In his address to deputies on Tuesday, Yushchenko accused Kuchma's administration of ''being capable of brewing political assassinations.'' He appeared haggard, with his face red, swollen, partially paralyzed and with one eye constantly tearing up.

Voters in this ex-Soviet republic of 48 million have become increasingly disenchanted with Kuchma's decade in power. His administration had been marred by a series of scandals, rampant corruption and dozens of suspicious deaths of political opponents and opposition journalists.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Defense Minister Yevhen Marchuk stepped down Wednesday, citing in part the June explosion at a major ordnance depot that rained rockets, shells and shrapnel over a wide area, the Interfax news agency reported.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry confirmed Marchuk ''has asked the President to be relieved from duties,'' but he gave no other details.

Marchuk's resignation came after he had defended himself in parliament against allegations he illegally provided soldiers and helicopters to help fight fires in Turkey.

Marchuk's resignation was seen as another sign of upheaval in the government ahead of the Oct. 31 vote.

[From the Ukrainian Radio First Programme, Sept. 21, 2004]

VIKTOR YUSHCHENKO SAYS THE GOVERNMENT IS THE KILLER

KIEV.—Ukrainian opposition leader and presidential race favourite Viktor Yushchenko has lashed out at the authorities, accusing them of trying to poison him. In an emotional speech delivered in parliament after two weeks of treatment abroad, Yushchenko said he barely survived and compared his alleged poisoning to the killings of several Ukrainian politicians and journalists in recent years.

He said President Kuchma's order to investigate the poisoning was disingenuous, and hinted that the president himself could have been behind the murder of opposition journalist Heorhiy Gongadze. He brushed aside suggestions that his illness was caused by ordinary food poisoning and urged fellow MPs to stand up to the government so as not to become next in the list of public figures who have died a suspicious death.

The following is the text of Yushchenko's speech broadcast live by Ukrainian radio on 21 September; subheadings inserted editorially.

Mr. speaker, fellow people's deputies! I am happy to be in this chamber today. I won't take much time, but let me make some statements that concern each and every one of you. For the past two weeks, a number of Ukrainian politicians and journalists have been debating about what one should eat, or drink, in order to live in this country and not die.

Because my dignity is concerned in a number of cases, and my morality—I am part of this story—I ask you for a few minutes of your attention. It may not be entirely appropriate to say some of these things, because I will be speaking about myself, but I will say those things to establish the facts.

NOT FOOD POISONING

Look at my face. Note my articulation. [Yushchenko appeared to speak with some difficulty. Part of his face was swollen and immobile during his recent public appearances.] This is one hundredth of the problems that I've had. Take a good look, to make sure that the same thing doesn't happen to you. Because this is not the problem of cuisine, not a problem of food, as some try to portray it.

Don't be quick to judge! I would like to ask every one of the 450 parliament members in this chamber. Have you ever seen me drunk over the past 10–20 years? Raise your hands if you have!

I am asking to the journalists of Inter [privately owned pro-government TV channel] and the so-called national channel UT1. And One Plus One [another privately owned pro-government TV channel]. And to other channels. Have you ever in your life seen me not in control of myself? If there were such cases, show them on television today. But there weren't. [Apparently referring to recent reports on the three TV channels speculating that Yushchenko's illness could have been caused by food or alcohol poisoning.]

And that is why, I would like to say to everyone: I am no gourmet! I don't fancy eastern cuisine or western cuisine. I eat the same borsch, potatoes and pork fat as all of you, the 47 million people of Ukraine! And what happened to me was not a problem of cuisine or a problem of diet!

SAME FATE IN STORE FOR OTHERS

It's a pity that Oleksandr Oleksandrovych [Moroz] is not in this chamber. I would like to say to him, Oleksandr Oleksandrovych, you can eat port fat and potatoes all you want. But mark my word: as soon as you become a real opponent of this regime, and I stress, a real one, as soon as you stop dancing to Medvedchuk's fiddle [applause], potato diet will not save you! Calm down! It pains me to say this. [Referring to Moroz's reported statement that Yushchenko would have been fine had he stuck to simple food.] [Shouts of ''Shame!'' in the chamber]

Friends! I'd like to continue. Esteemed [pro-presidential coalition coordinator] Stepan Bohdanovych Havrysh, you are going through a rough political patch. Because something you have given up your reputation for is falling apart, the so-called pro-presidential majority is falling apart.

I would like to say that as soon as you fall out of favour with the authorities, as soon as you start posing a tiny threat, they will throw you away like a piece of paper. And your fish diet won't save you!

I would like to tell the guys in the presidential administration, who advise that one should drink 100 grams of vodka after every piece of pork fat. Guys, it doesn't matter that you are in that camp. Such are the principles and morality of that camp that they can discard you just like they have discarded [former economics minister and deputy chief of presidential administration Valeriy] Khoroshkovskyy, [President Kuchma's once-close ally Oleksandr] Volkov and dozens of others. And 100 grams with every piece of pork fat won't help.

ATTACKS KUCHMA

Friends, this is not a problem of cuisine as such. We are talking about Ukrainian political kitchen, where assassinations are ordered! This is what we are talking about. Remember [former National Bank chairman] Vadym Petrovych Hetman walking around alive in this chamber in 1998. Who killed him? President Kuchma said it was a question of honour for him, that the prosecutor-general will give an answer and tell us who the killer is. Time has passed, but there is no answer.

In 1999 [right-wing leader and presidential candidate] Vyacheslav Chornovil was here alive. We pretend we don't know who killed him with a Kamaz lorry. In 2000 [campaigning journalist] Heorhiy Gongadze was sitting on the balcony over there and writing political reports. Who cut his head off? Well we don't seem to know, although one prosecutor said once that the killer has already been found, and that his surname begins with the letter K. He wasn't brave enough to give us a few more letters.

Two and a half years ago [opposition MP] Oleh Oleksenko was sitting in this chamber. Who poisoned him? Four weeks ago Alik Aslanov was still among us. But with his last borrowed seven and a half hryvnyas, the last loan in his life, he bought a litre of petrol and burned himself. Who killed him? The alcoholic head of the district administration, who represents the United Social Democratic Party? Or the arrogant head of the collective farm? Who killed him?

''GOVERNMENT IS THE KILLER''

Don't ask who is next. Every one of us will be the next. And if you ask how this fate spared me, I'll say: wrong dose, wrong time and my angels awake. That is what helped me return back to the living!

Let us draw a couple of lessons here. Lesson number one. I would really like us to receive an answer, who did it and who is the killer. But you know very well who the killer is. The government is the killer! And never will this prosecutor-general give an answer to who killed Gongadze, who killed Hetman, who tried to kill many others.

So I was very surprised that President Kuchma ordered to launch a criminal investigation of my poisoning. I don't believe this order! I don't believe this prosecutor-general! Why, Mr. Kuchma, are you asking the question if you have no intention of answering it?

Let us draw a political lessons from here. The lesson is that Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk suggests that someone should kneel before the Ukrainian people. [Kravchuk said dozens of MPs who quit the pro-government coalition earlier this month should kneel before the people of Ukraine.] So who should kneel, Mr. Kravchuk? And for how long should they stand on their knees, so that every one of the 47 million forgave them?

But I have another proposal. An appeal to you, my dear people's deputies! Show a little heroism today for Ukraine's sake, and you will see Ukraine democratic, with its people free and prosperous! Don't forget this lesson or this lesson will get you. [Applause in the chamber]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CONYERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)