

Is Cheney Trying To Break Up Ukraine?

by EIR Staff

Evidence is mounting that Vice President Dick Cheney may be personally handling a “Ukraine portfolio,” involving the destabilization of Prime Minister Victor Yanukovych’s government, or even splitting the country in two, at the same time that Cheney is running “special forces” operations inside Iran, against the Iranian government.

A March 28 Interfax-Ukraine wire noted that Cheney had just met in Washington with Ukrainian Central Election Commission Chairman Yaroslav Davydovych, to discuss “development of democracy in Ukraine.” This followed Cheney’s late-February consultations with visiting ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, a celebrity of the U.S. Project Democracy-backed Orange Revolution of 2004. Speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as *EIR Online* reported March 6, Tymoshenko cast herself as the person to relaunch the Orange movement. She met with Cheney and with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Back in Kiev, Tymoshenko crowed that “Cheney and Rice” support new elections.

Cheney-friend Tymoshenko’s push for new elections escalated April 2, when her on-again/off-again ally President Victor Yushchenko announced dissolution of the Supreme Rada (parliament) and called new elections for May 27. The legalistic pretext was the defection of 11 members of his own and Tymoshenko’s parties to the parliamentary majority (Yanukovych’s Party of the Regions, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party), becoming members of the Yanukovych cabinet. Yushchenko said this was unconstitutional because those individuals would be leaving the blocs, under whose banners they were elected. The Supreme Rada majority rejected Yushchenko’s decree, sending the matter to the Constitutional Court. Yanukovych supporters poured into central Kiev, and a new round of heated politicking began.

Defense Minister Anatoli Hrytsenko, a Yushchenko ally, reflected the high level of tension on April 3, when he stated that the Armed Forces were at their permanent stations, with no advance of troops or tank units.

There has been virtually a dual-power situation in Ukraine for months. After the Orange coalition of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko disintegrated in 2005, Yanukovych’s Party of the Regions was the top vote-getter in 2006 elections. A months-long political crisis ended with the return of Yanukovych—who had suffered defeat in the Orange coup—as Prime Minister in August 2006. His government and the Su-

preme Rada majority oppose Yushchenko’s commitment to join NATO, among other things. By late autumn, they were at loggerheads, with the Supreme Rada refusing to ratify appointments made by Yushchenko, and Yanukovych recruiting cabinet members from Yushchenko’s own party, and others, whom Yushchenko will not accept.

Tymoshenko has been working to drive these conflicts to a new, full-scale power crisis. When Yushchenko finally acquiesced to formation of a government under Yanukovych, the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc went into what she called “hard opposition.” Later, however, Tymoshenko rekindled her alliance with Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine, and the two parties signed an alliance in February of this year. She then rushed off to the U.S.A. for the consultations with Cheney. Moscow *Kommersant* wrote on March 5 that their agenda had to have included three points, related to recent energy agreements between Kiev and Moscow: “The possible loss of Ukraine’s economic sovereignty as a result of the pro-Russian orientation of . . . Yanukovych; plans for diversifying Europe’s energy supplies; and the consequences that Yanukovych’s moves may have for the development of democracy in the countries of the former Soviet Union.” Tymoshenko told Cheney, *Kommersant* claimed, that Yanukovych might hand over control of much of Ukraine’s energy sector to Ros-UkrEnergo, the intermediary firm involved in settling Ukraine’s conflict with Russian Gazprom over prices in 2006.

Western media are once again playing up the scenario of a “pro-West” vs. “pro-Russia” split of Ukraine.

The new outbreak of a Ukrainian political crisis was top news in Russia, whose Foreign Ministry issued a statement that, “Russia is watching the development of the situation in Ukraine closely and with concern. We assume it will not go out of the bounds of the ‘legal field’—the country’s current laws.” Yushchenko cancelled a planned visit to Moscow.

On April 5, Yanukovych spoke against calls from within the parliamentary majority to impeach Yushchenko, saying he did not want to “deepen the crisis.” Rumors swept the Supreme Rada, as well as Ukrainian and Russian media, that Yushchenko would declare a state of emergency and attempt to impose direct Presidential rule right after Easter. U.S. connections to the destabilization were the subject of sensational claims, such as the assertion by Socialist Party Rada member Vasili Volga, that Tymoshenko had received \$1 billion from the Shell Oil Company during her U.S. trip, “to organize a coup in Ukraine.” On the Russian web site KM.ru, analyst Alexei Pushkov claimed that Tymoshenko was interrogated by American investigators about her connections with ex-PM Pavel Lazarenko, jailed in California on a large-scale embezzlement conviction (the public record shows only that Tymoshenko was asked about this during her appearance at the CSIS), and that therefore she is vulnerable to blackmail by U.S. authorities.

As of April 6, Yanukovych and Yushchenko were meeting to discuss a possible compromise.