rolling her future bid for the presidency. But this was bluster, an unsophisticated smokescreen aimed at de-positioning Ms Tymoshenko ahead of the 2010 presidential election. It belies the fact that the prime minister fully supports the EU position on the conflict – a position endorsed by the president.

So if the war was not the reason for the coalition's collapse, what was?

"The policy differences between the two Orange partners are miniscule."

Thwarting of Reforms

The difference of opinion over the Georgia-Russia conflict was merely the most recent manifestation of a long-running feud between Ukraine's two branches of executive power.

This feud is not based on policy differences. Indeed, Hryhoriy Nemyria, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for European integration said, "The policy differences between the two Orange



partners are miniscule compared to the policy differences between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in Germany's grand coalition government."

The nub of the issue is "constitutional." Sadly Ukraine has not one government but three. There is the parliamentary government, the office of the president and the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC). The latter is headed by Raisa Bohatyryova (recently expelled from the Party of Regions), whose appointment was seen widely as a counterweight to the Tymoshenko government.

The NSDC is unashamedly a political tool of the president and has backed him in throwing up roadblocks that have brought the government's reform agenda to a grinding halt. Privatisation plans, anti-inflation initiatives and anti-corruption measures have all been stopped in their tracks, paralysed by a flurry of presidential decrees and NSDC resolutions.

For months Ms Tymoshenko endured searing criticism and seeing her reforms vetoed. She eventually spoke out publicly against the president in May, by which time the attacks had become increasingly personal. The final straw was an accusation of "treason" – an allegation subsequently investigated and dismissed by the deputy prosecutor general.

Driving this criticism is the desire of the secretariat to turn public opinion against the premier so as to scupper any bid by her for the presidency in 2010. But most people view it as persecution and the strategy has backfired, serving only to depress further the president's ratings.

Constitutional Change: The Heart of the Matter

The response by the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) to the paralysis of government was to side tactically with the Party of Regions to pass laws (on 2 September) that prevent the president and NSDC from overturning the lawful decisions of parliament. This, and the establishment of an unambiguous process for presidential impeachment, proved to be too much for the president.

Mr Nemyria explained why BYuT lawmakers voted for the new laws. "The decision was about a clear division of power. What we have had unfortunately is a phenomenon of parallel government, two or three at once, namely a National Security and Defence Council and a secretariat of the president trying to intervene in the competency of the government." This uneasy division of power was key to the last political crisis nearly a year ago, which culminated in

the dismissal of parliament and pre-term elections.

Clearly, this corrosive constitutional arrangement that pits president against parliament must be resolved. "Our position is clear," said Ms Tymoshenko, "we have to amend the constitution and

bring Ukraine to a type of parliamentary system enjoyed by most European democracies."



▲ Viktor Baloha, the Chief of Staff of the President's Secretariat, has led a campaign against Ms Tymoshenko, which many people believe is aimed at smearing the premier ahead of the 2010 presidential election. So far the campaign has backfired with OU-PSD languishing in the polls.

"Of course the issue of constitutional reform is far less glamorous to the media than a David and Goliath West vs. East tug-of-war."



Of course the subject of constitutional reform is far less glamorous to the media than a David and Goliath West vs. East tug-of-war. For a start, the issues are complex and require detailed explanation.

Yet we should not blame journalists. The president's constant sabre rattling with Russia does nothing to dissuade those coming fresh to the story. Indeed, the president's secretariat is content to propagate the myth that the collapse is owed purely to a West-East power struggle over the future direction of Ukraine.

But Ms Tymoshenko is in no doubt about Ukraine's future direction. "We are totally committed to Ukraine's European integration and we'll do whatever we can to bring Ukraine closer to the EU," she said.

Perhaps the few skewed headlines prove the old adage: never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

Hard Talk



Hryhoriy Nemyria, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister appeared on BBC TV's Hard Talk last week. It was his second appearance this year on the programme that puts leading politicians at the mercy of a 30 minute grilling by Stephen Sackur – a seasoned interviewer famed for his "take no prisoners" approach.

The deputy premier responsible for European integration answered questions on the political crisis in Ukraine, driving home the message that his bloc's priority was to re-establish the democratic coalition. "It was not the prime minister who pulled out of the coalition. We are persistent in our line that we would welcome back our partners in the coalition, and we are ready to negotiate a strategic compromise for the sake of Ukraine's European future," said Mr Nemyria.

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The interview was highly topical given the collapse of the democratic coalition that day and the opening of a 30 day window to enable parliamentary factions to form a new coalition government. If no new government is formed in that time, the president has the right, if he decides to exercise it, to disband parliament and call a pre-term parliamentary election.

Mr Nemyria made it clear that BYuT wished to avoid another election and requested the democratic partners put aside their personal differences and unite. He also indicated that an outline agreement had already been reached with the centrist Lytvyn block to be part of a reconstituted democratic coalition.



When asked if BYuT would be prepared to join a coalition with the Party of Regions he answered, "We are still in the space where we haven't exhausted all the possible ways for reaching a strategic compromise." However, he doubted a coalition with the Party of Regions would occur, saying that, in any event, BYuT's principles were non-negotiable.

On the issue of the Georgia-Russia conflict he expressed concern that the security vacuum in the post-Soviet space had expanded and argued that Ukraine pursue a dual strategy. He suggested integration into the EU security and defence policy and said that the NATO Membership Action Plan remains an option, while stressing that any question of membership be subject to a national referendum.

Quizzed over reports that Russian passports were being handed out in the Crimea, he told the BBC that the government had insisted on a full report from the Russian authorities. He noted that early indications reveal there was no spike in the rise of passports being made available.

Mr Nemyria was emphatic that Crimea will remain part of Ukraine. "We are against irresponsible statements of some odious Russian politicians that questioned Crimea's future or Sevastopol's future. We were very pleased when Prime Minister Putin clearly said that the Russian Federation does not question that Crimea belongs to Ukraine – this is a very important statement. The principle of territorial integrity should be respected by all players."



The Hard Talk interview can be viewed at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00dnzh9>



Questions or comments? E-mail us at nlysova@beauty.net.ua