

Yushchenko Slams Tymoshenko at Trial

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KIEV — Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko on Wednesday testified against his Orange Revolution partner, former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, in her abuse of office trial — as her supporters inside and outside the courthouse chanted "Shame! Shame!"

The scene underlined the disappointment many feel in Ukraine after hopes for reform raised by the 2004 pro-democracy demonstrations and Yushchenko's ascent to the presidency dissolved in factional squabbling and political paralysis.

Yushchenko claimed that Tymoshenko was driven by political gain when signing an important natural gas contract with Russia in 2009. She has been charged with violating legal procedures when the contract was signed. Critics in the West have called the trial a case of selective prosecution.

Yushchenko charged that Tymoshenko betrayed Ukraine's national interests by agreeing to what he believes was an inflated price.

"Only political motives could have played a role here," said Yushchenko, who was greeted by angry chants from Tymoshenko's supporters in the courtroom. "National interests were

traded for political considerations."

Yushchenko suggested that Tymoshenko, who was preparing to run in presidential elections the following year, wanted to be seen as a "savior" who ended a bitter pricing dispute with Moscow. The dispute led to Russia halting supplies to Ukraine, which caused shortages for customers across Europe.

Yushchenko also claimed that Tymoshenko ignored Ukrainian interests for the sake of special relations with Russian leaders. "Russia had to have a pliant pro-Russian leader," Yushchenko said.

Tymoshenko said she disagreed with Yushchenko's testimony, but declined to dispute him in the courtroom.

"I don't want for the Orange Revolution to go on trial in this court," Tymoshenko said. One supporter then called Yushchenko a "bastard" and was booted out of the courtroom.

Chaos reigned outside the courtroom in downtown Kiev where Tymoshenko's supporters and opponents staged competing rallies.

Tymoshenko's activists chanted "Yushchenko to jail!" while he spoke to reporters after testifying, and his black Mercedes was pelted with eggs as he was driving away.

A Tymoshenko supporter, speaking through a loudspeaker called Yushchenko "Judas." Meanwhile, a smaller group of Tymoshenko's opponents shouted "Yulia to prison!"

Yushchenko's former energy adviser Bohdan Sokolovsky testified in favor of Tymoshenko later Wednesday. He supported Yushchenko's claim that Tymoshenko was driven by political gain, but said she did not violate any laws by ordering that the contract be signed.

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