

Tymoshenko goes where no candidate has before

УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ПРОРИВ



'Hitler in a dress': Yulia Tymoshenko's unorthodox advertising campaign has made an impact on Ukrainians in the run-up to tomorrow's election

Picture: Sebastian Meyer

Daniel Stacey
Kiev

AFTER the disastrous fallout of the Orange Revolution, the mood of many voters towards the Ukrainian parliamentary elections tomorrow is one of apathy, except when you raise the subject of Yulia Tymoshenko's recent public relations campaign.

Tymoshenko Bloc — the party of the former prime minister — has circumvented political advertising laws by creating non-branded TV commercials that can be aired outside the designated times for campaign promotions.

Tapping into the nation's tradition of mysticism, the advertisements use predictions and images from Nostradamus, the Bulgarian psychic Wanga, and the Russian prophet Pavel Globa, and claim that a "white lady" and "warriors of light" are soon to arrive in the Ukraine,

and that they will "gain the power".

Her latest campaign poster shows her dressed in a white leather cosmonaut suit suspended in space next to a satellite, beside the slogan "Ukrainian Breakthrough".

The election, the third national poll in three years, is a chance for the pro-Western forces of Ms Tymoshenko and President Viktor Yushchenko to reclaim parliament, after coalition infighting saw the villain of the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yanukovich, elected as Prime Minister last year.

In a country that has only recently become accustomed to Western-style political advertising, many of Ms Tymoshenko's stunts have created strong reactions among voters.

"She's Hitler in a dress, but my daughter loves her because she looks like Barbie," said one woman.

The TV advertisements are part of a

broader populist campaign by Ms Tymoshenko, which included a visit to Margaret Thatcher in Britain earlier last week. Ukrainians hold Baroness Thatcher in high esteem for her strong leadership, with many referring to her as the West's Gorbachev.

US political consultants have also helped Mr Yanukovich, whose grim Soviet strongman image has been manicured into a vision of smiling, Western-style leadership.

According to the latest poll by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, Yanukovich's Regions Party will win 34 per cent, followed by the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc with 25.7 per cent, and Mr Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party with 11.9 per cent.

A Tymoshenko-Yushchenko coalition may be able to control the legislature. If so, Ms Tymoshenko could replace Mr Yanukovich as PM.