



“Two Iron Ladies” — Thatcher Gives Blessing To Tymoshenko

Last week Yulia Tymoshenko, Ukraine's Leader of the Opposition took time out from campaigning to fly to the UK to meet the Rt. Hon Baroness Margaret Thatcher - Britain's first female prime minister from 1979 to 1990, and credited with transforming the economic fortunes of Britain and hastening the end of the Cold War.



▲ Yulia Tymoshenko with Lady Thatcher following their private meeting in London last week.

The meeting of the two “Mrs Ts” took place at The Goring Hotel in London, where the two former prime ministers discussed the forthcoming parliamentary election scheduled for this Sunday and the reforms needed to raise Ukraine to European standards.

The “Iron Lady” expressed her admiration for all that Ms Tymoshenko has achieved in Ukraine and wished her well for the future. She expressed her wishes for free and fair elections and asked that the people of Ukraine keep alive the spirit of freedom and democracy that characterised the Orange Revolution.

“I hope the elections will be free and fair and be a guiding light for democracy in Eastern Europe,” said Lady Thatcher, “I wish for Ukraine to quickly complete its transformation and for its people to enjoy the benefits of a prosperous democratic nation at the heart of a modern Europe. The Orange Revolution gave hope to freedom-loving people everywhere - its spirit clearly lives on.”

Lady Thatcher gave Ms Tymoshenko some good advice, “Despite all troubles and political treasons, I always went straight forth with my aim, which I believed to be right. You do the same.”

Following the meeting Lady Thatcher presented Ms Tymoshenko with a signed copy of her memoirs. The inscription inside was heartfelt: “To Yulia Tymoshenko who has fought for freedom so vigorously, with admiration Margaret Thatcher.”

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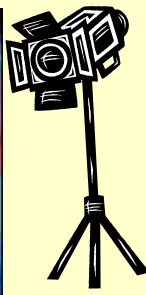


Ms Tymoshenko talked about her wish to transform Ukraine with the same zeal as Lady Thatcher, "I have long-admired Lady Thatcher and drawn inspiration from her success in transforming her country from being a "sick man" of Europe into one of Europe's strongest economies and raising UK living standards to one of the highest in the world. Her model has been followed and emulated by Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and even Nicolas Sarkozy the new President of France."

Ms Tymoshenko presented Lady Thatcher with a framed copy of Scythian gold antiquities and expressed her thanks to Lady Thatcher for her role in lifting the "Iron Curtain" and furthering the peaceful transition to democracy and state sovereignty in Eastern Europe.

"She was firm in adversity and stood up to oppression when others remained seated. Her words spoke for countless millions across Eastern Europe who had no voice," said Ms Tymoshenko.

Spotlight: Interview with Hryhoriy Nemyria



Hryhoriy Nemyria is Yulia Tymoshenko's foreign policy adviser and vice chairman of BYuT. Until recently Mr Nemyria was a deputy of the Verkhovna Rada, where he chaired the Sub-committee on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

Often quoted in the international and domestic media, Mr Nemyria is a familiar face in Brussels and Strasbourg and has done much to elevate the stature of Ukraine's parliamentary opposition in the eyes of the European Union.

He serves as the deputy head of the Permanent Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and is a member of the Ukrainian delegation to the Committee on Parliamentary Cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union.

In 2005, when Ms Tymoshenko was prime minister, Mr Nemyria served as her foreign policy and European integration advisor.



When should Ukraine Join the WTO?

Really, Ukraine should have been a member 8 months ago. The Yanukovich-administration has dragged its feet, missing deadline after deadline. The last one was February 2007, which meant that we could not join until this summer. Now, it is unlikely we will be a member before November.

How will WTO membership benefit ordinary Ukrainians?

Some people would have you believe that the WTO is an elitist club that only benefits big industrialists. This is nonsense. About 90 per cent of the world's trade is through the 150 WTO states, that see huge benefit for their economies and therefore their own citizens: business people and consumers.

The fact is that Soviet-style protectionism cannot work in today's global economy. Protecting inefficient industry and jobs have been excuses for our oligarch clans for too long, but import-export restrictions and high custom tariffs serve only to raise the price of goods, restrict choice and ultimately damage job prospects.

It's vital we change the agenda by attracting investment and equipping our industry to compete on a level playing field. That is the best way to protect jobs. Our recently launched "Contract with investors" outlines 33 measures for improving the investment climate in this country and WTO membership is seen as a prerequisite. ▶▶▶

In addition to parliamentary and political duties, Mr Nemyria is a founder and director of the academic Centre for European and International Studies (CEIS) and honorary chair of the Department for European Integration at the National Academy of Public Administration.

From 1996 until 2005, Mr Nemyria served as chairman and advisor to the board of the International Renaissance Foundation, the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration and the Civil Society Advisory Committee to the Speaker of the Parliament (2002-2005). He has also been a Freedom House CEE-NIS Academic Advisor for Nations in Transition since 2000 and a member of its Europe Advisory Committee since 2004. In 1992, Mr Nemyria founded the Centre for Political Studies (CPS) and served as its director from 1992-1996.

Mr Nemyria has a master's degree from Donetsk State University in 1982 and a Ph.D. from Kyiv Taras Shevchenko University in 1988. He is married with children and lives in Kyiv.

Foreign trade will stimulate economic growth and jobs. Good governance and adherence to a clear and internationally agreed system of trading rules will enable foreign businesses to invest in Ukraine with greater certainty and confidence.

Also, joining the WTO will grant access to markets previously denied us. International trade – whether it be in finished goods, semi-finished goods, raw material or energy – is the means to strengthen our economy and attract investment. A stronger economy translates into more plentiful, better paid jobs and, at the same time, will provide the state with resources to afford the social welfare programmes this country needs.

Furthermore, without being a WTO member we will be unable to progress membership of the EU.

We are told that the EU doesn't want Ukraine to be a member. Why be so keen to join a club that doesn't want us?

It's true that there exists some degree of enlargement fatigue, particularly amongst some of the original member states. It's only natural. Events have moved quickly. The EU

needs some bedding down time following Bulgaria and Romania's admission this year and a raft of eastern European states in 2004.

This doesn't mean that Ukraine is being rejected – far from it – otherwise we wouldn't have been granted a special trading status with Brussels. But there are economic, legal and social conditions that have to be met before we can seriously start talking about membership. It will take time for us to meet these requirements but we have to start planning now.

The benefits of membership are enormous though. Already four of our neighbours that border us are members – Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania – and behind them are 23 other nations who would be active trading partners and investors in Ukraine. By being a member, our

doors would be open to the world's largest economic block comprising nearly 500 million consumers with a combined GDP of nearly \$13 trillion. In comparison, Russia's population is about 143 million and GDP about \$1.7 trillion. Obviously, Russia will remain an important partner for us, both economically and culturally, but the greatest opportunities lie with European integration and we make no secret of aspiring to be a full member of the EU as soon as we can.



Would BYuT have us join NATO?

Clearly this is an issue that carries a lot of historical baggage and anti-NATO emotions run high in the Crimea and east of the country where the ties with Russia are strongest. We believe that there needs to be improved understanding of the benefits of joining NATO if there is going to be any sort of serious and constructive dialogue on membership.

We have long called for a public information programme so that a true picture is put before the people. We also support a national referendum on the issue, but again, we could not undertake this without first educating the populace, many of whom were taught in school to view NATO as the enemy. The world might have changed but old prejudices die hard.

However, this should not stop us from tighter Euro-Atlantic integration and chipping away at the barriers. It's worth noting that Ukraine is highly respected by NATO member countries because we have participated so readily and enthusiastically in all the NATO exercises.

I really don't see NATO membership as a hot topic in this election campaign. We need to park it for the time being as ultimately the people will decide, once they are presented with the full facts.

BYuT understands the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration for Ukraine and that no country can confront new challenges alone. The benchmark for successful Euro-Atlantic integration should be progress in the implementation of high level standards of accountability, transparency, and civil democratic monitoring of governmental institutions, especially the Armed Forces, security and law enforcement agencies. Improved institutional capacity and adoption of international standards should be priority investments in our security.



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On the Campaign Trail with Yulia

It was an overcast day. Sullen rain clouds did not deter more than 5,000 people from gathering to hear Yulia Tymoshenko speak in the square at Bila Tserkva – another one of the many stops in the BYuT leader's punishing campaign schedule.

Located 85 km south of Kyiv, the small city is home to 204,000 people, a significant number of which work at the Rosava tyre factory.

Famous for its landmark “White Church,” Bila Tserkva is a typical central Ukrainian city with a provincial look and feel that contrasts sharply with the nation's more prosperous capital which shares the same oblast.

Despite threatening rain clouds the crowd that waited patiently in the square comprised people of all ages and classes – from babushkas to children; from devoted fans sporting Yulia T-shirts to those driven by nothing more than curiosity.





The rally got underway with the initial razzmatazz supplied by Taras Petrenenko, a well known pop-star, who was joined by Tetyana Horobets his bouncy female compatriot. They were the warm up act for a rally which seemed a million miles away from the meticulously choreographed campaign setting most western politicians are familiar with.



Then sensing the main act was about to take the stage, the crowd chanted "Yulia, Yulia" with an endearing spontaneity that is sadly lacking from more polished western rallies.

Ms Tymoshenko, clad in a smart ivory-coloured outfit, greeted the masses and apologised for her hoarse voice. Yet this did not stop her from launching into a 50-minute speech that covered such wide-



ranging topics from corruption to social welfare, and touched upon pressing local issues to the state of the nation's economy. The audience listened attentively – this polite reception perhaps a hang-over from Soviet-times.

Although the speech was delivered without notes, large screens either side of the stage flashed up images to drive home particular points. For example, on the sensitive subject of gas prices, there were pictures of Ukraine's last three prime ministers: Ms Tymoshenko, Yuriy Yekhanurov and the current prime minister, Viktor Yanukovych. Displayed underneath the pictures were "\$50, \$95, \$130" – these being the import prices per 1,000 cubic metres of natural gas during their respective administrations. The message was simple but effective.

▲ Supporters of all ages gather in Bila Tserkva.

The corner-stone of the speech was the "Ukrainian Breakthrough" – a 12-point manifesto which is the distillation of a 319-page policy document or blueprint for the economic and social development of the country.

While Ms Tymoshenko spoke, supporters of the pro-Russian Party of Regions weaved their way into the crowd carrying large blue Party of Regions helium-filled balloons. Many had their faces covered with bandanas. They headed for the centre of the crowd where several of their balloons were popped amid loud cheers.

Defusing the situation, Ms Tymoshenko, appealed for the Regions protesters to be left alone. She then gave them some advice, saying they "should accept nothing less than 250 hryvnas as this is the price they were paying in the next town." Feeling embarrassed, the balloon holders trooped away letting Ms Tymoshenko continue with her speech.



I couldn't help think that democracy has come further in Ukraine than most people think. In some countries such intermingling of political factions would have caused violence. But then again these were hired-hands and not real activists. We talked to several Party of Regions flag holders on the periphery of the rally who freely admitted that they were being paid to attend.

Following her speech Ms Tymoshenko was whisked away to a local TV station where she was interviewed by foreign reporters before breaking off for a one-hour TV interview. After the interview her minders were anxious to put her in a car to Cherkasy for a large evening rally some 90-minutes away, but Ms Tymoshenko honoured a pledge to return and answer remaining questions from the foreign reporters before taking time to greet and meet well-wishers waiting outside. By any yardstick it was a grueling schedule, but somehow she had time for everybody. It was quite humbling to watch.



▲ Yulia Tymoshenko signs autographs outside the local TV station in Bila Tserkva before going to Cherkasy.

You would expect a positive spin on this story, after all this is appearing in BYuT's newsletter, but this trip helped confirm what I had so far only been told. For I saw laid out, in a small provincial city, the gulf that exists between the country's two leading parties.

One resorts to paying its flag carriers and pursues self-serving policies. Its leader, by no fault of his own, lacks the common touch and the ability to appeal to both

east and west – lacking qualities that are needed to unite this nation of 47 million people.

The other party has supporters who turn up for no other reason than they want to. It is a party that has grown-up considerably since the last election. It has well thought-out policies contained in its "Ukrainian Breakthrough" manifesto and recently launched "Contract with investors," aimed at securing the nation's economic development, welfare reform and alignment with the best principles of European democracy.

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If I ever needed reminding why the choice between them is so important, I need only remind myself of the Bila Tserkva market trader who tapped a journalist on the shoulder to hand them the 50 hryvna note they had dropped. That man is just one of millions of ordinary citizens who deserve a better future.

Perhaps this election is not just a question of politics. I believe it's more intrinsic than that: it's about decency and honesty. So am I biased? You bet I am.



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