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TAGS: PGOV PREL UP

SUBJECT: TYMOSHENKO ON THE ATTACK

Classified By: Ambassador William Taylor for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) On December 19 PM Tymoshenko upped the ante in her ongoing political battle with President Yushchenko when she declared herself in open opposition to him. Accusing him of currency manipulation and other destructive activities in concert with the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU), Tymoshenko called on the President to resign. Until recently, Tymoshenko had been open to political reconciliation with Yushchenko -- her attempts to find common ground were rebuffed. Rada politics has turned from the nascent Rada coalition to the 2009 budget. Tymoshenko introduced the draft budget on December 23. End Summary.

"Yushchenko Must Go"

2. (C) On a December 19 political talk show, PM Tymoshenko called on President Yushchenko to resign, citing his involvement in currency manipulation and other destructive activities, and declared herself in open opposition to the president. BYuT MP Valeriy Pysarenko told us on December 23 that BYuT decided that Yushchenko needs to go before the end of his presidential term in December 2009 because his actions, blocking the government's work and manipulating the currency, are too destructive to be allowed to continue. Pysarenko said that, while Yushchenko maintains levers as president, BYuT was "not interested" in continuing a political fight with someone as weak as Yushchenko. Yushchenko continues to lash out at Tymoshenko because "that's all he has left," said Pysarenko. Pysarenko concluded that Yushchenko was finished politically, and would not be a factor in the next presidential election.

3. (C) Pro-coalition OU-PSD MP Volodymyr Ariev told us that Tymoshenko is like a cat with "nine political lives." He said she was being counted out two months ago, but has come back even stronger against Yushchenko. Ariev noted that, until recently, Tymoshenko remained open to reconciling with Yushchenko but she was continually rebuffed by Yushchenko and his allies. Repeating a common refrain, Ariev said that



Yushchenko has no plan or strategy for the country beyond "destroy Tymoshenko." Arieiev said that "we need to be rid of Yushchenko" before he inadvertently destroys the country in his quest to destroy Tymoshenko.

Advice to Yushchenko from a Regions MP

4. (C) Party of Regions MP Vitaliy Hommutynyk told us that, in light of the upcoming presidential elections, Tymoshenko is doing everything right politically. Echoing what other Regions contacts privately told us regarding their earlier opposition to the new coalition, Hommutynyk said that Regions would oppose Tymoshenko and her new budget because "that is our job in the opposition." Hommutynyk expressed admiration for Tymoshenko's political acumen, saying that she has "great political potential." He suggested that Yushchenko's best avenue for political survival would be to reconcile with Tymoshenko and try to become PM if she becomes president. Hommutynyk said he thought Tymoshenko had a 50 percent chance at winning the 2009 presidential election -- Yushchenko has no chance.

Comment

5. (C) Tymoshenko's call for Yushchenko's resignation is yet another step towards the December 2009 presidential elections, and is reminiscent of the Yushchenko camp's attacks on Tymoshenko in August 2008, which included allegations of treason. The 2009 budget has replaced the Rada coalition as the political football du jour. Mutual blame and recriminations between the two former political allies are likely to continue, even intensify, well into the new year.
TAYLOR

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