

Pro-Russian party set to form government in Ukraine

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Viktor Yanukovich, leader of the Party of the Regions, is set to become the next prime minister of Ukraine.

The parliamentary coalition previously agreed between President Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine, the Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko, and the Socialist Party—the three parties at the head of the so-called "Orange Revolution" of 2004—fell apart on July 8. Socialist Party leader Oleksandr Moroz threw his lot in with the Party of the Regions and the small Communist Party after he was offered the post of speaker of the Ukrainian parliament (Rada).

Yanukovich's new coalition was met by riotous scenes in the Rada, with the rival parties shouting, setting off sirens and engaging in fist fights. When Moroz took to the podium he was phalanxed by Party of the Regions deputies to prevent attacks by representatives of the former Orange bloc.

Yushchenko's Our Ukraine has officially ceded its interim governmental power and moved into opposition in the Rada, signaling its acceptance, at least for now, of the new government.

Reports in the pro-Orange newspaper *Ukrajina Moloda* suggested that Yushchenko could call fresh parliamentary elections in an attempt to prevent Yanukovich becoming prime minister. However, Yushchenko appears to have foregone that option, as a fresh election would likely see his party all but wiped out—to the benefit of both Tymoshenko and the Party of the Regions.

Elections to the Rada in March dealt a serious blow to Our Ukraine. Finishing a distant third in the poll, Yushchenko's party engaged in a protracted series of backroom deals both with the other two Orange parties and with the Party of the Regions, the largest faction in the Rada. Our Ukraine was formed by Yushchenko in

2001 as a vehicle to advance his political career following his fall from grace under the previous president, Leonid Kuchma, whom he had served as prime minister.

After the March election, Yushchenko resisted any deal that would see Tymoshenko—his co-leader during the Orange Revolution—return as prime minister. Tymoshenko held the post after 2004, but Yushchenko sacked her within a year amidst accusations of corruption and mismanagement. The president accepted a rapprochement with his former collaborator last month, under pressure from the Bush administration, which sought to reunite the Orange leaders in an effort to keep the pro-Russian Party of the Regions out of office.

Tymoshenko had threatened to block the coalition between the Socialist Party and the Party of the Regions-Communist alliance on the technicality that Moroz had not given the mandated ten days notice to quit their coalition before joining the rival grouping. But she was unable to pursue this, as the Ukrainian Supreme Court, which would have decided on the matter, lacked a quorum due to the two years of political infighting which followed the Orange Revolution and prevented appointments being made to the court.

Though it is no less a reactionary party of oligarchs, the formation of a government led by the Party of the Regions is a blow to Yushchenko, Tymoshenko and the pro-Western elite they represent.

The Orange Revolution was a move by one group within Ukraine's wealthy elite to assume the levers of state power at the expense of their rivals, the eastern Ukrainian industrialists, whose main representative is Yanukovich. Control of the Rada and the government gives the holders the means to protect themselves from

the threat of criminal prosecution and the ability to stymie the economic interests of their rivals.

Yushchenko's victory in 2004 was the outcome of a political campaign funded and spearheaded by Washington as part of its drive to weaken the influence of Russia in the former Soviet Union. The subsequent unraveling of the Orange coalition will please Moscow and cause consternation in Washington, setting the scene for further imperialist meddling in Ukraine.

The debacle of the Orange Revolution provides an object lesson on the character of the so-called "colour" revolutions that have taken place in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, including Georgia and Serbia. The "democratic opposition" forces that have come to power with the aid of Western imperialism are headed by advocates of capitalist "free market" policies who are prepared to line up behind the foreign policy prescriptions of Washington. These governments have proven to be as corrupt as those they replaced.



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