

Mask, I know you...some details of the «Twins Show» in the 2002 election race

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The use of «cloning» of candidates and parties is one of specific features of the current election race that will probably be remembered later when the campaign is analyzed. Using «twins» for campaign purposes is not a Ukrainian know-how – the method seems to be borrowed from Russia (like many other specific technologies), where it was used in the 1998 elections to the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg. However, according to Russian experts, the method proved to be low effective and was not used at the governor elections in that region.

In the history of Ukrainian political technologies the «twin show» first appeared (or was first noticed by the media) in the by-elections to the parliament in June 2000. It was announced that then Vice Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was going to run for a seat in a constituency #99 of the Kirovohrad region. While the signature sheets were received by Yulia Tymoshenko's official representatives, her formal application to run was not submitted. In a short while, another candidate was registered for the race – someone called Alla Tymoshenko, an economist and head of department of the Kirovohrad regional Department of Statistics. Later on, another Tymoshenko, Halyna, appeared in the constituency. As Yulia Tymoshenko decided not to run, we never found out how many seats could have been taken away by her namesakes.

While rather uncertain results were received from the «initial test», the «twins show» is a rather popular trick in the current campaign, and the term itself has become widely used in political speech. It will be hard to tell how broadly it is going to be used in the campaign, for a number of names of majoritarian candidates remain unknown. However, it is likely that the list of potential participants of the «twins show» will grow.

By February 11, 2002, the CEC registered 4,111 candidates as members of political party lists, and rejected 435. 735 of the registered candidates had taken part in the 1998 parliamentary elections. 147 are current MPs. Almost 85% of the candidates have college degrees, but only 10% of them are lawyers, sociologists or political scientists. For 225 majoritarian constituencies, the CEC registered 3,483 candidates and rejected 270.

Speaking about the «twins show»: of course, it may happen that name-sakes run for seats in different constituencies – which is not the matter of our study. Our focus is on cases when people whose names are relatively broadly known in political circles find some namesakes in the constituencies in which they intend to run. As the «pre-election twins show» is not of friendly nature, the natural question is «who gains on that?»

Analysis of election lists suggests that «twins» are usually not introduced against obvious favorites of the race – a present-day MP or someone who may use the notorious «administrative resource» but against his or her real competitor! This tendency may be observed in practically all regions of Ukraine.

Here are a few examples. The Lviv region seems to be the most active in the «twins show». In constituencies 118 and 199, where Taras Stetskiv MP and Oleksandr Hudyma MP were elected in 1998, respectively, and registered for the 2002 race, there are three Stetskivs and two Hudymas! According to Taras Stetskiv, «for registration of name-sakes the persons with the same last names were offered from 1 to 3 thousand dollars» (Ukraina Moloda, January 31, 2002).

The «record» case of the «twins technique» occurred in the Uzhgorod region (constituency #71), where a local election commission received six applications from potential candidates under the same last name – Ratushniak. By February 11, 2001, the list of candidates registered by the CEC included two Ratushniaks. In fact, the popularity of this last name – rather common in the region – is linked to the presence of one of the candidates – former mayor of Uzhgorod Serhiy Ratushniak, currently the leader of the Uzhgorod regional organization of the Yednist political party. By the way, it is possible that there will be two name-sakes - claimants of the position of the mayor in Kyiv – though this will not be the case of «cloning» – the incumbent mayor, leader of the Yednist party Oleksandr

Omelchenko and the parliamentary «Anti-mafia» leader Hryhory Omelchenko MP.

In constituency #71 in Mukachevo, Western Ukraine, the seat in the would-be parliament will be claimed by at least two Balogas and one Balog, all with the same patronymic – Ivanovych. The name became well-known in the region due to Victor Ivanovych Baloga, head of the Transcarpathian regional state administration till June 2001.

In constituency #150 in the Poltava region there will be two Oleksandrs Magdas, one a Communist, and another independent. In constituency #211 of the Cherkassy region, the ballots will display names of two candidates called Mykhailo Makarenko. There will be four candidates called Melnyk in the Vinnytsya region (constituency #13), and four candidates called Fedorenko (two of them with the same initials) in the Donetsk region (constituency #41). In that constituency, in addition to Raissa Bohatyriova MP and member of the «alternative» Communist party Oleksandr Moisseyenko, there is a businessman Victor Semionovich Yushchenko, member of the Solidarnist, supported by Nasha Ukraina. Hence, the constituency will display at least three kinds of the «Twins technique». In the Donetsk region (constituency #45), where one of the candidates is the present-day MP for the constituency Volodymyr Rybak, there will be two candidates called Fedchenko, one of them a member of the Communist party (CPSU). In the Zhytomyr region (constituency #64), where one of the favorites is member of the Democratic Union Volodymyr Satsiuk MP, there are three other candidates called Petrenko and two candidates called Tymoshenko.

When it turned out that the parliamentary seat for the constituency #60 is claimed by two present-day MPs, Victor Domansky (Democratic Union) and Volodymyr Yatsenko (Communist party, CPU), another Volodymyr Yatsenko, registered as independent, joined the race.

In the Zaporizhyya region, the candidates who intended to run for the seat in the constituency #80 included two namesakes with a very unusual (for Ukraine) last name – Arabadzhy – member of the Solidarnist Volodymyr Arabadzhy MP and pensioner Georgy Arabadzhy (who withdrew from the race a couple of weeks ago). Another candidate for that constituency is member of the «ZaYedU» block, president of the Zaporizhyya Aluminium Combine Ivan Bastryha.

In the Mykolayiv region (constituency #128), there are two candidates called Gorbachov, one of them – Victor Gorbachov MP. Another candidate for the seat is Mykhailo Rykhalsky, member of the People's Democratic Party of Ukraine and deputy head of the Mykolayiv regional state administration.

Hence, none of Ukraine's regions showed an exception from the «twins rule». For instance, in the Crimea three candidates called Leonid Grach were registered for the constituency #25 in Simferopol, and some more individuals called Leonid Grach submitted their application shortly after the registration of speaker of the Crimean parliament and leader of Crimean Communists Leonid Grach.

Another example is set by the sons of the late leader of the Rukh Vyacheslav Chornovil, Taras and Andriy, who will be fighting for seats in the parliament in the opposing camps. Taras Chornovil MP will be running for a seat for the majoritarian constituency #116 in the Lviv region and will be supported by Nasha Ukraina, while Andriy Chornovil is a member of the top five of the «alternative» block, the People's Movement of Ukraine, a recent creation that has adopted the «old» Rukh name.

The «twins technique» gives the shade of absurdity to the election race. According to CEC chairman Mykhailo Ryabets, in one of the regions two persons with the same last name and initials submitted applications to be registered as candidates, following an earlier registration of an «original» candidate with that name. The interesting thing is that the two had very new passports, issued on the same day, which gives reason to suspect their names were changed on purpose for the race. However, according to Ryabets, «the election law does not allow the CEC to fight «twins» – neither parties nor individual candidates» (Holos Ukrainy, February 1, 2002). However, on February 8 Ryabets announced that the CEC had found ways to «neutralize» the «twins» but refused to disclose what exactly would be done.

Hence, the use of «twins» is not limited to majoritarian constituencies. For parties and blocks a modified version of the technique is used: the parties and blocks receive «twins» with names similar to those of popular political brands. Therefore, alongside with the Communist Party of Ukraine there will be the Communist Party of Ukraine (renewed) and the Communist Party of Workers and Peasants (abbreviated in Ukrainian as KPRS, formerly the abbreviation

for the «Communist Party of the Soviet Union»). While the «new» Communist parties are unlikely to be serious competitors of the CPU that has its traditional electorate and a broad network of local organizations, some votes, a percent or two of the general result, will be taken away from the CPU.

Some other political projects – namely, the women’s parties – also enjoyed demand, although big politics in Ukraine remains predominantly a men’s business. According to the CEC, women comprise only 24% of candidates registered for the race. Probably, Ukrainian female politicians will manage to repeat the success of the «Women of Russia» in the previous Russian Duma elections. In March 2002, seats in the parliament will be claimed by two women’s political projects, the «Women for the Future» and the «Women of Ukraine». Apparently, rapidly growing ranking of the nomenclature-linked «Women for the Future» inspired creators of other women’s groups. Another women’s project with almost the same name, «Women for the Future of Children» applied to take part in the race, but on February 5 the Shevchenkivsky borough court in Kyiv judged that the name, given to the block by its congress, was illegitimate, so the block had to change its name to the «All-Ukrainian Party of Inter-ethnic Understanding «New World».

The above examples suggest that the prime task of political «clones» and «twins» is not to win the race but to take away some votes from favorites that have the same or similar names. The race has produced a number of cases of political «parasitism» on popular brands.

One of the version of the «twins» method is to include namesakes of well-known politicians to the «promising» positions in the election lists. Sometimes the use of a well-known name is combined with the use of a very similar name of a party or a block.

For instance, on January 23, 2002, the All-Ukrainian Party of Workers approved a list of about 50 persons. The top five of the list was opened by Oleksandr Moroz, leader of one of local organizations of the All-Ukrainian Party of Workers. By the way, as many as 15 Morozs will participate in the race, four of them Oleksanders, full namesakes of the leader of the Socialist Party of Ukraine. The Socialists and Oleksandr Moroz themselves view the trick as an example of dirty techniques and argue that «the present-day workers <...> have close relations with number 2 in the Nasha Ukraina block Oleksandr Stoyan. <...>O. Stoyan, in his turn, accompanied by head of the Nasha Ukraina election staff, took an active part in the congress of the part of the All-Ukrainian Party of Workers that now plans to run independently (Tovarysh, #5, January 2002).

Probably, the most remarkable example of the «Twins method» was the attempt to use the name of Victor Yushchenko as a political brand. On January 24, Oleksandr Rzhavsky MP created an election block named after the former Prime Minister – «For Yushchenko!» Explaining the move, Oleksandr Rzhavsky claimed that since «no broad coalition was made within a single block», «For Yushchenko!» would supplement Victor Yushchenko’s block, Nasha Ukraina (Interfax-Ukraina, January 24, 2002). To be on the safe side, Yushchenko was also included in the top five of the list – not former Prime Minister Victor Yushchenko, but someone called Volodymyr Yushchenko, leader of a local organization of Rzhavsky’s party, Yedyna Rodyna, in the Vinnytsya region. Rzhavsky, of course, was number one on the list, followed with Volodymyr Yushchenko, leader of the Slavic Party Oleksandr Bazyluk and members of Yedyna Rodyna Mykola Zabilyi and Tamara Lysenko.

In early February, the CEC suspended the registration of the block «For Yushchenko!» for the race. Member of the CEC Yaroslav Davydovych announced that the decision had been made because leader of Nasha Ukraina block Victor Yushchenko sued Oleksandr Rzhavsky for his initiative to use Yushchenko’s name, claiming that the incident had violated his legitimate rights and interests. On July 4, 2001, Victor Yushchenko had authorized the Youth Party to register his name as «intellectual property», and a few days later the Youth Party filed an official application with the State Department of Intellectual Property to legalize Victor Yushchenko’s exclusive right for his name and the name of his block – all in all, eight «trade marks» were registered. Given the above, the Shevchenkivsky borough court of Kyiv ordered to suspend registration of the «For Yushchenko!» block until the judgment was made on the complaint.

After a few rounds of hearings in court, it was announced on February 5 that the Supreme Court of Ukraine rejected the appeal of leader of the block «For Yushchenko!» Oleksandr Rzhavsky, who had complained about the decision of the CEC to halt registration of the block for the race. Although the Supreme Court ordered that the CEC abolished its resolution to reject the «For Yushchenko» block, the CEC still rejected the block’s application claiming that the

founding agreement of the block had not included one of its parties, the Slavic Party, that had joined the block later. Moreover, the CEC argued that congresses of three constituent parties of the block – the All-Ukrainian Chornobyl Party «For Well-being and Social Protection of the People», the Party of Free Peasants and Entrepreneurs and the Slavic Party – took place and approved the formation of the block on January 6, January 12 and January 19, respectively, i.e., after the official beginning of the election campaign, while the law required such congresses to be held before the start of the race. Hence, one of the «twins» dropped out.

The recent developments have demonstrated a sheer boom of «twins» in the campaign, though the effects so far remain limited. The conclusion is supported by the results of a national opinion poll done by the Ukrainian Institute of Social Studies on January 17-22, 2002 (2,017 respondents nationwide): according to director of the Institute Oleksandr Yaremenko, «the level of political disorientation in the Ukrainian society is rather low» (Den, January 31, 2002). While the «twins» will be instrumental in taking away some votes from the favorites of the race or undermining positions of their rivals, the technology is unlikely to make a strong impact on the election outcome. In a sense, the «twins» are useful for their «originals» as they «certify» their popularity and create additional information opportunities for attracting attention of the media and voters. In that context the «twins» method may work as a boomerang.