
YULIA TYMOSHENKO

- Former Prime Minister of Ukraine

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Yulia Tymoshenko is a Ukrainian politician and businesswoman. She co-led the Orange Revolution and was the first woman appointed Prime Minister of Ukraine, serving from 24 January to 8 September 2005, and again from December 2007 to March 2010.

She trained as an engineer and economist in the east and, when the Soviet Union broke up, sought to take advantage of the business opportunities that emerged. In the mid-1990s she formed United Energy Systems of Ukraine, which helped supply gas to Ukraine's huge industrial base. By some estimates, she became one of the richest people in Ukraine. She was nicknamed "the gas princess". Like many tycoons in Ukraine, she sought to become involved in politics, and became part of Mr Yushchenko's government in 1999-2001, pushing through energy sector reforms. But she fell out with then-President Leonid Kuchma, and after being held in prison for a month on corruption charges, she made it her goal to unseat him, launching a campaign that reached its climax in the Orange Revolution.

A heroine of Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Yulia Tymoshenko is one of the country's most high-profile political figures. She was freed in February 2014, following the overthrow of Yanukovich's regime, after spending three years in jail for criminally exceeding her powers, charges that she says were politically motivated. The glamorous, fiery orator helped lead Ukraine's revolt against a corrupt election in 2004, gaining international recognition. But in 2011 she was convicted over a 2009 gas deal agreed with Russia and given a seven-year sentence. She always argued the charges of abuse of power against her were a tissue of lies, inspired by the man she helped oust in 2004, Viktor Yanukovich – who returned to defeat her in the 2010 presidential election.