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27. OSS co TTI buys Ukraine software house (Globes)
28. Evraz buys iron processing, coking assets in Ukraine for cash and shares (Forbes/ AFX News Limited)
29. Ukraine's president marks Chanuka (JTA)
30. Chernobyl: Lost world (The Independent)

1. Ukraine president presses for Tymoshenko as PM
By Yuri Kulikov
Reuters, 12 December 2007

Ukraine's parliament remained deadlocked on Wednesday as the pro-Western president made a second attempt to restore Yulia Tymoshenko as prime minister.

Tymoshenko stood alongside President Viktor Yushchenko in the 2004 "Orange Revolution," but was sacked in 2005 seven months after being named prime minister.

She won 225 votes in the 450-seat assembly on Tuesday, one short of the majority required to become prime minister, and accused rivals of tampering with the electronic voting system.

The outcome exposed the fragile nature of a 227-member coalition of two parties to emerge from a September election - Tymoshenko's bloc and Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party.

Yushchenko submitted her name to the chamber a second time. But Tymoshenko's rivals blocked a morning sitting, saying they first wanted to elect senior parliamentary officials.

Outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, the president's rival in the 2004 upheaval, said the vote showed an "orange" coalition had no long-term future. He repeated his call for a "broad coalition" with some of the president's supporters.

"Voters must at last get an answer on whether the coalition of 227 can take responsibility for the country. Let's make it clear, yes or no," he said in a statement on his Web site.

Parliament's Conciliation Council, which sets the agenda, was scheduled to sit and Tymoshenko's "orange" allies hoped a session would get under way later in the afternoon.

TAMPERING

Tymoshenko said all 227 coalition members had backed her on Tuesday, but tampering prevented two from registering their votes. But the SBU security service, summoned to investigate, said checks revealed no interference in the system.

Oleksander Turchinov, one of Tymoshenko's most trusted lieutenants, told reporters any new vote should be taken by a show of hands.

"The speaker would call on each member to raise his hand and say publicly whether he is for or against," Turchinov said.

Tymoshenko roused crowds in central Kiev in 2004 by denouncing a rigged election, eventually overturned by a court ruling after Yanukovich was initially declared the winner.

Named prime minister days after Yushchenko's inauguration, she spooked investors in office by calling for a major review of privatizations and by trying to influence markets. The two reconciled for the September election that had been intended to end three years of political turmoil.

Analysts were divided on whether Tymoshenko's setback was rooted in a betrayal by some coalition members said to be wary of her return to power, or a genuine technical problem.

Some said the events bore out skeptics' predictions that members of Our Ukraine considered Tymoshenko an unpredictable populist and would opt for a "broad coalition."

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

http://ca.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2007-12-12T125713Z_01_L12289502_RTRIDST_0_NEWS-UKRAINE-PARLIAMENT-COL.XML&archived=False

2. Ukrainian Loses Her Bid for Premier AP, 12 December 2007

Yulia V. Tymoshenko, a leader of Ukraine's pro-democracy protests in 2004, on Tuesday fell one vote short of the parliamentary majority needed to become prime minister.

Ms. Tymoshenko, a former prime minister and on-again-off-again ally of President Viktor A. Yushchenko, received 225 votes in each of two rounds of voting — one vote short of the absolute majority needed.

She and her supporters immediately claimed that the machine tabulating the votes was rigged.

The parties backing each of the leaders won a narrow majority in September's national elections, and the two agreed to form a majority coalition on the understanding that Ms. Tymoshenko would be nominated as prime minister.

"The voting was grossly and blatantly falsified," she said.

After the second disputed vote, members of the Party of Regions, which opposes Ms. Tymoshenko and has the largest contingent in Parliament, blocked the rostrum. Lawmakers then went into a recess.

Ms. Tymoshenko enjoys intense loyalty from her backers, especially since the 2004 Orange Revolution protests. Opponents say they are uncomfortable with her ambition and fiery oratory.

Ms. Tymoshenko and the president have often locked horns in the past. He dismissed her as prime minister in 2005, after only seven months.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/europe/12ukraine.html?ref=world>

3. Ukraine's Tymoshenko to continue fight for PM post **By Sabina Zawadzki** **Reuters, 12 December 2007**

Yulia Tymoshenko, a leader of Ukraine's "Orange Revolution", makes another attempt in parliament on Wednesday to get back the job of prime minister after failing to secure the position on Tuesday.

Tymoshenko fell one vote short of returning to the job after two members of her "orange" coalition failed to vote, according to the electronic voting system. She and her allies accused rivals of tampering with the system.

Analysts and observers were divided on whether the setback amounted to a betrayal by some members of the coalition said to be wary of her return to power, or the result of a genuine technical problem.

Tymoshenko's bloc and the party of President Viktor Yushchenko, Our Ukraine, have 227 seats out of 450 in the chamber, just one more than needed to pass most legislation.

"I think it is most likely that Tymoshenko will be elected tomorrow," analyst Olexiy Haran at the Kiev Mohyla University told Radio Era late on Tuesday.

"As deputies did not publicly withdraw their support for Tymoshenko, this amounts to proof that she has the 227 votes," he said. Two coalition members, one from Tymoshenko's own bloc, said their votes for her had not been registered.

Other analysts said the events bore out skeptics' predictions that members of Our Ukraine considered Tymoshenko an unpredictable populist and wanted to form a "grand coalition" with outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's Regions Party.

Parliamentary speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk, a coalition member whose election to the post last week indicated unity was tight, closed the session saying Yushchenko would soon again submit his nominee. That would mean another parliamentary vote.

Yushchenko and Tymoshenko have had an uneasy relationship since they stood side by side during weeks of 2004 when orange-clad protestors swept him to power.

He sacked her as his first prime minister after just eight months during which they constantly sniped. She spooked investors by calling for a major review of privatizations and worried them she was trying to influence markets.

That allowed Yanukovich, Yushchenko's rival in the "Orange Revolution", to form a government after a 2006 parliamentary election, but their fight for power as parliament reduced the president's authority led to over a year of political deadlock.

Yushchenko and Tymoshenko reconciled this year for a September parliamentary election which produced the slender orange majority. That vote had been intended to end three years of political crises which forced vital economic reform down the agenda.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL1140641120071212>

4. Tymoshenko Loses by One Vote The Moscow Times, 12 December 2007

Ukraine's parliament on Tuesday failed to approve Yulia Tymoshenko as prime minister in a vote that her supporters immediately charged was technically flawed.

Tymoshenko was nominated by President Viktor Yushchenko, but received only 225 votes in each of two rounds of voting, one vote short of the absolute majority needed. Her supporters, however, said the machine tabulating the votes had been tampered with.

"It's not the lawmakers that malfunctioned, it's the machine. It was programmed for 225 votes," said Volodymyr Filenko, a parliament member from Tymoshenko's party.

"The voting was grossly and blatantly falsified," Tymoshenko said.

The dispute over the vote count adds a new exacerbating element to Ukraine's chronically chaotic politics.

After the second vote, members of the anti-Tymoshenko Party of the Regions, which has the largest contingent in the parliament, blockaded the rostrum; the body then went into recess.

Katya Malofeyeva, chief economist at Renaissance Capital, predicted that Ukraine would be without a government for at least several more weeks.

"I actually expected this to happen. Full support was very doubtful," she said.

"It's definitely a strong sign that she needs to negotiate further. She would have to give up her ambitions for all the economic positions in government."

Tymoshenko told the parliament before the vote that she would fight corruption and unite the country, which is divided between nationalist western regions and the Russian-speaking east.

"When the national team is playing, we must all cheer in the same way," Tymoshenko said.

"I want a national team to be born so that we are able to turn Ukraine into a strong European state."

Although the Party of the Regions, led by the previous prime minister, Viktor Yanukovich, has the largest number of seats, the parties of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko together obtained a narrow majority of the seats in September's national elections.

Tymoshenko and the president have often locked horns in the past -- he dismissed her as prime minister in 2005 after she had served only seven months -- but agreed to form a majority coalition on the understanding that she would be nominated to return to the post.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2007/12/12/014.html>

**5. Tymoshenko falls short in vote for PM
By Roman Olearchyk in Kiev
The Financial Times, 11 December 2007**

The future of the pro-western governing coalition in Ukraine was cast into doubt on Tuesday, as the country's deeply-divided parliament failed to back the candidacy of coalition candidate Yulia Tymoshenko for prime minister.

The vote was a blow to the coalition between the political blocs of Viktor Yushchenko, the president, and his erstwhile Orange Revolution ally, Yulia Tymoshenko, formed late last month. Ms Tymoshenko was the favourite for premier after her bloc finished with a surprisingly strong showing in snap elections held on September 30.

But on Tuesday, as her candidacy fell one vote short of winning a parliamentary majority in the 450-seat assembly, Ms Tymoshenko rushed to blame political allies of Viktor Yanukovich, the outgoing premier, of tampering with the electronic voting system.

Mr Yanukovich's Region's party denied the allegations, but television reports showed that a member of his party had snatched away the voting card from the parliament speaker, thereby preventing a vote in favour of Ms Tymoshenko's candidacy. One lawmaker in the president's camp said his card failed to register for the vote.

Ms Tymoshenko expressed hope her candidacy would be resubmitted by the president, perhaps as early as Wednesday.

"The president said that he is ready to submit my candidacy for prime minister a second time. He saw with his very eyes how the falsification was conducted," she said.

But the incident revealed just how fragile the coalition- which controls the assembly with only a hairline majority- could be. What's more, some presidential allies have expressed support for a coalition with Mr Yanukovich's Regions party.

The heroes of the Orange Revolution were reunited this summer after a bitter falling out in 2006 to oust the governing coalition of Mr Yanukovich, whom they accused of derailing western integration initiatives and sponsoring political corruption.

Ms Tymoshenko is viewed as a supporter of Mr Yushchenko's efforts to join the European Union and Nato military alliance. But she is expected to challenge for the presidential post in a campaign that kicks off in 2009.

While increasingly popular in Ukraine, Ms Tymoshenko's return as premier, a post she held briefly in 2005, is expected to strain relations with Moscow. She has pledged to clean up the murky role of intermediary companies in the billion-dollar natural gas trade between Kiev, Russia and Central Asia.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/67726234-a80e-11dc-9485-0000779fd2ac.html>

6. It's orange, but is it bright?
By Tomas Valasek
Guardian Unlimited, 12 December 2007

The political haggling in Ukraine seems to be coming to an end. Can the country now look forward to some stable government?

The future looks orange in Ukraine as Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko, the two heroes of the 2004 revolution, join forces again to form a government in Kyiv.

Their respective parties finished second and third in the September parliamentary elections (the top honours having gone to the man they banished in the Orange revolution, Viktor Yanukovich). But the two "orange" parties control just enough votes in the parliament to form a government. Yulia Tymoshenko is to become the new prime minister, and she will share power with Yushchenko, whose term as president ends in 2009.

Ukrainians will be relieved that the behind-the-scenes haggling over top posts, which took more than two months, is finally over. But they will also question whether this government can last. And they will want to know if it is strong enough to sort out the country's messy judiciary and its electoral system.

The last time Yushchenko and Tymoshenko governed together, in 2004, the president fired the prime minister after only eight months on the job. Their 2007 collaboration, too, got off to a shaky start - parts of Yushchenko's party revolted over the prospect of ruling with Tymoshenko again. Defections can sink the government in a heartbeat; it has a majority of only two seats in the parliament. Yushchenko and Tymoshenko are also both eyeing the presidential elections in 2009, so there is a risk that their current collaboration may turn out to be only marginally longer-lived than the previous one.

That would be a terrible waste. Ukraine badly needs a stable government that can sort out the failing judicial system and introduce changes to the constitution.

The judiciary has lost all credibility during Ukraine's 2007 political turmoil. In the most blatant case of judicial malfunction, the country's highest court failed to rule on the legality of early elections. It appeared to be leaning against Yushchenko's decision to call the poll, but then the president simply fired a number of the court's judges and yet more resigned. A mature democracy cannot function if the courts are unable to check the power of the executive branch. The government must strengthen the power of the judiciary, and respect its decisions.

Similarly, the provisions regarding elections need repair. The voters must be given the right to vote for individual MPs instead of blank party tickets. Ukraine's parties are notoriously shady: they lack any ideological content of note, mostly representing Ukraine's powerful oligarchs. MP loyalties are openly traded for cash. If the voters were given the right to vote for MPs by name, the parliamentarians would have to account for their actions to voters.

Ukraine, on the whole, is a successful country. Its politicians may be quarrelsome and corrupt but the economy is doing well, and the country is independent and unified (even though, at its birth, many predicted that it would split). Yushchenko and Tymoshenko started the Orange revolution, and they were given a second chance to strengthen its legacy. The two most urgent tasks are to repair the electoral and the judiciary systems; other reforms should follow. The "orange" government must not let its voters down again.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tomas_valasek/2007/12/its_orange_but_is_it_bright.html

**7. Ukrainian president resubmits Tymoshenko's candidacy for PM
RIA Novosti, 12 December 2007**

Ukraine's president submitted the candidacy of Yulia Tymoshenko to prime minister for a second time after the pro-Western "orange" coalition leader fell short by one vote Tuesday, the presidential press service said.

Viktor Yushchenko's move follows a relevant proposal from Supreme Rada Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk on behalf of parliamentary factions.

After Tymoshenko, who served as premier in 2005, failed to receive sufficient votes in the Supreme Rada, the "orange" camp accused opponents - the Party of Regions led by acting Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich - of blocking lawmakers' electronic cards during the vote.

Tymoshenko, 47, was nominated for the post by a coalition of her eponymous party and the pro-presidential Our Ukraine bloc after the groups won a total of 227 seats in the September elections, one vote above the 226 votes required to form a majority in the 450-seat Rada.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://en.rian.ru/world/20071212/92001614.html>

**8. Tymoshenko falls 1 vote short of majority needed to become Ukraine's prime minister
By MARIA DANILOVA
AP, 11 December 2007**

KIEV, Ukraine -- Orange Revolution heroine Yulia Tymoshenko fell one vote short Tuesday of the parliamentary majority needed to become prime minister, prompting her supporters to cry foul.

Tymoshenko, nominated by President Viktor Yushchenko following the September elections that gave their parties a razor-thin edge in the 450-seat parliament, received 225 votes -- one short of the majority needed for confirmation.

Approval would have cemented the resurgence of her partnership in power with Yushchenko. Together, they led the peaceful Orange Revolution protests of 2004 that helped Yushchenko win the presidency and put her in the prime minister's office until a bitter split seven months later.

But Tuesday's outcome only added to the political chaos in Ukraine.

Tymoshenko accused opponents bent on barring her return to the premier's office of rigging the vote. Her foes blocked the rostrum to prevent further balloting, and parliament adjourned without resolution.

Tymoshenko and supporters from Yushchenko's party claim the electronic vote-tabulating machine had been tampered with and did not record two votes for Tymoshenko. They claimed the same mechanism was used during a vote minutes later on whether or not to hold another ballot on Tymoshenko's candidacy -- which also got only 225 votes in favor.

The two pro-Western parties accused the rival Party of Regions, led by outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, of rigging the vote.

"The voting was grossly and blatantly falsified," a somber Tymoshenko said. "We are convinced that Party of Regions is behind this."

"It's not the lawmakers that malfunctioned; it's the machine. It was programmed for 225 votes," said Volodymyr Filenko, a lawmaker from Tymoshenko's party.

Yanukovych's party denied the accusations, saying the vote demonstrated a rift in the so-called Orange camp.

"If something goes wrong, they always blamed Party of Regions," said Anna Herman, a top lawmaker from Yanukovych's party.

After the disputed votes, dozens of members of Yanukovych's Russia-friendly party, which has the largest contingent in parliament, blocked the rostrum. The legislature then went into recess and later adjourned for the day, as Yushchenko met with top lawmakers to wrestle with the crisis.

Tymoshenko's and Yushchenko's parties were pushing for a quick revote on Tymoshenko, while Yanukovych's party insisted Yushchenko must formally re-nominate Tymoshenko first.

U.S. Ambassador William Taylor, who was at parliament during the tumultuous voting, expressed regret that it was inconclusive. "We look forward to working with the new government as soon as it is formed, which we hope will be soon," Taylor told The Associated Press.

The vote suggested further political turmoil in a country that has struggled for stability since the Orange Revolution.

Burying past differences with Yushchenko, who needed the support of her more popular party to forge a majority in parliament, Tymoshenko agreed to join his supporters in a coalition on the understanding that she would be nominated as prime minister.

The Orange Revolution protests broke out after a fraud-plagued presidential election in which Yanukovych tallied the most votes. Amid weeks of round-the-clock demonstrations in Kiev, a court nullified the election and ordered a rerun, which the reformist, Western-oriented Yushchenko won.

But Yushchenko's star quickly dimmed as his government became mired in factional squabbling.

Yanukovych, who was prime minister at the time of the Orange Revolution, returned to the post after the 2006 parliamentary elections that brought his party the biggest share of votes.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2007/12/12/news/politics/17_37_2712_11_07.txt

9. Ukraine reformers fail to elect Tymoshenko premier - Summary Earthtimes.org, 12 December 2007

Ukrainian reformers suffered an embarrassing defeat Tuesday by trying but failing to elect politician Yulia Tymoshenko the country's new prime minister, according to her because of a computer error. A vote in the national legislature, the Verhovna Rada, showed 225 MPs in support of Tymoshenko's candidacy, with 226 ayes needed in the 450-seat house.

Ukraine's Orange coalition won a narrow two-seat majority in the house as a result of parliamentary elections held in September, but observers had long questioned whether the two reform parties in the alliance would be able to hold their majority without defections.

Leaders of the alliance, including Tymoshenko, had confidently predicted the motion would carry with 227 in support. In fact two members of the coalition failed to cast ballots.

Confusion reigned in the legislature immediately after Tuesday's vote, with dozens of opposition MPs leaving their seats to argue with the parliament speaker, and Tymoshenko and her associates going into an emergency huddle.

After announcing the vote failed because of a possible technical problem in one of the pro-Tymoshenko MP's voting machines, the parliament considered a motion to repeat the vote immediately, rejected it, and adjourned for discussions.

Tymoshenko later told reporters that the loss had not been due to cracks in the coalition, but rather manipulation of the parliament voting machines so that the votes of a pair of MPs were not get counted.

Early evidence seemed to favour Tymoshenko's claim, with both MPs in question stating for the record they had in fact supported Tymoshenko, and questioning the vote computer recorded them as opposed.

The voting machine's registration of one deputy absent from the hall in a non-related vote, while TV cameras showed him present, also seemed to be an indication that Rada's polling computer had been suffering technical problems.

Tymoshenko accused members of Regions Ukraine party, a pro- oligarch party and her main opponents, of tampering with the Rada voting machines.

The coalition circulated a petition condemning the parliament's voting equipment as unreliable, and calling for roll-call or paper ballot votes until it was repaired. The petition had gathered 150 signatures, the number needed to allow abandonment of electronic voting, by early afternoon.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, who had made a rare visit to parliament to support Tymoshenko in the ultimately flubbed vote, was meeting with coalition leaders in the early evening.

Tymoshenko predicted a repeat vote would be held on Wednesday, and predicted that the coalition had the necessary majority, and party disciple, to put her into the Premier job.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/156902.html>

10. Partisan Disarrangement Political Leaders Lack Time and Will to Build Modern Parties **By Alexei MUSTAFIN** **Zerkalo Nedeli # 47 (676) 8 — 14 December 2007**

Ukrainian political leaders never live up to their promises and not only because some promises are unrealizable. Some promise lower prices of natural gas. Others promise "a better life today" or complete reimbursement for devalued deposits with the former USSR Savings Bank. Before the September 30 election the pro-presidential bloc Our Ukraine undertook to build a single political party on the basis of nine allied parties by the end of this year. This promise hardly contributed to the bloc's electoral gains but surely pleased its honorary chairman Viktor Yushchenko. The President still keeps urging the allied parties to merge in one, but all he sees is their reluctance...

The explanations are simple. The leaders of the People's Rukh [*Movement*] are reluctant to part with their popular brand, fearing to turn into a replica of the ill-fated Popular Democratic Party. Yuri Kostenko, leader of the Ukrainian People's Party, says that leftists and rightists may have common grounds but cannot share the same roof. Anatoliy Matviyenko, leader of the Sobor [*Togetherness*], fears to become someone's "tool" and believes that democracy takes time to mature. The People's Self-Defense led by Yuri Lutsenko has gone even further, withdrawing from the unification process in protest against attempts to form a grand coalition [between the Our Ukraine – People's Self-Defense and the Regions Party – **A.B.**]. The prime suspect in the alleged collusion with the Regions Party is Presidential Secretariat Chief Viktor Baloga.

In response to allegations of "secret talks and deals with the enemy camp", Baloga called Lutsenko and other allied leaders "a jelly bunch" and accused them of "an unpardonable and unforgettable moral crime". According to him, they violated their obligation to unite in a single party in 2007. The

Presidential Secretariat ordered all governors and chiefs of OU-PSD branch offices to organize demonstrations of grass-root support with “collective letters from rank-and-file party members” and all that. The arrow missed the target – simply because the branch offices are staffed by members of the parties allied in the bloc and none of them wished to dissolve. However, there is hardly a thing that could stop Baloga. According to sources with the presidential chancellery, he is designing a new party – not necessarily with the participation of the existing ones. Allegedly, it is for this purpose that he has founded a public organization named Hart [*Endurance*] and managed by Igor Kril. The Our Ukraine office comments on Baloga’s initiative quite unambiguously, calling it “an attempt to build a party to be completely controlled by the Presidential Secretariat” and suspecting him of “scheming a grand coalition” in defiance of any objections. OU leader Vyacheslav Kyrylenko and his comrades surely did not want to be left overboard and decided to take the lead. They set up three workgroups that found no serious differences among the allied parties’ statutes or programs. When Roman Zvarych suggested convening a unification congress in April, Igor Kril was beside himself with anger and said that with such an approach the party would hardly be established in October.

By now the Presidential Secretariat has cooled down, seeing that it is not omnipotent. The chancellery might succeed in disrupting a session of the Our Ukraine political council, but it is unable to dictate its will to the entire bloc, even though on Yushchenko’s behalf. Besides, Yushchenko is short of “human resource” – there is no one to show the new party’s “public face”. Baloga and Kril have been discredited after the long haggle over the coalition agreement; Kyrylenko and Lutsenko do not “deserve” Yushchenko’s trust; and all his former “dear friends”, who wasted their money on the OU-PSD project, prefer to keep away from another risky venture. Yushchenko has a joker – Arseniy Yatsenyuk, but one man, even such a charismatic one, cannot be everywhere at once.

Similar integration processes are going on in the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc – the one and only ally of the OU-PSD. Tymoshenko, however, is not much interested in building a strong party on the basis of those allied in her bloc. In any status – as the Prime Minister or a candidate for presidency – she prefers to play the role of a national leader towering above political parties.

Besides, there can be no united party without ideological certainty, which the Tymoshenko bloc evidently lacks. Some parties are liberal and others are nationalist, leftist, or center-leftist. Tymoshenko claims to profess solidarism, which has a definite rightist bias, but even her most loyal and devoted supporters doubt the firmness of her rightist convictions. There is one thing no one doubts: if only she wished so, all parties in her bloc would immediately find a common ideological denominator. They share one consolidating idea, believing that their leader’s success guarantees success to all parties and groups within the bloc. In this sense the motley crew of the Tymoshenko bloc differs from the parties of the OU-PSD bloc which have a common ideology but entirely different goals.

It is clear why the OU-PSD leaders need a united party – they need an operational mechanism of decision-making. The only point of dispute is namely who should operate this mechanism. Tymoshenko already has such a mechanism. Her prime concern is prevention and neutralization of any disturbances within the fragile body of her bloc that are fraught with fatal consequences. That is why, understanding that each vote counts and that unification or any other reorganization at the moment would cause serious disturbances, Tymoshenko puts off this issue to a later time.

On the opposite pole, the Regions Party keeps hunting for votes. For some inexplicable reason its leaders decided to build a united opposition to counterbalance the “orange coalition”. Having one-third of seats in the parliament, the RP faction tries hard to enlist a dozen or two MPs [from the Communist faction and the Lytvyn faction – **A.B.**] – a quantity hardly decisive but rather costly.

That is not exactly what the party needs, being even more fragile than the Tymoshenko bloc. Actually, it is a coalition of different politicians who entered the parliament in single file. Now it is clear that some of them are nothing but ballast. They understand it and so break their (and others’) backs to prove their indispensable value. Although the party badly needs reorganization, there is no one in sight who could take up this job. Viktor Yanukovich and Rinat Akhmetov pinned great hopes on Boris Kolesnikov, but he bungled his job. He failed three times: first as the manager-in-chief of the Regions Party’s election campaign – the party collected too much fewer votes than Yanukovich had counted on when giving his consent to the preterm election; then he was dispatched to negotiate with Baloga,

but the OU-PSD formed a coalition with the Tymoshenko bloc and not with the RP; finally, he failed to prevent the election of Arseniy Yatsenyuk to the post of Verkhovna Rada Chairman. The white-and-blue flag remains in Yanukovych's hands and he means to hold on tight to it at least until the presidential race. Akhmetov hired expensive political managers and advisers in the West, but all their recommendations were designed for a team in charge. Now even Yanukovych feels that the days of his government are numbered.

The "white-and-blue" put up a front, crying out loud at every corner that the orange coalition is doomed and that they will regain power as early as next spring. If so, then they have no time to start any reorganization (which may even do harm in the middle of the race).

Regrettably enough, the same concerns all other political parties in this country. By all appearances, Ukrainian politicians simply hate to soil their hands in such a difficult and thankless job as party building, preferring informal talks in restaurants and haggling for posts in the parliament.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.mw.ua/1000/1550/61395/>

11. Voting cards of lawmakers failed to operate during voting for Tymoshenko as PM UNIAN, 11 December 2007

The voting cards of BYuT lawmaker Ivan Denkovych and Our Ukraine – People's Self-Defense lawmaker Oleksander Omelchenko failed to operate during voting on the candidacy of Yulia Tymoshenko for the post of Prime Minister of Ukraine.

According to an UNIAN correspondent, BYuT faction member Andriy Shevchenko disclosed this to journalists.

A.Shevchenko recalled that later the lawmakers voted for a repeat consideration of this issue. This time, the voting card of BYuT lawmaker Yaroslav Fedorchuk failed to operate.

A.Shevchenko assures he personally saw the above-mentioned lawmakers voting for Yulia Tymoshenko, as he seats close to them. However, due to unknown reasons, their cards failed to operate.

Constant URL of article:
<http://www.unian.net/eng/news/news-225967.html>

12. Yulia Tymoshenko Gets Computer Failure By Mikhail Zygar Kommersant, 12 December 2007

Supreme Rada computer revolted against the candidate for Ukraine's prime minister

Ukraine's Supreme Rada failed on Tuesday to approve Yulia Tymoshenko for prime minister. According to her supporters, it is due to the conspiracy between the Party of Regions and the parliament's staff. Viktor Yanukovych's associates think that Tymoshenko's failure was a "sign from God". However, Rada deputies are likely to have another chance to vote for the BYuT leader on Wednesday. Certainly, if Viktor Yushchenko does not change his mind about nominating her once again.

Card Failure

By Tuesday morning, it seemed everything was ready for approving Yulia Tymoshenko for prime minister. President Viktor Yushchenko came to the Supreme Rada to admonish his associates for the

last time before the upcoming voting. Last days showed the president's lectures produce a beneficial effect on the members of his bloc, the Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense (OU-PSD) bloc. For instance, when seven OU-PSD deputies refused to sign the agreement on creating a governmental coalition a week ago, the president delivered such a speech that they immediately changed their minds and put their signatures where asked.

Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, the Supreme Rada's new Speaker Arseny Yatsenyuk, and a few more prominent orange coalition leaders cloistered in the speaker's office and lengthily discussed disputable candidates for minister positions in the future Cabinet. To persuade former Prime Minister Yuri Ekhanurov into voting for Tymoshenko, they agreed upon offering him the defense minister position. So far, Ekhanurov was regarded as a "strong economic executive" and never expressed any military ambitions.

Yushchenko, emblazing Tymoshenko's new Cabinet in duet with her, also decided that Vladimir Ogryzko, a prominent pro-West politician and an ardent supporter of Ukraine's accession to NATO as soon as possible, should become the new foreign affairs minister. By the way, that appointment was blocked by the Supreme Rada just six months ago, when the majority was with Viktor Yanukovych's anti-crisis coalition.

After their session with the president, orange leaders proceeded to the parliamentary hall. Tymoshenko's right-hand man Alexander Turchinov announced to journalists that the negotiations had ended successfully and that the Cabinet had been completely agreed upon.

Nothing foreshadowed trouble when the parliamentary session began. Not only BYuT and OU-PSD members, but also the Litvin Bloc deputies, -- 246 people in total -- voted for including the issue of forming a new Cabinet and appointing the prime minister into the agenda. Yushchenko declared that he asks the deputies to vote for appointing Yulia Volodymyrivna Tymoshenko as the prime minister.

However, something unbelievable happened next. The voting began. By preconcert, members of the Communist and the Litvin Bloc factions pulled out their deputy cards from reading devices, so as to show they do not take part in the voting. The Party of Regions came to the Rada without cards at all: cards were prudently taken away from the deputies, so as to prevent them from accidentally voting for Tymoshenko. BYuT and OU-PSD deputies began voting for. However, the screen eventually displayed the 225 figure. That is precisely one half of the Supreme Rada (consisting of 450 deputies in total). Just one more vote was necessary for approving the prime minister (226 would make the simple majority).

Panic seized the orange coalition. The Regionals were puzzled at first, but then started applauding. Yushchenko sat with a set face. Later, it turned out that 2 cards failed to vote, those of OU-PSD member and former mayor of Kiev Oleksander Omelchenko, and BYuT member Ivan Denkovych. Without losing time on investigation, Speaker Yatsenyuk suggested voting for the second time. The Regionals jumped up in protest. During the voting, the Party of Regions' deputy Vladislav Lukyanov ran up to the speaker's box and pulled out Yatsenyuk's card from the reading device. Later, he said he had done it in protest against violating the parliamentary voting procedure. The screen once again showed the 225 figure. It turned out afterwards that BYuT member Yaroslav Fedorchuk's card did not work as well.

Chaos covered the Rada. Skirmish and abuse happen there quite frequently, but this time the emotional heat was so strong that it might have led to bloodshed. Dizzy with unexpected happiness, the Regionals behaved as if a miracle had happened. Orange coalition members sat with distorted faces. Yushchenko left the room. The presidential colors were carried away after him. The speaker announced break, while the Regionals immediately surrounded the tribune, broke off the microphone, and pulled out all wires, as one of OU-PSD leaders Yuri Lutsenko said.

"Don't worry, Yatsenyuk will come out with a loud-hailer if necessary," Lutsenko told them.

“Bad Guy’s” Scheming

Rada deputies broke up the session, so as to find out what had actually happened. Orange coalition members unanimously assured that it was a conspiracy. Their most wide-spread version is that certain engineers-saboteurs of the parliament’s staff had intentionally programmed the Rada’s computer so that it always displays no more than 225 votes. Officers of the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Security Service of Ukraine were summoned to deal with the saboteurs, to uncover the plot and find out whose ill will made the parliamentary computer revolt against Tymoshenko’s premiership.

“The Supreme Rada’s staff, which has not changed as of today, works for the Party of Regions. There is evidence they are intentionally blocking the cards, to prevent Tymoshenko from being approved,” assured BYuT member Bogdan Gubsky.

Deputy Lukyanov admitted that he had pulled out Yatsenyuk’s card, and said he is ready to answer for his action in court. Meanwhile, his fellow members of the Party of Regions triumphed.

“We will not allow one more voting with Yulia Tymoshenko as candidate for premiership,” said Inna Bogoslovskaya, number four in the Party of Regions list and Tymoshenko’s perennial rival. Moreover, Bogoslovskaya demanded the president should acknowledge the orange coalition’s failure and immediately begin talks with the Party of Regions on forming the new Cabinet on its basis.

According to the Regionals, there was no conspiracy, but orange deputies simply failed to implement the difficult task of pressing the buttons. The Party of Regions had also spread an official statement reading: “BYuT and OU-PSD are incapable to secure the government formation, and are once again trying to shift the responsibility for their disability onto a ‘bad guy’.” Moreover, Yanukovich’s party promises to sue the orange coalition for slander: “The insinuations and accusations thrown at the Party of Regions are not child’s play, for they undermine the party’s reputation with Ukraine’s citizens.”

“Sign from God”

In the evening, President Yushchenko came to the Rada once again, to hold talks with the parliamentary faction leaders, concerning the issue of “how to return to voting on Tymoshenko’s candidacy for the prime minister position”. Tymoshenko herself said in the evening that Yushchenko would again offer on Wednesday to approve her as PM, and this time deputies would vote without using the electronic system, to avoid disorders. She said there are two variants: either ballots or simple hand-raising.

However, if the voting is by secret ballot, it will be even harder to achieve Tymoshenko’s appointment. For instance, during electing Yatsenyuk as Rada speaker last week, Tymoshenko and Turchinov had to personally stand by the voting box and check the ballots of all their fellow party members, to make sure they had ticked the right box. Back then, the voting ended successfully, even despite the fact that Regions deputy Vasily Kiselev grabbed the ballot from BYuT member Oleg Terekhin and tore it to pieces. It will be much harder to approve Tymoshenko this way: the OU-PSD faction is far from being as iron-disciplined as BYuT. To make sure that all deputies made the right choice, President Yushchenko himself would have to stand by the ballot box and check ballots. Besides, now the Regionals know for sure they can frustrate Tymoshenko’s appointment by destroying just two ballots, which is far easier than pulling a card out of a reading device. Also, there is no certainty that hand-raising would pass smoothly: there might begin a fistfight.

Yanukovich promised on Tuesday night that his associates will not hamper a new voting on Tymoshenko if it goes along the procedure rules. Another leader of the Regionals, Boris Kolesnikov, suggested the president should choose a different candidate for prime minister. In the Party of Regions’ official statement, the failure of the Tymoshenko voting was also termed as a “sign from God”.

If Tuesday’s oddities go on during the Supreme Rada session on Wednesday, it will mean they might have been not accidental at all. Especially if a sequence of “signs from God” makes Yushchenko listen to them after all.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

http://www.kommersant.com/p835204/r_531/Odd_events_prevent_Tymoshenko_from_becoming_PM/

13. Tymoshenko PM bid stymied by Rada computer Ukrainian Journal, 12 December 2007

Yulia Tymoshenko's bid to become prime minister fell through on Tuesday when a computerized vote counting system in Parliament suddenly failed to register votes from some of her most ardent supporters.

The system showed only 225 lawmakers voted for Tymoshenko, one less than is required for approval, while two lawmakers immediately complained their voting cards had failed.

An attempt to hold a re-vote also failed as Region Party lawmakers, Tymoshenko's opponents, swarmed around the seat of Parliament Speaker Arseniy Yatseniuk, pulling out his voting card and destroying equipment that operates the system.

The development led to clashes between lawmakers and triggered lengthy political consultations, involving President Viktor Yushchenko, to try to unblock the work of Parliament.

David Zhvania, a lawmaker from Yushchenko's Our Ukraine-People's Self-defense, said the president has agreed to submit Tymoshenko's nomination to Parliament again on Wednesday.

He also said that lawmakers will probably hold the new vote by casting paper ballots instead of relying on computerized voting system, known as Rada, to prevent any manipulations.

Meanwhile, the failed vote is a setback for Tymoshenko and for the pro-Western coalition that was expected Tuesday to approve a new government to replace that of Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, the leader of the Regions Party.

"This proves the fact that Parliament's secretariat, which hasn't been reshuffled, is working for the Regions Party," Bohdan Hunskiy, a member of the Tymoshenko group, said. "There is evidence of them blocking the voting cards to make sure that Tymoshenko's approval doesn't get through."

The Regions Party denied the allegations of tempering with the voting system. But some Regions Party lawmakers argued the failed vote means it was time to create the grand coalition, which would include their party in the government.

The pro-Western coalition controls 227 seats in the 450-seat Parliament and has successfully voted to approve Yatseniuk as the speaker of Parliament last week. The vote strengthened hopes within the coalition that Tymoshenko will be approved as the new prime minister and the new government will be formed the same slim majority.

But the vote counting system on Tuesday showed that Oleksandr Omelchenko, a former mayor of Kiev and an ardent supporter of the pro-Western coalition, has failed to register his vote in favor of Tymoshenko.

Ivan Denkovych, a member of the Tymoshenko Bloc, also failed to vote for Tymoshenko, according to the Rada system.

Both, Omelchenko and Denkovych later confirmed that the system had malfunctioned, and urged for the re-vote.

Minutes later both lawmakers voted to re-run the vote, but this time a card from another lawmaker failed. Yaroslav Fedorchuk, a Tymoshenko group member, said the malfunction had rejected his vote, while Yatseniuk's card had been pulled out by a Regions Party lawmaker, leading to the failure. (tl/ez)

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.ukrainianjournal.com/index.php?w=article&id=5721>

14. Ukrainian Security Service Reveals No Interference with Voting System
By Z. Novosvitski
Trend News, 12 December 2007

A special group of the Ukrainian Security Service, which was established on 11 December and was sent to the Parliament by the request of the people's MPs, did not reveal any interference with the Rada electronic voting system during the voting on appointment of Yuliya Tymoshenko the Prime Minister, the Ukrainian Security Service reported on 12 December.

On 11 December, several MPs did not vote. Their votes lacked for appointment of Yuliya Tymoshenko the Prime Minister. MPs accused the opposition representatives of interfering with the voting system.

The opposition Party of Regions will apply to court on 12 December in case the representatives of the parliamentary majority do not apologize for groundless accusations within a day.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://news.trendaz.com/index.shtml?show=news&newsid=1093479&lang=EN>

15. Labor Party leader meets with deputy foreign minister of Ukraine
The Georgian Times, 12 December 2007

'It's very important for Ukraine that Georgian government held free and democratic elections,' deputy minister of foreign affairs of Ukraine, Konstantin Eliseev announced at the meeting with the leader of the Labor Party Shalva Natelashvili today. The Ukrainian official is meeting with all presidential candidates in Georgia.

'We are meeting with every candidate and get familiar with their positions,' Mr. Eliseev said, adding the elections in Georgian must meet the standards of the OSCE.

Natelashvili said Ukraine and the west were concerned over the ongoing situation in Georgia, because everyone knew that the opposition would launch protest demonstrations if the government rigged elections.

'We'll see whether Saakashvili takes into consideration the desire of Georgian people and the west,' Natelashvili concluded.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=8166>

16. Playing the Game of Ukrainian Politics
By Alexei Makarkin
Kommersant, 12 December 2007

Game rules in the Ukrainian politics are completely different from those in Russia. Here, the presidential election winner's name is known at the very beginning of the campaign. Moreover, it has been known long before the current month that the new president will be the current president's political successor. The issue of prime minister has also become absolutely clear after Dmitry Medvedev's statement on Tuesday. In spring, at least three out of the four parliamentary factions will vote for Vladimir Putin, which exceeds the constitutional majority by far.

In Ukraine, everything is different. There, the outcome of Supreme Rada voting can depend on just one or two deputies, while the opposition can actively obstruct appointing the prime minister, up to taking the voting card away from the speaker's hands by force. In part, it is a feature of the Ukrainian

political process' traditional peculiarities. The process is much more pluralist and 'uncontrollable' than in Russia. And it is not the only difference.

The matter is, Ukraine's political class has got used to its liberty, and does not want to surrender it. For instance, the president, when making important decisions, has to consult both the pro-authority forces and the opposition. Just in the tough political confrontation, as in spring 2007 when Viktor Yushchenko dissolved the Rada, the president can make 'lion' decisions, and not 'fox' ones, speaking in classic terms of Machiavelli, though the lion decisions encounter his opponents' strong protest.

However, this paradigm is questioned now. If Yulia Tymoshenko became the prime minister, she would be able to initiate a step-by-step reconsideration of unwritten rules. Tymoshenko has a tough leadership style, an ambition to achieve a maximally possible result, even if at the cost of conflict with political opponents, primarily with 'eastern' tycoons on whose resources the Party of Regions strongly relies. Besides, these actions might become not just an exception confirming the general rule, but a new rule imposed on the political class. And then, the lion decisions would become a norm. Especially if Tymoshenko' uses her PM position as a foothold for the next presidential election. At least, her most prominent promises – to reimburse the bankrupt Soviet deposits to Sberbank customers and to shortly create a professional army – prove it.

The fact that the presidential bloc members are to take most positions in the government does not change the situation. Tymoshenko's political "charisma", as well as pragmatic calculation (if her ratings run ahead of Yushchenko's) can turn many members of the presidential team into the political allies of "the only man in Ukraine's politics", as Tymoshenko is sometimes called. Meanwhile, sole Yuri Ekhanurov, tipped for the defense minister, can hardly become a counterbalance to the charismatic PM and possible presidential candidate. Hence the tough struggle in the Rada, stimulated by the fears of politicians and businessmen.

Alexei Makarkin, deputy director general of the Political Technologies Center

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

http://www.kommersant.com/p835213/r_520/Tymoshenko_might_become_presidential_candidate_if_she_becomes_PM/

17. Party Of Regions For Top-Priority Formation Of Committees And Election Of Vice Speakers Ukrainian News Agency, 12 December 2007

The Party of Regions is demanding to form committees and elect the first deputy and deputy chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada as a matter of top-priority.

The Regions Party made this statement.

"We demand to return today to Article 16 on the procedural rules - to form committees, to elect vice parliament speakers. With this aim to hold consultations and a meeting of the conciliatory council. And only after this to hold plenary session of the Verkhovna Rada," reads the statement.

The Regions Party also demands immediate coalition's apology for accusations of obstructing vote for premier.

The Regions Party has intention to turn to the Prosecutor-General's Office for defending its interests in court if the relevant satisfaction not pronounced during the day [December 12].

Acting Vice Prime Minister Volodymyr Rybak, an MP of the Regions Party, told reporters that on December 11 the Regions Party gave the coalition chance to change the order of studying items on the agenda and first vote for candidacy of prime minister but the coalition failed to make an opening and elect prime minister.

"We shall be insisting on studying all the questions sticking to the rules affixed: first leadership of the Verkhovna Rada and formation of committees," said Rybak.

He added that the Party of Regions is not to blame for actually there is no coalition.

"Yesterday we provided such an opportunity, taking into account that ill people [came]," said Rybak.

As Ukrainian News reported, the Party of Regions is not out to prevent a repeat voting on the candidacy of Yulia Tymoshenko for the prime minister's post with the observance of laws and parliamentary regulations.

December 11 the Rada refused to appoint Tymoshenko as prime minister.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.ukranews.com/eng/article/87481.html>

18. Inter-group Union To Develop GUAM to be Established in Ukrainian Parliament
By Z. Novosvitski
Trend News, 12 December 2007

An MP of the Ukrainian Parliament, who is also the President of the public organization International Foundation for GUAM Development, Anatoliy Matvienko said to Trend that he intends to initiate the establishment in the Ukrainian Parliament of an inter-group union for the development of GUAM.

Ukraine has not yet confirmed the Charter of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM. Passing of the document was envisaged in the coalitional agreement between the groups which created the majority in the Parliament – the Bloc of Yuliya Tymoshenko and the bloc Our Ukraine-People's Self-defence.

"The purpose for the establishment of such a union is to support the development of such an institution as GUAM on a legislative level," Matvienko said.

According to the MP, actual work in this connection will begin soon after Parliament is established, i.e. after the administration of the Parliament and the Government are selected.

The public organization International Foundation for Development of GUAM was established in September 2007.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://news.trendaz.com/index.shtml?show=news&newsid=1092466&lang=EN>

19. Euro-Chaos-2
By Alexander PUNTUS
Zerkalo Nedeli # 47 (676) 8 — 14 December 2007

The ambassador of Poland to Ukraine has been joking that only war can stop Ukraine and Poland from hosting the UEFA EURO-2012 championship successfully. Fortunately, there aren't any threats of military aggression in Europe today. However, there aren't any alarms going off in the football headquarters of both countries either.

"A favorable result can be obtained only if the organizers clearly understand the final goal and the mechanisms for reaching it," said Anatoliy Kinakh, the Ukrainian Economy Minister, when commenting on the State Program on preparation for the final part of the European championship in 2012. However, this program does not include any "mechanisms for **reaching the final goal.**"

He also added that more state programs should be passed in order to start sufficient preparations for EURO-2012. The most important among them are:

- programs of cities and regions that host tournaments;
- programs of central executive bodies of power;
- program for public road development for 2007-2011;
- program for development of national network of international transport corridors in Ukraine for 2006-2010;
- program for cities' electrical transport development for 2007-2010.

We should remember that European officials consider the transport issue to be the most serious weakness of Ukraine as a future host of EURO-2012. Until appropriate and comprehensive resolutions are issued, talks about Ukraine failing to make ample preparation for the games will still be heard.

At this point, Ukrainian authorities are only planning to consolidate efforts of all participants preparing for EURO-2012. And the negligence or carelessness of any of them might threaten their common cause.

Meanwhile, there are doubts that all officials involved in preparation for EURO-2012 realize the importance of their tasks, know the specifics of the main issues and can work together.

For instance, during an intermediate examination of the Health Ministry's readiness for the future games, tested healthcare officials were confused on questions about their work in fan-zones. It turned out that none of them knew what it was. They also didn't know that these fan-zones were going to appear in our cities in five years. They eagerly talked about the construction of new medical institutions, but were not ready to talk about:

- the network of temporary emergency medical stations near tourists' residences;
- 24 hour medical service in every hotel where football-fans are going to stay;
- special training for the medical staff.

Healthcare officials also were not able to say how first aid teams would be equipped for EURO-2012. They proposed to ask the Transport Ministry that question. As it turned out later, transport officials were not aware of UEFA requirements for medical service. That's why they were not busy re-equipping first aid teams.

Additionally, we should take into consideration another medical aspect. European tourists, which (we hope to God) will come to Ukrainian cities, will bring here not only Euro-money but also Euro- medical insurance. Where will they, with these insurance policies, (God forbid) go?

Will our medical system provide the necessary services based on these insurance policies by 2012? What will be the quality of these services? This is another unpleasant point.

Technical support for Ukrainian first aid emergency teams, improved standards for Ukrainian clinics and hospitals, the introduction of medical insurance based on European rules – these are the main concerns of the state as the whole and the concerns of every government institution in particular.

However, this story is not only about medical service. Ukrainian transport, tourist and sport departments have a lot of problem too.

Let's go back to the above mentioned fan-zones. Fan-zones should become the main attraction for the tourists. The amount of the tickets is limited (according to official sources, 1,600,000 tickets), and the number of people wishing to get to the stadiums will be at least 1.5 times higher than that. Thus, fan-zones are necessary for satisfying the passion of numerous fans, which won't get to the stadiums; to give the state the opportunity to earn money and to provide safety.

Fan-zones are specially prepared and equipped places for the fans' enjoyment. Beside big screens broadcasting the football matches, the fan-zones should have places for parking, food and drinks; they should be comfortable and safe.

A lot of different government and local structures should be involved in building the fan-zones in the six Ukrainian cities that will host EURO-2012. Special scientific calculations should be conducted to build these zones. Are Ukrainian authorities making the necessary calculations? Are they doing them on time?

Representatives of the Cabinet of Ministers have announced that it is necessary to go through several stages to approve the final plan of preparation for EURO-2012. Besides approving the numerous programs, it is necessary:

- to coordinate different programs between each other;
- to approve all plans with the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance;
- to define the executors and provide them with necessary instructions;
- to define the supervisors and provide them with necessary powers.

As a result, a general layout should be presented. How long should we wait for it? A month ago, vice prime-minister Dmitriy Tabachnik promised that the general layout will be finished by the end of the year. However, it is hard to believe that state authorities will be able to manage this enormous work in the next two months while it has taken them half a year to handle the program, which includes just vague definitions and approximate sums instead of distinct tasks and transparent calculations.

This obvious slowness in the organizational process is a result of the lack of sufficient management. In order to carry out all the tasks outlined by UEFA, Kyiv and Warsaw should coordinate their actions on several levels. First, the two states should synchronize their steps with each other. Second, it is necessary to establish good contacts with UEFA management. Additionally, there should be a full mutual understanding between the main participants of the process in every country:

- state – business;
- central– local powers;
- customers – executors.

Mostly, all the above work has to be finished soon so they can focus on practical questions in 2008.

Today, the Ukrainian "EURO-2012" project is promoted by three structures: Coordinating Council, created by the President of Ukraine; Organizational Committee, established by the government; and the Football Federation of Ukraine. The Executive Board, founded by the Football Federation of Ukraine, is the coordinator of their actions. However, cooperation between these structures should be improved. Grygoriy Surkis, the president of the Football Federation of Ukraine, and Ivan Fedorenko, the head of the Executive Board, are the main initiators. They have strengthened their teams with highly-qualified specialists, have collected a solid base of necessary data, have prepared a series of methodical recommendations and have developed a monitoring mechanism. Nevertheless, that is not enough. However, Surkis and Fedorenko are not able to accelerate preparation since they don't have the necessary power.

Not long ago, the number of structures involved in the process of preparation for EURO-2012 increased by one structure. According to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers from October 31, 2007, a state agency on hosting the final tournament of European football championship was created. The agency has the status of a central body and is controlled by the Cabinet of Ministers. It is supposed to fulfill two chief functions – financing and controlling.

Concerning control, a day or two ago, it was announced that national lawyers were going to develop a methodology for applying administrative and other sanctions for violating the EURO-2012 legislation. During their work on this matter, they have been using the experience of other countries. For instance, Polish Law “On preparation for the final part of the European championship in 2012” and Russian Law “On amendments to some acts of Russian Federation on hosting the XXII winter Olympic Games and XI Para Olympic Games in 2014 in Sochi”.

Unfortunately, Ukraine was faced with political crisis recently. That’s why the current political situation does not let us to talk about stability in the executive branch. Changes in politics can seriously damage the speed and quality of the process of preparation for EURO-2012.

Some sports authorities have made hints that Viktor Yushchenko should become the main initiator of the preparations for EURO-2012. Especially, considering the fact that he paid a lot of attention to the football matter recently. It looks like Surkis is pleased with the President's enthusiasm for football. If the failure of preparation for EURO-2012 becomes obvious, then the President would be convinced that he has to take the control over the process.

However, another group of worried fans believes that only Ukrainian fans-multi-millionaires can save the situation. Ukrainian oligarchs are dealing with substantial but local problems today. Akhmetov is faced with some business-troubles during the construction of his wonder-stadium. Kolomoysky also has problems with the construction of the Dnipropetrovsk arena. Nevertheless, there are some optimists that think that oligarchs’ financial, organizational and lobbying efforts might be the only alternative to the weakness of the state.

It is sad to admit, but most of all there won’t be any progress in the process of preparation for EURO-2012 by the end of this year. Let’s hope that they will start work in 2008 and we will host the UEFA EURO-2012 championship successfully.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.mw.ua/1000/1550/61386/>

20. Extensive Coverage Of Euro 2012 Football Championship Arranged By Polish Media By Vittorio Hernandez AHN, 12 December 2007

Warsaw, Poland (AHN) - To ensure extensive coverage of the Euro 2012 Football Championships in Poland and Ukraine, the Polish Football Association and three state media organizations signed an agreement on Tuesday. The Polish Radio, Polish Television and TP S.A., the national telecommunications provider, agreed to join hands in facilitating media coverage of the regional sport meet.

According to Krzysztof Czabanski, the head of Polish Radio, the fourth program of BIS will be renamed Polish Radio Euro. The station will still keep its youthful character, but will reserve a big chunk of broadcast hours to the football finals. It will continue to air music and educational programs.

Czabanski added a website on Euro 2012 will be created, while modern tools of broadcasting and communication will be tapped to ensure the European continent as well as the rest of the world will be updated on the major event.

The Polish Football Association will prepare background materials on the sport for use by the media, and liaise with the UEFA and Ukraine, which co-hosts the event.

Extensive preparations are being done by co-hosts Poland and Ukraine even if the championship is 5 years away. A study by MasterCard said the European Championship will bring in \$2.1 billion (1.4 billion euro) for 2008 championship co-hosts Austria and Switzerland. MasterCard is the games' official sponsor since 1992.

The economic boom will come from ticket sales, travel, food and beverage sales, merchandising, sponsorship income, advertising and telecommunication and media coverage. In the Euro 2004 event held in Portugal, \$1.2 billion (800 million euro) was generated throughout Europe by the football championship.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7009432576>

21. Special report: Responsible business in Ukraine – From orange revolution to black economy

Ethical Corporation, 12 December 2007

Ukrainian businesses are increasingly keen on corporate social responsibility but are not at all sure how to interpret the notion.

In October a gaggle of journalists stood expectantly outside the Grand Hyatt hotel in Kiev. Inside, the powerful and glamorous Yulia Tymoshenko was negotiating her way to political power. A businessman from Donetsk, Ukraine's Russian-leaning industrial heartland, sidled up to your correspondent. He asked how much the media in attendance had been paid for their time.

Corrupt article placement is big business in Ukraine's media. Journalists are often poorly paid and prone to corruption. Known locally as "black PR", many public relations companies have specific budgets for such work – they promise glowing articles for clients for the right fee. But the paying of journalists is only one among many ethical business issues for foreign companies operating in Ukraine.

We'll do it our way

In modern, messy and confused Ukraine, business and politics are inseparable. This is a recipe for confusion when it comes to corporate social responsibility. Ukrainians are a sceptical bunch, used to promises being broken and business bosses muscling their way to the top of the political pile. While the UN is making moves on responsible business in the country, Ukraine, one of the biggest nations on the EU's border, struggles with massive business corruption. Company owners are heavily involved in politics. One company alone, System Capital Management, is responsible for 8 per cent of Ukraine's gross domestic product, while the firm's boss, Rinat Akhmetov, is a member of parliament and a major political force behind the scenes.

Volodja Vorobey, knowledge manager at the European Academy of Business in Society, says he thinks implementation of corporate social responsibility by big western companies operating in Ukraine risks becoming a "top-down process of adapting global programmes to local conditions". Such a strategy, he believes, often ignores "more pressing issues", such as basic skills training. Indigenous businesses are better entrenched in the Ukrainian environment, Vorobey says. He suggests some are rapidly building the "intellectual capability of their human capital" to understand and address responsibility-related issues.

European foreign direct investment in Ukraine comes from the banking, steel, agriculture, telecoms and consumer goods sectors, and European venture capital firms have been paying particular attention to the last of these in recent months. Vorobey believes ethics-minded foreign firms have a chance to learn from Ukrainian business with regard to social responsibility priorities, since many big European and US companies are expanding into Ukraine by buying successful local firms, complete with their respective organisational cultures and attitudes.

Osnova Solsif, a construction firm, is seen by some commentators on corporate social responsibility in Ukraine as a genuine believer in social activities. The company invests resources in reconstructing old Ukrainian churches consistently neglected by the government. Auto International, a Ukrainian vehicle-importing company, supports sports activities in the country as part of its early forays into social responsibility. Nemiroff, an alcohol company, and Kraft, the US-owned foods giant, are also active.

There appear to be two approaches to corporate social responsibility emerging in Ukraine. The first, the PR-based approach, is designed to secure coverage – often paid-for articles – in the media. The second appears to be interest taken by some senior managers in what they see as pressing local issues. Those issues include, for example, church renovations, water purity in lakes, sports sponsorship, or encouraging literature via competitions and endowments. An initiative undertaken by Kraft, the largest confectionery company operating in Ukraine, has resulted in the publication of almost 70 novels to date.

The UN in Ukraine seems determined to help. A conference hosted this year on corporate social responsibility in the media was preceded by the launch of the UN Global Compact in 2006. After a slow start, the Global Compact's local network of firms appears to be gaining ground, with more Ukrainian companies signing up.

The current official take-up of 78 business signatories of the Global Compact in Ukraine, very similar to the number in Turkey, is not huge for a country of nearly 50 million people. But a UN study in 2005 showed awareness of the concept of corporate responsibility. Almost 80 per cent of larger Ukrainian businesses surveyed by the UN had at least heard of corporate social responsibility. The figure rises to 91 per cent in Kiev but drops to 60 per cent in Donetsk and Lviv, two large regional cities. According to the survey's respondents, it is employees who come first in the social responsibility hierarchy. Two-thirds of companies responding to the UN's survey said corporate social responsibility was about improving working conditions, while a similar proportion thought it applied to development and training of workers. Just over half thought community concerns mattered and that it should apply to how companies treat customers.

Environment, what environment?

Many companies say social issues are solely the responsibility of the state. Both the UN survey and Ethical Corporation's conversations with companies found one thing has not changed since the 2005 survey was undertaken: few companies or corporate social responsibility advocates mentioned the environment. In the UN's 2005 survey, only 12 per cent thought the environment a corporate-responsibility-related issue. Climate change is just not on the menu yet in Ukraine. Companies feel they have more pressing local issues to deal with first.

Mobile-phone operator UMC and its two main competitors, Kyivstar and Astelit, are singled out by some as beginning to view corporate social responsibility as a competitive, strategic issue that customers may respond to. But it remains early days for corporate social responsibility in Ukraine.

Government incentives, many say, are lacking. For example, companies in Ukraine only get a VAT tax break on 5 per cent of their income used for social or charitable issues. Alongside press corruption, general bribery and graft is a big problem in the country. Transparency International ranked the country as 107th in the world in 2005, alongside Belarus, Eritrea, Nicaragua, Palestine, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. In 2007 it had slipped to 118th, alongside Mali and Malawi, all while becoming eastern Europe's fastest-growing economy.

However, at least some of Ukraine's business oligarchs appear to be grasping the political realities of emerging trade with the country's giant neighbour, the EU, and the US. Rinat Akhmetov, who ranks 214th on Forbes's 2007 global rich list with a fortune estimated at \$4 billion, is reputed to be quickly cleaning up the corporate governance of System Capital Management, his conglomerate that has plans to list outside the country. A rival, Victor Pinchuk, also makes regular statements about being a good corporate citizen via his businesses. While Ethical Corporation was in Kiev, Pinchuk launched a major art exhibition in the city.

As Ethical Corporation went to press, former prime minister Viktor Yanukovich was in office as acting premier, following the most recent round of elections. Whoever emerges to lead the government will need to help figure out how to help make the Ukrainian firms of the future devote more brain power and money to social responsibility, and help clean up business corruption. This, more than anything, will help Ukraine to the economic stability it has lacked in recent years. Encouraging reading is all very well as a corporate social responsibility activity for companies, but if the press coverage is bought and the company does rotten deals, it is not exactly a page turner.

Investment explosion

Ukraine is eastern Europe's fastest-growing economy. The country brought in some \$7.5 billion in foreign direct investment in 2005. Compare this to the less than \$9 billion the country attracted in the previous 14 years and you get some idea of the changes afoot. Ukraine was recently ranked 73rd among 131 countries in the "Global Competitiveness Report 2007-08", released by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum. The WEF's economic study, published at the end of October 2007, revealed that institutions and market efficiency were Ukraine's weakest areas.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.ethicalcorp.com/content.asp?contentid=5567>

22. Ukraine refinery dispute stops supply to others Reuters, 12 December 2007

A dispute at Ukraine's largest refinery that has prompted it to buy domestic oil rather than get Russian supplies, has forced two other plants to stop work, a state company monitoring the sector said on Wednesday.

The dispute at Kremenchug led Russia's Tatneft TATN3.MM to cease supplies and raised the price of Ukrainian oil at auctions by 16 percent to \$694 per tonne in November from \$597 in October. The refinery is buying most of it to keep working.

But as Kremenchug muscled into the domestic market, two smaller plants -- the Halychyna and Naftokhimik Prykarpattya refineries in western Ukraine -- have been unable to buy oil and have stopped processing.

"Naftokhimik stopped in November. It restarted for three days for cleansing, but now it has stopped again and it's unlikely it will start again before January because there are no supplies," an official from Ukrnaftokhimpererobka said.

"(Halychyna) had stopped working, but will start in the coming days and will be working to the end of the year. All the oil is being sent to Kremenchug," the official said.

The Halychyna refinery processed 610,000 tonnes of oil in the first 11 months of the year, almost 18 percent less than in the same period last year ago. Naftokhimik produced 852,400 tonnes, 29 percent lower than a year ago.

Ukraine's six oil and one gas refineries processed 14.226 million tonnes of oil last year against 18.284 million in 2005. (Reporting by Pavel Polityuk; writing by Sabina Zawadzki)

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL1258318520071212>

23. Russia's Evraz signs deal to buy production assets in Ukraine RIA Novosti, 12 December 2007

Russia's Evraz Group [LSE: EVR] said on Wednesday it had signed a deal to acquire majority stakes in selected production assets in Ukraine.

Evraz Group said the acquisitions included a 99.25% stake in the Sukhaya Balka iron ore mining and processing complex with annual production of 3.75 million tons of iron ore, and a 95.57% stake in the Dnepropetrovsk Iron and Steel Works with annual output of 1.8 million tons of pig iron and 1.23 million tons of crude steel.

The group, a leading Russian steel and mining company, said it had also acquired three coking plants with total annual capacity of 3.52 million tons of metallurgical coke.

Evraz Group said it would pay for the acquisitions with cash and new equity.

"The acquisition will allow us to increase iron ore self-sufficiency and ensure further upstream integration... This deal also represents another step in Evraz's geographical diversification into one of the lowest-cost steel producing regions," Evraz Group Chief Executive Officer Alexander Frolov said.

Once the deal is approved by the company's board of directors, it will not be subject to any other approvals and is expected to be closed in the first quarter of 2008, Evraz said.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://en.rian.ru/business/20071212/91991648.html>

24. Evraz Buys Out Key Assets of Ukrainian Privat for \$3bn Kommersant, 12 December 2007

Evraz Group is buying from Privat Group steel, mining, coke and chemical assets in Ukraine. As the deal of roughly \$3 billion will be partially paid by the stocks of Evraz, Privat will get about 10 percent in it in the end.

Evraz Group announced yesterday that it entered into an agreement to acquire some enterprises in Ukraine, including 99.25 percent in GOK Sukhaya Balka (3.75 million tons of sintering ore a year), 95.57 percent in Dnepropetrovsk Iron and Steel Works (1.8 million tons of cast iron and 1.23 million tons of steel), 93.74 percent of Bagleikoks Coke and Chemical Works, 98.65 percent in Dneprokoks and 93.83 percent in Dneprodzerzhinsk Coke and Chemical Works. The overall annual capacity of coke and chemical enterprises is estimated at 3.52 million tons of metallurgical coke.

The name of the seller hasn't been officially disclosed, but the assets are said to belong to Privat Group of Igor Kolomoisky and Gennady Bogolyubov. Evraz said it would pay for the assets both by money and by new stocks. The deal that is to be completed in the first quarter of 2008 is yet to be approved by Evraz BOD in view of independent assessment.

The amount will be above \$3 billion, said Timur Novikov, first deputy board chairman at PrivatBank (Privat Group). Of it, \$1.7 billion will be settled by money, while the stocks of Evraz will cover the remainder. Privat will get a bit less than 10 percent in Evraz, Novikov specified.

Given that the LSE capitalization of Evraz was \$30.43 billion yesterday, the sale of 10 percent for \$1.3 billion to \$1.5 billion means the discount of at least 50 percent. But a source familiar with the deal doubted Novikov's words, specifying that Evraz would pay at price that is "more than reasonable." Regardless, the GDRs of Evraz lost 3.02 percent in London yesterday.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
http://www.kommersant.com/p835317/Evraz_Privat/

25. Evraz buys steel assets in Ukraine
By Roman Olearchyk
The Financial Times, 12 December 2007

Russia's Evraz Group has agreed to buy a steel mill, three coke plants and an ore company in Ukraine in a deal valued by analysts at more than \$2bn, the steel and mining group said yesterday.

The acquisition gives Evraz its first major presence in Ukraine, ranked as one of the world's top 10 steel producing countries, and comes on the heels of a wave of merger and acquisition talks between leading steel groups in both countries.

Evraz said it would buy a 99.25 per cent stake in ore company Sukhaya Balka and a 95.25 per cent stake in Dnepropetrovsk Iron and Steel Works, which has a total annual steel-producing capacity of 1.8m tonnes.

The group said payment for the assets would be made with a combination of cash and new equity, suggesting that a stake in Evraz would be given to the principal Ukrainian owners of the assets: billionaires Igor Kolomoisky and Gennadiy Bogolyubov.

The agreement also sees Evraz acquiring controlling stakes in three Ukrainian coke plants with a total annual capacity of 3.52m tonnes: Dneprkoks, Dneprodzerzhinsk Coke and Bagleykoks.

Alexander Frolov, Evraz's chairman and chief executive officer, said: "We view this transaction as yet another important step in realisation of our strategies.

"The acquisition will allow us to increase iron ore self-sufficiency and ensure further upstream integration.

"It will also create captive intragroup coke-making demand for the excess production of the company's coal mines in Siberia."

Evraz is controlled jointly by Russian oligarchs Roman Abramovich and Alexander Abramov.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/673cfe68-a855-11dc-9485-0000779fd2ac.html>

26. UPDATE 2-Russia's Evraz buys Ukraine steel, iron plants
Reuters, 12 December 2007

Evraz Group HK1q.L, Russia's largest steel maker by domestic volume, on Tuesday agreed to acquire Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk Iron and Steel Works plus a separate iron ore complex and three coking plants.

Evraz said in a statement it would pay for the assets with a combination of cash and new equity, but did not say how much it would pay. The assets are owned by Privat group, co-owned by Ukrainian businessmen Ihor Kolomoisky and Hennady Boholyubov.

"The acquisition will allow us to increase iron ore self-sufficiency and ensure further upstream integration," Evraz Chairman and Chief Executive Alexander Frolov said.

Evraz, part-owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, will acquire 95.57 percent of the Dnipropetrovsk steel mill, which has capacity to produce 1.8 million tonnes a year of pig iron and 1.23 million tonnes a year of crude steel.

The company said it would acquire a 99.25 percent stake in the Sukhaya Balka iron ore mining and processing complex, which has annual capacity to produce 3.75 million tonnes of iron ore.

Evraz will also acquire 93.74 percent of the Bagleykoks coking plant, 98.65 percent of Dniprkoks and 93.83 percent of the outstanding shares in Dniprodzerzhinsk Coke Chemical Plant.

Evraz said it expected the deal to be closed in the first quarter of 2008 after an independent valuation of the assets is completed.

Frolov said the coking plants would process some of the excess coking coal produced by Evraz mines in Siberia. (Reporting by Robin Paxton in Moscow and Yuri Kulikov in Kiev; Editing by David Holmes, Paul Bolding)

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL1127449820071211?sp=true>

27. OSS co TTI buys Ukraine software house Globes, 12 December 2007

The company paid \$2.7 million for Telesens.

Operations support systems (OSS) developer TTI Team Telecom International Ltd. (Nasdaq: TTIL) has acquired Ukraine software house Telesens LLC for \$2.7 million. The final price will be subject to downward adjustments for the company's actual 2007 annual turnover and certain performance factors, and will be paid in cash over a three-year period.

Telesens LLC also operates in Russia and other CIS states. It has an annual turnover of over \$2 million and 100 employees. The company has been developing, implementing and promoting software solutions and related professional services for the telecommunications market since 1998. Customers include Kievstar, Kazakhstan Telecom, UKR Telecom and MTS Ukraine.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/DocView.asp?did=1000285443&fid=1725>

28. Evraz buys iron processing, coking assets in Ukraine for cash and shares Forbes/ AFX News Limited, 12 December 2007

LONDON (Thomson Financial) - Evraz Group SA said it has agreed to acquire majority shareholdings in selected production assets in Ukraine, including an iron ore mining complex and three coking plants, for cash and shares.

The company will buy a 99.25 pct stake in the Sukhaya Balka iron ore mining and processing complex with a total annual production capacity of 3.75 mln tonnes of iron ore.

It will also acquire a 95.57 pct stake in the Dnepropetrovsk Iron and Steel Works with a total annual capacity of 1.8 mln tonnes of pig iron and 1.23 mln tonnes of crude steel. The three coking plants will together have a capacity of 3.52 mln tonnes of metallurgical coke per year.

The acquisition will allow Evraz to increase iron ore self-sufficiency, ensure further upstream integration and create captive intra-group coke-making demand for the excess production of the company's coal mines in Siberia.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

<http://www.forbes.com/afxnews/limited/feeds/afx/2007/12/11/afx4426878.html>

29. Ukraine's president marks Chanuka JTA, 12 December 2007

Ukraine's president lit Chanukah candles at a Kiev synagogue.

During Tuesday's ceremony at the Central Synagogue, Viktor Yuschenko announced a state inventory and return of religious property.

Yuschenko expressed his respect for Ukrainian Jews and, in reaffirming that his country will safeguard the cultural and spiritual needs of all ethnic minorities, he cited in particular that Ukraine will be "tolerant and sensitive" to the Jewish community's needs.

"My position toward the Jewish nation and people always was open and remains the same," the kippah-clad Yuschenko said. "Today we are representatives of two fraternal nations, and we are responsible for today's dialogue and respect to the past. We should pass this way neatly."

Yuschenko announced that during the first quarter of next year, a state inventory of all religious property will be carried out in Ukraine, and then the state will return to those properties to the appropriate religious communities.

Yuschenko was celebrating his sixth Chanukah at the Central Synagogue.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

<http://www.jta.org/cgi-bin/iowa/breaking/105832.html>

30. Chernobyl: Lost world By Steve Connor The Independent, 12 December 2007

Two decades after disaster struck, Chernobyl's wastelands are now teeming with wildlife. Should they become a nature reserve?

Maria Urupa cleans her kitchen garden in a village near Chernobyl nuclear power plant on May 10, 2007. Two decades after an explosion and fire at the nearby Chernobyl nuclear power plant sent clouds of radioactive particles drifting over the fields, natural wildlife is returning to the area

On 26 April 1986, the worst nuclear accident in history occurred at the Chernobyl power station in the former Soviet Union. More than 135,000 people – and 35,000 cattle – living within 30 kilometres (19 miles) of the stricken nuclear reactor were evacuated and an unprecedented "zone of exclusion" was established around the site, close to the border between the Ukraine and Belarus.

Within this zone, nature was left alone to cope with the high doses of radiation released from the reactor. As a result, the exclusion zone effectively became a huge, unwitting experiment in what happens to animals and plants in the wild following catastrophic radioactive contamination.

In the immediate aftermath of the accident, when the emphasis was on the immense human cost of the fallout, few people thought about what would happen to the wildlife within the zone – or how to monitor it.

Radiation is known to cause genetic mutations and there were some early suggestions that wildlife would suffer widespread birth defects and other developmental deformities. Lurid reports of mutant animals were never confirmed. Twenty years later, a clearer picture has emerged, yet scientists are still arguing about what has actually happened to wildlife within the zone.

The latest spat has taken place within the pages of *Biology Letters*, one of the scientific journals of the Royal Society. On the one side is Anders Moller of the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris. Opposing him is Jim Smith, an ecologist at the University of Portsmouth, who has carried out his own studies of the zone's animals and plants. Moller believes that the radiation damage to wildlife within the zone has been dangerously underplayed, while Smith believes that much of the evidence collected so far points to a flourishing wildlife haven created when the area was abandoned.

There is no doubt about the severity of the accident itself and the great damage it did to the people whose lives have been irrevocably blighted. In addition to the tens of thousands of people who lost their homes and livelihoods, there have been several deaths – although not as many as some environmental groups have suggested. Three people died immediately as a result of the explosion and fire and a further 28 died a few weeks after the accident as a direct result of acute radiation poisoning. All were either staff of the power plant itself, or workers from the emergency services that attended the accident.

A further 19 people from the emergency services died of various causes between 1987 and 2004. There have been an estimated 4,000 cases of thyroid cancer in Belarus, Ukraine and parts of Russia, most of which are attributed to the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl. (Fortunately, thyroid cancer is treatable if caught early enough.) But there were also concerns about the longer-term genetic damage to humans, which is why the study of wildlife within the zone is so important.

Scientists have had access to limited data when it comes to assessing the true facts within the 4,000 square kilometres of the "zone of alienation". Photographs of the abandoned city of Pripyat, near Chernobyl, reveal that trees and shrubs have started to sprout through the roads and buildings. Nature has begun to reclaim what was originally lost to urban development and agriculture.

Scientists from the International Radioecology Laboratory in Slavutych have documented an increase in sightings of large animals that were rare or absent before the disaster. Several packs of wolves have appeared and they seem to have made easy meals of any stray dogs left behind by their owners. (*Wolves Eat Dogs* is the title of a novel based on the exclusion zone by Gorky Park author Martin Cruz Smith.)

The rare Przewalski's horse from the Russian steppe has been reintroduced, along with European bison. Beavers and boars are beginning to reshape the forest ecosystems, European lynx have been sighted and many rare birds, such as the black stork and white-tailed eagle, have returned, along with many swans and owls.

For some scientists, the sight of wildflowers growing through the cracks in the concrete roads of Pripyat and the many and varied species of larger animals within the zone are signs that something positive has come out of the disaster. These researchers believe that the detrimental effects of the radioactive fallout have been exaggerated, while the true impact of human activity has been overlooked.

"The benefit of excluding humans from this highly contaminated ecosystem appears to outweigh significantly any negative cost associated with Chernobyl radiation," said Robert Baker, a biologist at Texas Tech University, who has made more than a dozen scientific excursions into the zone. Baker believes that the diversity of animals and plants within the zone is what could be reasonably expected to be seen in a nature park dedicated to conservation. Indeed, there have been calls to turn the Chernobyl exclusion zone into what would become Europe's largest nature reserve.

But this has cut little ice with Anders Moller, a controversial Danish-born scientist who was once accused of scientific misconduct in his home country. Writing with his colleague Timothy Mousseau of the University of South Carolina, Moller says that reports of a thriving ecosystem around Chernobyl

are not actually based on standardised censuses. "Surprisingly, there is little data on how the abundance of animals varies with levels of radiation, and there has been no effort to census animals in relation to local levels of radiation around Chernobyl," say Moller and Mousseau.

The two scientists carried out their own birdlife census at eight different sites within the zone. They recorded some 1,570 individual birds from 57 species and compared their observations with records of local radiation levels. They found that the higher the background level of radiation, the lower the number of birds, which they say is a clear indication of a possible cause and effect. The abundance of birds differed by as much as 66 per cent between the most contaminated sites and those with normal, background levels. And the variety of species varied by more than 50 per cent depending on radiation levels, they say.

One possible explanation they put forward is that the birds are affected by the loss of their main source of food, such as worms and insects living in contaminated soil. "The effect was differential for birds eating soil invertebrates living in the most contaminated top-soil layer. These results imply that the ecological effects of Chernobyl on animals are considerably greater than previously assumed," they say.

Previous work by the two scientists found that barn swallows in the exclusion zone tend to suffer a high level of albinism and carry a significantly higher level of "germ line" mutations to their sperm and eggs compared with barn swallows elsewhere. They have followed up this work with similar research on house sparrows and black redstarts, and they claim to have found individuals from these two species that also carry more germ-line mutations if they live within the exclusion zone compared with birds living elsewhere.

Professor Mousseau says that the findings point ominously towards what may also happen in humans. "Our work indicates that the worst is yet to come in the human population. The consequences for generations down the line could be greater than we've seen so far," he says.

Jim Smith disagrees. He questions the methodology of Moller and Mousseau, saying that their statistical analysis wrongly clumps sites of widely varying radiation dose rates under one category. He also points out that the apparent fall in numbers of barn swallows and other birds living in parts of the zone may be due to the absence of people rather than increases in levels of radiation.

"Barn swallows are commonly associated with human habitation and their population is influenced by farming practices... [Moller and Mousseau] do not apparently consider the abandonment of contaminated lands to be a potential confounding factor." Smith says that given the limitations of Moller's work, it is "premature" to extrapolate the findings to the controversial and potentially emotive issue of human health.

For their part, Moller and Mousseau ask why there has been no concerted effort to monitor the long-term effects of Chernobyl in free-living organisms and humans, despite it being possibly the biggest-ever environmental disaster. "Scientific inquiry," they say, "depends on rigorous analysis of data rather than rendition of anecdotal evidence."

But perhaps this last point is where both sides can reach agreement. Chernobyl has spawned a vast rumour industry based on anecdote rather than science. They include stories as varied as two-headed mutants breeding in the exclusion zone to the blogs of "Elena", a mysterious "girl on a motorcycle", whose claims about illicit rides through the exclusion zone were taken seriously – until she was exposed as a hoax by Mary Mycio, a foreign correspondent of the Los Angeles Times and author of *Wormwood Forest: A Natural History of Chernobyl*.

If the true long-term effects of the world's biggest nuclear accident on the surrounding countryside are ever to be known, it has to be based on science rather than anecdote.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
http://news.independent.co.uk/sci_tech/article3244626.ece