



## Don't cave in

Yesterday at 22:15 | Kyiv Post

Personal revenge and the triumph of the natural gas lobby are the most convincing explanations for President Viktor Yanukovich's defiance of democracy and his political persecution of ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. The two rationales are related.

During and after the 2010 presidential election campaign, Tymoshenko prophesized accurately about her own fate and that of the nation if Yanukovich became president.

On Oct. 26, 2010, after the Yanukovich administration started jailing former members of her government, she said: "The mafia is showing that if you go against them, sooner or later you'll be in jail. They have to show that they are in full control of people's lives and that anyone that crosses them will end up behind bars."

Tymoshenko also told the Kyiv Post in a Nov. 17, 2010, interview: "They don't see Ukraine as a country, with democracy and freedoms for citizens. They see it as a mega-corporation of their own, and it's a joint stock closed company. And all the resources and population are their assets." She has also called the president "a marionette" of the nation's billionaire oligarchs.

On the eve of her Aug. 5 arrest, two months before her Oct. 11 conviction and seven-year prison sentence, she said: "Everything I do is my struggle against this criminal regime for Ukraine's rightful place in the world."

It looks like Tymoshenko's repeated denunciations of Yanukovich got under the president's skin enough for him to sanction her conviction and three other criminal investigations against her.

His desire for revenge appears greater than his desire to lead Ukraine closer to membership in the democratic, 27-nation European Union, which does not accept authoritarian regimes.

Yanukovich is trying to frame the issue as the EU not respecting Ukraine. That's not the case at all. The EU doesn't respect Yanukovich's leadership because he doesn't respect democratic values and merely wants to stay in power.

Leaders of the so-called gas lobby – Energy Minister Yuriy Boyko, industrialist Dmytro Firtash, media magnate and Security Service chief Valeriy Khoroshkovsky and presidential chief of staff Serhiy Lyovochkin – appear to be in charge.

Revenge is exacted against those who stand in their way. Tymoshenko is enemy No. 1, but they appear to have a long list of people they regard as enemies.

It also seems that the aim of the gas lobby is to secure cheap Russian natural gas imports to fuel the nation's heavy industries, many of which were acquired through insider deals that mortgage national interests for personal enrichment.

What can the West do? One response is to not exaggerate Ukrainian leaders' threats to drop EU integration and get closer to Russia, including joining the Moscow-led customs union, a prospect that top officials are floating again.

Ukraine's leaders are feinting eastward for short-term economic gains. They are smart enough to know that Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is the biggest threat to Ukrainian sovereignty and that all bargains with him will be hard and require concessions.

If the West wants to punish the nation's leaders while minimizing harm to its citizens, it should look at denying visas to those officials associated with the ongoing repression.

Also, as others have suggested, additional scrutiny of the wealthy elite's Western bank accounts and assets abroad may be warranted. The West, including the International Monetary Fund, shouldn't be lending any more money under these conditions – so little of it helps citizens anyway.

These measures may not reverse the increasingly brazen behavior by members of the Yanukovich administration, but they may be enough to make them pause long enough to consider the consequences.

Web links to Kyiv Post material are allowed provided that they contain a URL hyperlink to the [www.kyivpost.com](http://www.kyivpost.com) material and a maximum 500-character extract of the story. Otherwise, all materials contained on this site are protected by copyright law and may not be reproduced without the prior written permission of Public Media at [news@kyivpost.com](mailto:news@kyivpost.com)

All information of the Interfax-Ukraine news agency placed on this web site is designed for internal use only. Its reproduction or distribution in any form is prohibited without a written permission of Interfax-Ukraine.

Design & Development by [MEMO.UA](http://MEMO.UA)