

MEPs call for Ukraine's rival leaders to set aside differences at a time of crisis

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On 18th August a statement was made by the deputy Chief of Staff to the President of Ukraine, Andriy Kyslynskiy, accusing Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko of ties with the Russian leadership, citing in evidence her lack of support for Georgia during the recent conflict with Russia. He further alleged that Ukraine's Prime Minister was cooperating with Russia in order to guarantee Russian support for her presumed Presidential bid in 2010.

Dr Charles Tannock MEP (UK), who is Vice President of the Delegation of the European Parliament with the Ukraine and a Spokesman for the EPP-ED Group on foreign affairs, commented: "This allegation is baseless and clearly an attempt to discredit the Prime Minister. It is high time that President Yushchenko sets aside his rivalry with his Prime Minister who wrote an article in "Foreign Affairs" clearly demonstrating her commitment to her country's sovereignty and the need to resist Russian interference in Ukraine's internal affairs. It is understandable that Yushchenko in solidarity with his friend President Sakashvili of Georgia felt a need to go to Tbilisi and show solidarity against Russian aggression after its invasion of Georgia. However, his statements that he would prevent Russian ships returning to their Black Sea base in the Crimea if used against Georgia were beyond his power to deliver on. Indeed, Russia's ships returned to their port in Sebastapol without hindrance.

"Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko chose a different strategy, one of cool-headedness in a crisis.

Ukraine's Prime Minister, who has personally been subject to international arrest warrants manufactured by Russia, knows all too well that Ukraine must avoid mindlessly provoking her powerful neighbour.

Given the mindset of the Kremlin, any pretext for fomenting unrest in Ukraine is not only futile, it is dangerous. Moreover, Premier Tymoshenko's calm leadership at this moment also reflects the firm but measured tone that German Chancellor Angela Merkel is also pursuing in her efforts to rein in Russia's revanchist instincts.

"It is clear that after Russia's cynical recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that there are undoubtedly officials in the Kremlin who are keen to extend their irredentism to Crimea.

We are witnessing a phase of Russian military

adventurism and expansion and Ukraine must be extremely vigilant both for its own territorial integrity and national unity with a 30% Russophone community and another major other frozen conflict on its border in Transnistria."

Elmar Brok, German MEP and Chairman of the Foreign, Security and European Policy committee of the German CDU Party, commented: "President Yushchenko as father of the nation and guarantor of its sovereignty and security must set aside his political differences with his Orange coalition partner and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko by consolidating the pro-Western governing coalition. During Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations on Aug. 24, he rightly called for politicians to unite and end infighting. Foreign Ministers from France and the UK have been in Ukraine recently bolstering EU support for Ukraine because of fears of potential external threats of encroachment on Ukraine's sovereignty by Russia. Yushchenko at this time of crisis should now silence those in his administration like Mr Kyslynskiy engaged in cheap point scoring against Mrs Tymoshenko ahead of the 2010 elections."