

Profile of Ukrainian opposition MP Petro Poroshenko

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▣ Abstract (summary)

A top Ukrainian businessman, MP Petro Poroshenko, is considered to be a major financier of Ukrainian opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko's presidential campaign. Poroshenko controls the Ukrprominvest concern that incorporates chocolate factories across Ukraine, a bus assembly plant in Lutsk, a Kiev shipyard and many smaller enterprises like the Kiev-based taxi company Prominvest. Poroshenko controls the Mriya bank and holds the post of a deputy chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine supervisory board. In addition, Poroshenko controls a network of media outlets across Ukraine including the pro-opposition 5 Kanal national TV channel, the Niko FM entertainment radio and several newspapers in regions.

▣ Full Text

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In Yushchenko's Our Ukraine faction, Poroshenko heads the Solidarity group closely connected to Poroshenko's own Solidarity Party which he founded in 2000. Both the party and group are staunch supporters of Yushchenko. Poroshenko has been appointed Yushchenko's campaign coordinator and envoy for talks with campaign allies.

In parliament, Poroshenko holds the post of the budget committee head who is known for its criticism of the 2004 state budget. The cabinet, Poroshenko believes, has concealed a dozen billion hryvnias of budget revenues which will be used to finance the presidential bid of a pro-government candidate.

As an unwavering supporter of Yushchenko, Poroshenko has been an object of attacks that are believed to be coordinated by the presidential administration. In parliament, Poroshenko was accused of distributing state budget funds in favour of constituencies held by opposition MPs. Poroshenko's businesses were accused of tax evasion and tax audits were held at many of his companies at the same time, thereby effectively disrupting their operation. Poroshenko's bus assembly plant in Lutsk lost tax privileges which it was entitled to as a domestic vehicle building company. Poroshenko's 5 Kanal TV is facing closure as its broadcasting license could be withdrawn in favour of an unpopular Kiev-based channel.

However, Poroshenko remains defiant. The 5 Kanal TV channel remain on the air. His chocolate factories produce new brands of chocolates, the Lutsk bus plant keeps manufacturing popular buses called Bohdan following a petition to the Ukrainian cabinet from the Japanese Isuzu car maker which supplies engines to Poroshenko's buses. Poroshenko's Ukprominvest is said to cooperate with companies controlled by the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Hennadiy Vasylyev.

Petro Poroshenko was born in 1965, is married, has a son and two daughters. Yushchenko became the godfather of Poroshenko's twin- daughters in 2000. Poroshenko has admitted to have personal ties with the Ukrainian parliament speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn. At an early stage of his political career, Poroshenko was a members of the pro- presidential United Social Democratic Party and enjoyed the political patronage of the then presidential administration head Lytvyn. However, in 2000 Poroshenko formed his own Solidarity parliament group which subsequently voted against ousting Yushchenko as prime minister.

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