

## Under reconstruction! We apologize for the absence of certain materials.

### WHAT VOTERS DO AND DON'T THINK ABOUT BEFORE ELECTIONS

17 January 2004

Leonid Kuchma's presidency is drawing to a close. The results of his tenure are very well known, and they range from positive achievements to shameful failures. The main result is that few want him to be reelected. Even if he were the sole government-nominated candidate, he would collect barely eight percent of the vote today, and "in company" with other candidates, not more than three percent. No matter what verdicts the Constitutional Court may pass, Kuchma would not be supported in fair elections.

Having such enormous powers, the President could have done far more for this country. Now it's generally understood that Kuchma is simply going to drag his term on and then step down. He might retire, join the opposition, read lectures, or resign himself to doing charitable works. But he will not be impeached.

So we will have elections, but it's unclear what kind of elections. In theory, it's possible that a new President will be elected by Parliament in October. Possible, but unlikely. Even if the "aggressively-obedient majority" decided that they would elect a new President for 18 months only instead of five years, who can guarantee that he wouldn't like to stay in office longer?

Ukrainians' attitude to the Kuchma-led leadership is extremely negative. The overwhelming majority of respondents are convinced that this leadership is: authoritarian, not democratic - 63%; unprofessional - 67%; not oriented towards the observation and protection of their rights - 79%; unable to raise their living standards - 80%; dependent on foreign influence - 78%, on oligarchs - 83%; corrupt - 88%; indifferent to common people's interests - 88%. Of course, there is not a single country whose leadership enjoys complete popular support, but such a strong dislike, even hatred, is something extraordinary.

Who is going to replace Kuchma? Who is able to work more effectively, to change this unpopular manner of leadership and the popular attitude to authorities? Today there is no *popularly recognized leader of a national scale*. Kuchma is not that sort. And there is no one to take over. There are many worthy people in this big country, but they are hardly known to the electorate. Would they ever be? Those whose names stand out are not up to the mark. And some are not leaders at all, on closer inspection.

So what do the people expect from their new president? What do they think of, what and who do they hope for, whom could they support in the elections this fall? What do politicians think four months ahead of the election campaign?

We are not going to divulge the motives and aspirations of those who send widely advertised letters to the office of the Presidential Administration [in support of the Kuchma-initiated political reform, in protest against the opposition's "destructive" activity in Parliament] at their bosses' orders. We are more interested to know the opinions of those whom sociologists found in big cities and small remote villages, those who spoke their own minds, answering numerous questions. This article is based on two nationwide polls conducted by the Razumkov Center on November 14-20 and December 10-17, 2003. (2023 and 2019 people were polled, respectively; sampling error does not exceed 2.3%).

#### Voters Want to Be Voters

The absence of a "street response" to the reform-related events, to the Constitutional Court's verdicts [allowing Kuchma's third term in office, allowing election of the president by parliament and others], and the confrontation in Parliament do not mean that the citizens of this country are indifferent to how the future head of state ought to be elected. The returns of the polls show the following:

Number one. The voters want to remain voters: the overwhelming majority (86%) of Ukrainians insist that the President of Ukraine be elected through a direct popular vote. Only 5% are ready to unconditionally cede this right to Parliament, and another 4% are ready to hand it over to Parliament in 2006.

Number two. The voters don't believe in this Parliament's ability to choose the worthiest man. They remember how it was elected, they saw how this majority was formed, they know how these lawmakers work. So they are convinced that if the new head of state were elected by this Parliament, it would most likely be a representative of the authorities - either [Prime Minister] Yanukovych (21% of respondents) or Kuchma (18%). But these men are the last in creation the voters want to see as Ukraine's president. 71% of respondents are convinced that the new president must change the present political course and only 14% would prefer to see it continued. Neither Kuchma, nor Yanukovych would change this course.

Number three. 51% of Ukrainians pin their hopes for a better life on the forthcoming presidential election. Almost as many skeptics (42%) have little hopes for the election and expect no changes for the better. Only 2% of Ukrainians don't want anything better from life, and they are indifferent to the election; 5% are undecided.

Number four. 78% of respondents are definitely determined to go to the polls; 5% are not going to vote; 17% are still undecided. It's not because Ukrainians enjoy casting ballots so much that they will go to the polls. And not for mercantile reasons (because elections offer good opportunities to make some money). They will go to the polls because it's the only chance, however illusory, for them to influence the authorities in the hope of a better life.

The present authorities are unable to secure the basic civil rights: to labor and just remuneration, to quality education and medical aid, to security in old age, to objective information... It would be immoral to deprive the people of their right to elect their own president once in five years.

#### The Same Faces

The issue of the quality of the elections is extremely important, but quality of choice is no less important. This choice is influenced by two factors: the voters' own experience and the candidates on offer.

As to their experience, it's far from positive. Last year this country didn't move an inch forward "on the way of the European choice". Nor did anything change much in the people's welfare. The intangible macroeconomic figures, which the authorities like to cite, and the action program, which the opposition keeps promising but never shows, both remain abstract to the people. Last year, just as the year before, neither the authorities nor the opposition were able to solve a single significant problem. That's why the voters have so little trust in both the authorities and the opposition.

Nor was the opposition able to defend a single businessman who supported it. Strange as it looks, it is not thanks to the opposition, but to journalists and individual members of government that Ukraine has not been involved yet in dubious international projects like the SEC [Single Economic Space to be shared by Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus], the [Russia-led] gas transportation consortium, or the reverse use of the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline. Opinion polls show that popular trust in the opposition is not increasing. Instead, dissatisfaction is mounting.

Small wonder that opposition to the regime as a candidate's personal platform won't be decisive to most voters in October, and the number of staunch supporters of the opposition hasn't grown any bigger than the same 26% as before.

The number of those who are going to vote for a representative of the authorities is even smaller - 10% (vs. 11% one year ago).

79% of voters are generally dissatisfied with the authorities' work during the past year; 57% are dissatisfied with the Yanukovych government's performance; 58% are dissatisfied with the opposition's activity. As a result, the general attitude to the country's leadership has become 34 percent worse, and to the opposition - 20 percent worse. Apparently, it would be easier to vote against than for a candidate from either camp.

The attitude to individual politicians, except for Yanukovych and [National Bank Governor] Tyhytko has worsened, too: by 37% to Kuchma and by 8% to Yushchenko. Tyhytko's popularity rating has grown by 2%, and Yanukovych's has grown by 6%. It should be noted, however, that the voters' evaluations are mostly based on their emotions and traditional likes or dislikes than on sober assessments of concrete deeds. It's enough to mention that 31% of those who believe that last year most harm to the country was done by Yushchenko are Yanukovych's supporters, and the remaining two-thirds come from Eastern Ukraine. At the opposite end, 47% of those who call Yanukovych the problem are Yushchenko supporters, and 38% come from Western Ukraine.

There are no new political leaders in sight. We see the same faces, and none looks attractive enough to the majority of voters. None of the leading politicians has a popularity rating of at least 50%. And all the likely candidates have fewer determined supporters than determined opponents, who would not vote for them "under any circumstances".

The low "hard" popularity ratings and limited possibilities to raise them indicate that firstly, each candidate will have very narrow possibilities for maneuvering during the election race: he will have to make advances to the voters, instead of convincing them of the correctness of his position and raising their political awareness and view of important issues, no matter what part of the country they come from. Secondly, it is clear that there is still a niche for a "third" candidate (*The ZIV* wrote about it on March 8 last year). Consciously or subconsciously, the voters are still hoping for a surprise leader who would convince them of his ability to lead the nation and manage the country better than the known candidates could.

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A direct question about the likelihood of a third candidate's emergence was answered positively by a large number of respondents - 41%. About the same number of respondents don't expect such a candidate. Interestingly, almost one-third (31%) of voters are convinced that a surprise "third" candidate would win the race, and 41% are convinced of the opposite. These figures show that the available choice of candidates is insufficient and most voters are not satisfied with it.

It should be noted that many supporters of each available candidate don't rule out a "third" candidate's emergence and his chances to win the race. In the camp of opposition candidates' supporters, the number of those who admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate varies from 35% of Yushchenko's electorate and 40% of Tymoshenko's; in the pro-authority camp they vary from 41% of Yanukovich's supporters to 57% of Medvedchuk's.

The generalized returns of these polls give the following picture.

Each leader's voters have much in common: most of them reject the idea of Kuchma's third term in office (from 70% of [Parliamentary Speaker] Lytvyn's supporters to 87% of [Communist leader] Symonenko's); most of them uphold the idea of electing the president by direct popular vote (from 84% of Symonenko's electorate to 92% of Yushchenko's and Medvedchuk's); most of them pin their hopes for a better life on presidential elections (from 52% of Symonenko's supporters to 75% of [Defense Minister] Marchuk's). The only exception is Tyhytko's electorate: only 40% of them pin hopes on elections, but on the other hand, the number of these who are satisfied with life is quite large - 7%. More people are sure that the elections will not be democratic than the reverse (the only exception is Medvedchuk's voters - 41% vs. 42%). Appraising the future effects of an opposition candidate's victory, a significant number of respondents tend to evaluate a concrete personality.

Opposition as a personal feature rather than an ideology matters mostly to the supporters of Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, and [Socialist leader] Moroz (50% - 53% of respondents). Yushchenko's and Moroz's supporters appear to be the most determined ideologically (25% of Yushchenko's electorate support the national-democratic ideology; socialist and national-democratic ideas are supported by 25% and 10% of Moroz's electorate respectively). As to Tymoshenko's supporters, 16% of them are inclined to the national-democratic ideology while 28% are ideologically inert or "illiterate". Most of those who support Symonenko (53%) are in favor of the Communist ideology, and his opposition to Kuchma's regime only matters to 41%.

Yushchenko's electorate: 42% reside in Western Ukraine, 36% reside in Central Ukraine; they are mostly young (46% are under 40); two-thirds (65%) have a secondary education, 28% have a higher education; 53% are female and 47% are male, which is basically the gender ratio in Ukraine. This camp is not very strong: 35% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 48% do not, 27% don't rule out his victory (46% do).

Symonenko's electorate: 50% reside in Eastern Ukraine, 30% reside in Central Ukraine; they are mostly old (65% are over 50) and have a secondary education (64%), the male/female ratio is 50:50. The camp is even weaker than Yushchenko's: 39% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 39% do not; 31% don't rule out his victory (40% do).

Moroz's electorate: these are concentrated in Central regions (54%) and Eastern regions (23%); they are predominantly elderly (53% are over 50) and with a secondary education (69%). The gender ratio is 50:50. This camp is stronger than others: 33% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 52% do not; 27% don't rule out his victory (48% do).

Tymoshenko's electorate: 36% reside in Western Ukraine and 35% reside in Central regions; most are young (57% are under 40), with various educational backgrounds; the gender ratio is 50:50. The camp is not very strong: 40% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 36% do not; 28% don't rule out his victory (38% do).

Yanukovich's electorate: these are concentrated chiefly in Eastern regions (40% in the Donetsk region alone) and Central regions (20%); 20% are under 30, 42% are under 40; 62% have a secondary education, 32% have a higher education; the gender ratio is 50:50. This camp is quite strong: 41% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 46% do not; 28% don't rule out his victory (54% do).

Tyhytko's electorate: these are concentrated mainly in Eastern (59%) and Central regions (23%); the number of young voters is substantial (44% are under 40), 51% have a secondary education, 43% have a higher education; 44% are male and 56% are female. The camp is not strong and actually anidian: 43% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 49% do not; 36% don't rule out his victory (48% do).

Lytvyn's electorate: 38% reside in the Central regions, 31% reside in Eastern regions; most are either young or old (41% are under 40 and 31% are over 60); most have a secondary education (63%), 32% have a higher education. The male/female ratio is 38:62 respectively. The camp is not strong: 43% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 43% do not; 30% don't rule out his victory (40% do).

Medvedchuk's electorate: 32% reside in Southern, 27% - in Central, 25% - in Eastern regions; the share of young voters is impressive: 41% are under 30; most have a secondary education (68%); the male/female ratio is 48:52 respectively. As to as the solidity of the camp, it looks like either Medvedchuk has finally put off even his own supporters, or they understand that he is not going to run for president: 57% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence, 32% do not; 46% don't rule out his victory (29% do).

Marchuk's electorate: 38% reside in Central regions, 25% reside in Southern and 25% in Eastern regions; young voters make up a substantial part: 38% are under 30; 62% have a secondary education, 38% have a higher education; the male/female ratio is 81:19 respectively. This camp of supporters looks like Lytvyn's and Medvedchuk's: 44% admit to the possibility of a "third" candidate's emergence and as many do not; 38% don't rule out his victory (44% do).

An unknown "third" candidate's electorate: voters in practically all parts of Ukraine admit to the possibility of such a candidate (even in Western regions their number is not much smaller than that of their opponents - 36% versus 45%); they represent all age and education categories, and both genders equally.

The support for a "third" candidate is not much lower than for the rest, varying from 24% in Western parts to 34% in the East, from 29% among voters aged between 50 and 59 to 33% of younger voters; he would be supported by 30% of women and 32% of men; by 29% of university and college graduates and 35% of undergraduates. He would be supported by 26% of those who are ready to vote for an opposition candidate; by 40% of those who are against both pro-authority and opposition candidates; by 31% of those who insist on radically changing the present course and by 37% of those who would like a new president to continue it.

A "third" candidate has chances to collect 26% of votes from the opposition's supporters, 33% from the authorities' supporters, 40% from those who are inclined to vote for a candidate who is supported by neither the opposition nor the leadership, 35% from those who don't care whether he is for the opposition or the authorities, and 37% from those who believe that a new president should continue the policy pursued by the incumbent.

As we can see, a "third" candidate is largely expected by the authorities' supporters; in particular, among young educated men, residents of Eastern and Central regions, who are in favour of sticking to the present political course. Therefore, Yanukovich's and Medvedchuk's positions among young educated voters are rather weak. Such a candidate is supposed to be supported mainly by young East-Ukrainians, irrespective of their sex or educational backgrounds.

#### Round One

None of the known candidates can count on an easy victory. Yushchenko, Yanukovich, and Symonenko have a chance to make it to the second round. The last's are weaker and weaker, and if the current trend persists, the Communist leader may well drop out of the race after the first round. The candidates who represent the authorities have the poorest starting positions: Yanukovich's rating is 12%, Tyhytko's is 5%, Medvedchuk's is 3%, Lytvyn's is 2%. Nothing has changed in twelve months, except for a 4% decline in Medvedchuk's rating since he deliberately backed out and a 5% rise in Yanukovich's rating (his predecessor Anatoliy Kinakh's best rating barely reached 6%).

Ukrainian voters maintain that *the highest chances* to win the race (please don't confuse this with readiness to support) among the authority-nominated candidates are with Yanukovich (38%, which is twice last year's figure). The chances of other representatives of the authorities are estimated far lower: Tyhytko, Medvedchuk, Lytvyn - 7% each; Marchuk - 3%.

The majority (63%) of those who are going to support the authorities in the presidential election believe that it's necessary to nominate a single candidate, and 46% of them see Yanukovich as such a candidate (last year the figure was 18%). 15% of respondents who are going to vote for the authorities suggest Tyhytko as a single candidate; 12% - Medvedchuk; 11% - Lytvyn, and 4% - Marchuk.

However, even if the maximum effort is exerted to promote one of these candidates, his rating could grow by 3% at best. Considering the preferences of those who were still undecided or unwilling to vote, in the first round, should it take place today, Yanukovich could collect 20% of votes at best, Tyhytko - 10%, Lytvyn and Medvedchuk - 7% each, and Marchuk - 6%. Thus, the authorities' losses would be minimal if Yanukovich were nominated as their single candidate.

The opposition's start positions look stronger: Yushchenko's rating is 24%; Symonenko's is 13%; Moroz's is 6%; Tymoshenko's is 5%.

Among the four opposition leaders, Yushchenko has the highest *chances to win the race*: 48%. He is followed by Symonenko - 15%, Tymoshenko and Moroz - 6% each. Thus, almost every second respondent, irrespective of his/her preferences (the authorities or the opposition), regard Yushchenko as a real contender for the presidency.

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The overwhelming majority (71%) of respondents who are inclined to vote for the opposition are convinced of the necessity of nominating a single opposition candidate. Most of them name Yushchenko - 51% (38% in March 2003), Symonenko - 22%, Tymoshenko - 11%, Moroz - 10%.

Expert estimates suggest that if Yushchenko were nominated as a single opposition candidate, his rating might reach 30%, beefed up by 50% of Tymoshenko's supporters, 25% of Moroz's supporters, and 10% of Symonenko's supporters. Considering the preferences of those who were still undecided or unwilling to vote, Yushchenko as a single opposition candidate could count on 35% of votes.

Symonenko, if nominated as a single opposition candidate, would have a 21% rating, with 25% of votes added by Moroz's supporters, 10% - by Tymoshenko's and as many by Yushchenko's. Should the presidential election take place today, Moroz as a single opposition candidate could collect 18% of the vote; every fifth supporter of Symonenko, Tymoshenko, and Yushchenko would definitely vote for him. Tymoshenko as a single opposition candidate could count on 16%: 30% of Yushchenko's supporters, 20% of Moroz's supporters, and 5% of Symonenko's supporters would vote for her. Thus, the opposition's losses would be minimal if Yushchenko were nominated its single candidate.

Most supporters of the opposition (52%) are ready to accept any configuration of a pre-election alliance: Tymoshenko's Bloc + [Yushchenko's] Our Ukraine, Tymoshenko's Bloc + Our Ukraine + Socialists, or Tymoshenko's Bloc + Our Ukraine + Socialists + Communists. Ideological differences would be smoothed over. At the same time, the idea of nominating a single candidate by the Communist-Socialist alliance has little support: only 36% of the opposition's supporters would vote for such a candidate. The voters' attitude to any pre-election alliances between pro-authority and opposition forces are equally negative, which makes the feasibility of Yushchenko becoming Kuchma's successor next to zero.

Of course, some of the above options are purely hypothetical: for example, the Communists and the Our Ukraine could never agree on a common candidate. Yet, they illustrate the layout of the opposition leaders' forces. Besides, they show that withdrawal of any candidate would by no means greatly influence the final returns without proper promotional efforts.

It would be interesting to consider the following hypothetical option: "elections without Yushchenko". If his name were not in the ballot, then Yanukovich and Symonenko would pass the first round (their chances are estimated at 18% and 14% of votes respectively). This option is hypothetical, because of some nuances.

It's hard to expect Yushchenko bailing out of his own free will, so the authorities would have to apply force, and that would be met with an unpredictable response in this country and abroad. As a result, a candidate nominated by the authorities may not collect any votes at all, while an opposition candidate may beat Saakashvili's record [at the January 4 presidential election in Georgia]. There may be a different outcome, though: knowing about the authorities' maniacal resolve and ample means to falsify everything on earth, the voters may not believe in the opposition's chances to win and so they may either ignore the election or obediently vote for the authorities' candidate.

Leaving out such a force-majeure, and considering the current trends, we can forecast that no candidate will win in the first round. So there has to be a second round.

## Round Two

The polls show that the winner of the first round stands a very good chance to win the whole race.

Yushchenko's victory over his potential second-round rivals looks like the following vote ratio: Yushchenko vs. Yanukovich - 42:27; Yushchenko vs. Symonenko - 43:26; Yushchenko vs. Tymoshenko - 43:11; Yushchenko vs. Kuchma - 47:13. The picture might be different in October, but for now that's how it is.

And this is how the returns of the second round would look if Yushchenko were out of the game: Yanukovich vs. Symonenko - 33:27; Yanukovich vs. Moroz - 33:26; Yanukovich vs. Tymoshenko - 34:23. As we can see, Yanukovich has a chance to defeat any of the three opposition leaders even without resorting to the so-called "administrative resources". But that's a hypothetical chance.

What future do the voters expect after the second round? Their forecasts differ, depending on the outcome of the election race: on whether the new president represents the authorities, the opposition alliance, or the Communist Party.

However, most voters don't expect any serious changes for the better, no matter who wins. And those who still have some hopes, tend to pin them on one of the three opposition leaders: 25% of respondents believe that the situation in this country will change for the better (10% are sure that improvements will be very significant); 14% believe that the situation will change for the worse (9% are sure that it will become significantly worse); 17% expect no tangible changes; 32% maintain that "everything depends on the personality of the new president"; 12% were undecided. So the ratio between optimists and pessimists is 25:14, with a strong accent on a candidate's personality.

The personality factor is also apparent in the forecasts about a possible victory of a pro-authority candidate (31%) and even a Communist (22%), although the Communist candidate's name is unknown.

A pro-authority candidate's victory, in the voters' opinion, would aggravate the situation in this country - 17% of pessimists versus 12% of optimists (only 4% are positive that the situation would improve significantly while 13% are sure that the aggravation would be serious). 30% of voters are sure that very little, if anything, would change in the country after such a candidate's election. 10% found it difficult to answer.

Aggravations are also predicted in case a Communist becomes President: 18% of optimists versus 24% of pessimists. 10% of respondents expect considerable improvements, and 22% expect the situation to get a great deal worse. 24% believe that little would change after a Communist becomes President. 17% found it difficult to answer.

The above figures demonstrate that Ukrainian citizens' discontent with their leadership and cautious hopes for a better life, tied to the non-communist opposition, are adequately reflected in their post-election forecasts. Here we can see that the voters are not completely satisfied with the possible candidates and that they would like to have a more convincing personality as a candidate for presidency. And a last remark: few believe that Symonenko can be elected President, while the "Yushchenko's Ukraine" or "Yanukovich's Ukraine" projects may well materialize. The thinking and concerned voters have had enough opportunities to sense the difference between these two Ukraines.

## On the forthcoming presidential campaign and the role of the media in it

As the incumbent President said in his book "Ukraine is not Russia", "the formation of democracy is not a sight for nervous people". The forthcoming election promises to be a sure proof of this thesis. According to those surveyed, the election will be undemocratic, unfair, amoral, going as far as attempting to destabilize the country. All of the above is expected by voters from both sides, but chiefly from the government.

60% of Ukrainians are convinced that the 2004 election will not be democratic, and 58% are sure that amoral and illegal methods will be used in the election fight. The majority (61%) of those expecting an unfair fight believe that it will be waged by both sides. Yet according to the polled, *unilaterally* the government would sooner use the unfair methods (34%) than the opposition (3%). However this is not a case of moral purity on the part of the latter. It is just that during the fight the opposition will be unable to resort to such methods as, say, special attention of fiscal bodies, or the rare unanimity of those in so-called "closed establishments", such as prisons, military units or educational institutions.

In fact, the main source of information - television - is under the full control of the government, which makes the most of it: according to those polled, the President is rated first (81%) according to the frequency of the appearances on national TV, the Prime Minister is second (57%), Yushchenko is third (52%) and Lytvyn with Tymoshenko are fourth (39%). However, if the President and the Prime Minister lead in positive TV coverage (Kuchma is 61% in his advantage and Yanukovich -- 44%), the representatives of the opposition are the major targets of criticism on TV. Tymoshenko (64% is negative information) and Yushchenko (46%) lead the poll.

Nevertheless, the government has practically used up its resource of information pressure on public, whereas the voters have developed a strong immunity to concentrated criticism of politicians by pocket mass media. It even has the opposite effect: 37% of the voters are ready to vote for the politician most criticized by the media, and only a fifth (21%) may be persuaded by it.

The low efficiency of media efforts can be confirmed by the results of the campaign conventionally called "our-ism will not get through". Less than 13% of those polled believe the accusation that "Our Ukraine" is fascist and is provoking clashes between nationalities. However, the majority (58%) of Ukrainians either strongly rejected these accusations (41%) or are sure that clashes between nationalities can be provoked by the activities of those who put forward such accusations (17%).

That is why, even if the presidential campaign threatens to be built on negative information, it will not be as effective as the positive. Yet for voters to trust positive information, reliable sources are needed, and the government has a trump card in this situation: its success can be proved by the politician with the highest approval rating in Ukraine - Vladimir Putin. Meanwhile, neither George Bush, nor Aleksandr Kwasniewski, nor Vaclav Havel can help the opposition.

## What the politicians do not think about

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Enough has been said **about the government**. It is worried about the main question: how to preserve itself. At the same time it declares its full support of the policy of the President (the one whom the overwhelming majority of the people does not support), and of all his constitutional initiatives; it signs special memoranda on this matter, sets up conciliatory bodies, make the coalitional government even more coalitional, shares posts, divides property, and promotes presidential projects (the SES, the gas consortium, operation of the pipeline in reverse). This is on a large scale. On a small scale the government is busy putting out fires and planning to put out new fires.

The previous year was spent on constitutional reform, winter preparations, fighting the growth of prices in grain and fuel markets, pushing through the budget, Tuzla, the SES, the gas consortium, and the operation of the pipeline in reverse. This year will be spent on the continuation of the constitutional reform, election, fighting the growth of prices on bakery products, Tuzla, the SES, the gas consortium, and the operation of the pipeline in reverse...

What is to be done with the country next, and how can they break the vicious circle of putting out fires? There is no systemic planning and well-organized work towards the future in this state. The government did not manage to direct 5 employees out of 100 towards working for the future; everyone is busy putting out fires. It is sad but it cannot be changed. Ministers, who are counting the days before their discharge, are not used to thinking about the country's future. **About the opposition. Its leaders have repeatedly stated that they have their own programs of specific actions and the teams capable of implementing them. Nobody has seen these programs; bluntly speaking, there aren't any. Moreover, nobody has ever developed them and nobody is developing them now. The situation with the teams is the same. None of the political forces can now put forward a list of people, capable of and ready for efficient work in the key posts - in the Presidential Administrations, National Security and Defense Council, government, ministries, departments, military and law enforcement bodies, in the regions and key diplomatic posts. Generally, nobody thinks about this seriously, not even the politicians, who are sure of their victory in the election.**

It is true that the bother of dealing with tactical issues is not conducive to thinking about future strategy. Yet a leader stands out for his understanding that it's not worth such a bother without a vision of the entire picture, and his own vision. The majority always carries stones, but there must be someone who will design the house which is being built of the stones, and who will coordinate the actions of the others. Otherwise there will be deadlock.

We have said that at present the main goal is to prevent the sliding of this country towards authoritarianism. I agree that the country has no future without preventing this. Yet this is not the only goal, so its attainment should not involve all our resources. Second, this is the objective for the present, but what about the future?

For well-known reasons, the opposition has been removed from solving state issues by the executive power, and it has the least influence on processes in the country. Yet who prevents the opposition from constructive work on the future: working out an action program in the major spheres, starting with high priority ones, and promoting their results and approaches in society, thus expanding the number of their supporters?

The opposition headquarters have not yet set up groups of systemic analysts to work out specific steps, proposals, solutions, and projects that will give the people and the country in general a second breath and a feeling of success, breakthrough and hope. Why? There are all sorts of people in the milieu of the opposition leaders: orators, fighters, organizers, ideologists, speech writers, negotiators, financiers, lickspittles, instigators, and mere idlers; but there are no strategists working for the future. Not for the election campaign but for the future development of the country, after the election.

To win in the election and come to power is difficult and important. However, it is not enough. With whom, and with what to come is as important. For the time being, only Tymoshenko is trying to organize a systematic search for the answers to these questions. She is still at the very beginning of the path, but her aspiration is worth mentioning. Moreover, at the moment neither Yushchenko, nor Moroz, nor Symonenko can answer the following simple question: what will be the first five decrees of the new president, and his first five bills? Their teams are not directed towards the preparation of such documents, as they were not on the eve of the 2002 parliamentary elections. The opposition failed in parliament from the very start - its leaders could not reach agreement on the key issues, and the factions were working without any system and tempo. Are we making the same mistake again?

As for the future opposition ministers, what will be their first five decisions and whom will they appoint to the key posts in the ministries? We will not hear a clear answer. Those with three assistants will come to each other's offices, for half a year they will study the regulations of the ministry, form patronage offices, and start their working day with a painful thought of which numbers to call and whom to call to the meeting.

Three "Ps" - professionalism, patriotism and probity - are the chief criteria of the selection of the candidates for important state posts, and the opposition knows this. Yet upon joining the present state machine, even the people selected according to this criteria begin to degenerate. This is clearly seen by those few seemingly successful presidential appointments to the posts of ministers' and military departments. People, especially those who have career ambitions, quickly imitate the first person: patriotism and probity quickly volatilize, yielding to a what-can-I-do-for-your approach, to the detriment of professionalism. The lack of need for professionalism is compensated for by the formal attributes of a high post, closeness to the heads of state and accompanying goods.

I was personally convinced that the opposition politicians lack an understanding of the importance of reforming public service. Many of them believe that their people are more honest than the current officials and that they will not yield to the temptations of corruption. Is it worth hurrying with such guarantees? Any minister with the salary of 2000 hryvnias (about \$400) is doomed to search for additional sources of money. Either he will be supported by large business and lobby for their interests, which do not always or entirely coincide with the state interests; or will simply steal, being in control of cash flows of many millions. Who prevents the opposition from solving the issues of reforming public service and the salaries of officials in the legislative body? How does the opposition plan to address them in case of its victory in the elections, or does it plan to address them at all?

Instead of the generally accepted 4 Ps, there is the fourth P in the staff policy of the opposition. It is personal loyalty to the leader plus effective participation in the election campaign. The same is the case with the current government. Doesn't the incumbent President use this criteria to appoint and dismiss his people? These are important qualities, and pleasant for a leader, but they are not sufficient to claim high state posts. A leader of an oblast election headquarters who ensured the required result in the election will not always make an effective governor. Why bind oneself by promise now, thus creating future problems?

The opposition does not necessarily have to expose its shadow government, since there is no such tradition and it is not safe for those who are exposed. Yet it must do work in this area and the results of this work must be evident to the voters: quality bills, expert examinations, initiatives, prompt professional reactions to events in this country and abroad, elaboration of program regulations, clever ideas in speeches by the opposition leaders on topical issues and fresh political initiatives. There are problems with these. Except for general and almost identical phrases, none of the opposition candidates gave a clear explanation of how, with whom and with what resources they will act if they are elected. Neither this country, nor the international community know about this. A typical speech or article by an opposition leader consists of the following two blocks: 90 - 95% of the time (or text) is spent on criticism of the past and the present and 5 - 10 % are general phrases about the future in the "you-will-be-better-with-us" style.

The country must have hope for the election. After a long and deep downfall, we need new prospects and a breakthrough. Both the government (that part of it which is going to live in this country and plans to stay in politics) and the opposition have a great deal to work on. The government has an additional responsibility - the situation is such that the future of this country, and the attitudes of powerful states and international structures towards it, depend precisely on the actions it will take during this year. This is what the politicians must think about. And then the voters will support them.

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