

## Gloves come off so fight can start



UKRANIAN boxing star Vitali Klitschko has stopped training to protest the arrest of the country's former leader.

Klitschko said in his blog on the news site *Ukrainska Pravda* that he returned to Kiev as soon as he learned that the former prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, had been arrested for contempt of court during her abuse of power trial.

He is currently in training to fight Poland's Tomasz Adamek for the WBC Heavyweight Championship in September.

"When I learned what had happened in Ukraine, I stopped training for the fight and returned to Kiev as far as I understand that the real battle for democratic values is unfolding here - in Ukraine - and I cannot be an observer in this situation," said Klitschko.

The politically-committed fighter said that Ukraine's democracy was being "destroyed" on the eve of the 20th anniversary of its independence.

"If this continues, we will forever live in a dictatorship and total corruption and the development of civil society will be forgotten," he wrote.

"Is the government going to be at war with the people and imprison all those who oppose its methods of managing the country?"

"The consequence could be the international isolation of Ukraine, finally putting an end to the Ukrainian wish to live in a free democratic country with European values."

Klitschko heads the Kiev-based political party Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR, meaning "punch" or "strike" in Ukrainian and Russian) but the force has yet to make an impact outside the capital.

His boxer brother Wladimir - like Vitali an articulate speaker in several languages - delighted Ukraine last month by easily defeating Britain's David Haye in his latest bout.

Mrs Tymoshenko has accused President Viktor Yanukovich of instigating her trial, a charge the presidency denies.