

# Yulia Tymoshenko urges West to stop ignoring Russian takeover of Ukraine

Ukraine's former prime minister has accused the West of ignoring a Russian takeover of her country, warning that the Kremlin is poised to swallow up its giant gas pipeline network which is vital for Europe's energy security.

By Andrew Osborn in Kiev

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In an interview with the Daily Telegraph, Yulia Tymoshenko said the West had failed to condemn an alarming lurch to Soviet authoritarianism in Ukraine this year, unwittingly opening the door to pernicious Russian economic and military influence.

"Ukraine is being swallowed up," she warned. "The country's new rulers see everything as an asset to be sold. Natural resources, state industrial monopolies, government cash flows, media organisations and factories. Russia is already taking advantage of the situation and I think they will do so even more in future."



Former Ukrainian prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko. Photo: EPA/SERGEY DOLZHENKO

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Miss Tymoshenko, who narrowly lost a presidential election to Kremlin-friendly politician Viktor Yanukovich in February (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/7184349/Ukraine-election-Viktor-Yanukovich-claims-victory.html>), said she was disappointed by the West's timidity.

"I do not understand. When Yanukovich came to power and democracy began to ebb away Western politicians spoke of stability," she said. "If you do not call things by their real name and speak out about the flouting of democracy it is better to say nothing."

She likened the pro-Russian politician's eight months in power so far to "the funeral of democracy."

Since coming to power, Mr Yanukovich, a former mechanic, has strengthened his own presidential powers, signed a deal that allows Russia's Black Sea Fleet to remain in Ukraine until 2042, and boosted the use of the Russian language in everyday life.

In the process, critics contend he has clamped down on opposition media, stifled meaningful opposition, and turned the former Soviet republic into a pale imitation of the USSR circa 1970 when Leonid Brezhnev was in power. Mr Yanukovich rejects that, saying he has brought much-needed stability and repaired badly damaged relations with Ukraine's biggest neighbour: Russia.

But Miss Tymoshenko, who shot to global prominence during the 2004 pro-Western orange revolution, urged the West to wake up. She said Mr Yanukovich was selling the country of 45 million people to the Kremlin piece by piece.

Nothing, including the giant country's strategically-vital energy infrastructure which Vladimir Putin, the Russian prime minister, has already admitted Moscow wants, appeared sacred, she added.

"Money and fear are ruling the country," she said. "What is left of our energy resources is being swallowed up. It is the co-operation of a master and servant. We can co-operate and be friendly with Russia but we should not be selling our sovereignty to them or abandoning the path of European integration for them."

She said Russia and Ukraine were already in advanced talks about setting up a series of joint industrial behemoths which would effectively give Moscow far-reaching control of Ukraine's economy.

"Russia like any other country around the world is pushing its own national interests. The problem is not with Russia but with Ukraine where a fifth column is operating. The new rulers' attitude is that they own the country and can dispose of whatever they want."

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