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UKRAINE'S DIFFICULT ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

INTRODUCTION

Continued existence of a Soviet Union is increasingly doubtful because of the pro-independence movements and governments in all of its 15 republics. Yet just two of these republics hold the key to the Soviet Union's future. The first, of course, is Russia – the huge, resource-rich land that by itself would be by far Europe's most populous, biggest, and potentially richest nation. The second is Ukraine, of which Vladimir Lenin said shortly after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution: "If we lose [it], we will lose our heads."¹ Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev echoed Lenin in February 1989: "if there were disorder in Ukraine...the whole fabric of the Soviet Union would disintegrate."²

To be sure, Ukraine is no Russia. Still, with its 52 million people, its important location bordering on Byelorussia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Russia, and its own venerable history and traditions, Ukraine would rank among Europe's top nations. And although it occupies less than three percent of the Soviet territory, Ukraine accounts for nearly one-fifth of Soviet industrial output and almost one-quarter of agricultural production. Without Ukraine, the Soviet Union as it is known today would cease to exist.

Poised to Regain Independence. Today, after centuries of struggling for independence from Russia, Poland, the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Soviet Union, and Nazi Germany, Ukraine appears poised to regain the independence it lost to

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- 1 Traditionally in English the word "Ukraine" is preceded by the definite article "the." Independence-minded Ukrainians, however, consider this a linguistic artifact of Russian colonialism. Therefore, the article will not be used in this text.
 - 2 *The Washington Post*, February 23, 1989.

Moscow's Bolshevik troops in 1920. Millions of Ukrainians have joined the pro-independence struggle led by the popular movement *Rukh*, the Ukrainian Republican Party and the Ukrainian Democratic Party.

Yet obstacles to independence are formidable. Among them: political divisions among Ukraine's 15 political parties; the legacy of the three centuries of Russian domination, including the efforts to stamp out the Ukrainian language and culture; the presence of 11 million ethnic Russians in Ukraine who may not want an independent Ukraine; and the economic crisis and ecological disaster aggravated by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, which occurred 60 miles northwest of Ukraine's capital, Kiev.

Serving American Interests. The United States has direct stakes in the outcome of this struggle. If this large nation moves peacefully toward independence, democracy, non-violence, ethnic tolerance, and a free market, American interests will be served. There are three reasons for this. First, a peaceful exit of Ukraine from the Soviet Union would deprive the Soviet armed forces of manpower and resources and thus diminish the Soviet threat to America and its European allies. For over forty years, the Soviet Union was a menace to Europe, and Ukraine as part of the U.S.S.R. contributed to Moscow's military might. Without Ukraine, the borders of the Soviet Union and Russia would be pushed back, weakening their ability, if they should remain communist or authoritarian, to project their power and influence into Europe. Second, a democratic and independent Ukraine, committed to peaceful relations with Russia and other neighbors, could be an important force in securing a more stable order in the region. Whether independent or, if it chooses, as part of a voluntary federation with a democratic Russia, Ukraine could join other emerging democratic states in Eastern Europe in creating a new state system that respects popular sovereignty and the right of nations to live in peace. Third, without U.S. assistance, the Ukrainian road to independence could be marred by inter-ethnic violence, dictatorial regimes and economic catastrophes that could produce a major convulsion in the region and prompt a resurrection of Russian imperial chauvinism.

While Ukraine's movement toward increasing autonomy from Moscow could occur regardless of what America does, the Bush Administration can influence the ways in which Ukraine's separation from Moscow may occur. To be sure, doing this would constitute an attempt by the U.S. to influence the internal affairs of the Soviet Union, but concerns about this problem should not stop the U.S. from promoting the peaceful independence of Ukraine. It should be up to the governments of the republics, not Moscow, to decide whether U.S. support is welcome assistance or pernicious meddling. If the republican government of Ukraine does not object to U.S. aid for democratic groups inside the country, then Washington should proceed with it. Washington, however, should not aid any group that advocates violence. The U.S. has no interest in promoting civil war in the Soviet Union, and military aid to any group thus is out of the question. But peacefully assisting groups that wish to create democratic and free market institutions is in the U.S. interest.

To help Ukrainians at this critical moment in their nation's history, the U.S. should:

◆ ◆ **Identify and aid political forces in Ukraine that are pursuing a democratic and non-violent road to independence.** Such groups as the Ukrainian Republican Party and the Ukrainian Democratic Party could use U.S. communication and copying equipment.

◆ ◆ **Ship emergency medical supplies directly to Ukraine to alleviate the misery caused by the Chernobyl disaster.**

◆ ◆ **Help Ukraine develop free-market solutions to the environmental problems caused by 73 years of communism.** Ukraine could be helped by experts from such private groups as the Washington, D.C.-based Competitive Enterprise Institute and the Bozeman, Montana-based Foundation for Research on Economics and Environment and Political Economy Research Center. Visits to Ukraine by these experts could be funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

◆ ◆ **Encourage Ukraine to develop its own foreign policy.** To spur this, Washington should invite high-level Ukrainian officials to visit America to meet with their counterparts in the Bush Administration. Examples: Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatolii Zlenko could meet with Secretary of State James Baker, and State Minister and Minister of Agriculture Alexandr Tkachenko could meet with Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan.

◆ ◆ **Support Ukraine's request for independent status at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).**

◆ ◆ **Welcome independent policies by the Ukrainian delegation at the United Nations if they should emerge, and work with the Ukrainian delegation on issues of mutual concern.**

◆ ◆ **Increase the broadcasts in Ukrainian by the Voice of America (VOA) and enlarge the staff of the Ukrainian service.**

◆ ◆ **Offer Ukrainians more Fulbright Fellowships and high school and college exchanges.**

◆ ◆ **Begin publishing in Ukrainian the U.S. Information Agency's monthly *Amerika* magazine, currently available only in Russian.**

◆ ◆ **Ask Congress to double the five-person staff and expand the activities of the U.S. Consulate in Kiev.** The staff increase is necessary if the U.S. wants to signal its heightened attention to Ukraine, transform the Consulate into a cultural and political center of U.S.-Ukrainian relations, and enable the Consulate to perform such normal consular duties as issuing U.S. visas in Kiev, rather than in Moscow.



EUROPE'S "SECRET NATION"

Although among the most populous of Europe's nations, Ukraine and its history are not well known in the West. This prompts experts to call Ukraine "Europe's secret nation."³

Ukraine arose as a state in the second half of the first millennium. Its capital, Kiev, was the capital of Kievan Rus, a Slavic state that was home to what later become three distinct nationalities: the Russians, the Ukrainians, and the Belorussians. It was in Kiev that Christianity first was introduced in Rus and made the state religion by Prince Vladimir in 988.

After the disintegration of Kievan Rus into warring principalities in the 12th-13th Centuries, Ukraine continued to exist more or less within its current boundaries until it gradually was absorbed into the Grand Principality of Lithuania in the 14th Century. Ukrainian lands not occupied by Lithuania and Poland became

³ Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, *The Hidden Nations. The People Challenge the Soviet Union* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1990), p. 72

Moscow's protectorate under the terms of the 1654 Treaty of Pereiaslav, signed by the Ukrainian Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the representatives of the Russian Czar Alexei Romanov. After that, for almost 300 years, most Ukrainian territory was divided between Russia, Poland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Czarina Catherine the Great in 1775 completed the absorption of Ukraine into Russia by annexing the last independent Cossack region of Zaporzhskaya Sich. The very word Ukraine disappeared from the language of Russian officialdom, replaced by *Malorossia*, or "Little Russia." There followed two centuries of deliberate policy of Russification aimed at strangling Ukrainian culture and language and assimilating Ukrainians into Russia.⁴

Short-Lived Independence. Ukraine declared its independence from Moscow on January 22, 1918, three months after the Bolshevik Revolution, but was reconquered by Moscow's Red Army in 1920. Somewhat tolerant at first of Ukrainian nationalism, Moscow changed course in the early 1930s when Joseph Stalin unleashed a campaign of terror against nationalist-minded Ukrainian writers, artists, actors and teachers. Some 80 percent of them were killed.⁵ Then, in Stalin's brutal collectivization of agriculture in 1932-1933, some four million to seven million Ukrainian peasants starved to death.

Following the Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union occupied Western Ukraine, which had been part of Poland. Then, in June 1940, Moscow forced Romania to cede the provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina, which border Ukraine in the west. As a result, seven million more Ukrainians came under Moscow's rule. Moscow began mass arrests and deportations to concentration camps in the Soviet East in spring 1940.⁶ An estimated 400,000 Ukrainians were arrested in and deported from the Western Ukrainian province of Galicia alone.

When Nazi troops pushed the Soviets out of Ukraine in 1941, they were at first welcomed as liberators from Bolshevism. But Ukrainians soon became disillusioned by Nazi brutality and eventually rebelled against the Germans, conducting a masterful guerrilla war. When Soviet troops re-occupied Western Ukraine in 1944, the nationalist guerrillas turned their guns against Moscow. But after five years of fierce fighting, the Soviet government crushed all armed resistance in 1949. During this time, these Ukrainian forces received absolutely no support from the West.

Rising Nationalism. In the early 1960s young intellectuals began to publish underground journals focusing on Ukraine's language, culture and history. So great was Moscow's fear of political instability in Ukraine that in the 1970s the Ukrainian KGB was given *carte blanche* to eradicate Ukrainian nationalism once and for all. The Ukrainian KGB soon acquired a reputation as the most brutal of all

4 Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine. A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 282.

5 Karatnicky and Diuk, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

6 Subtelny, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

regional branches of the Soviet secret police. Deaths of political prisoners, rare in the U.S.S.R. in the 1970s, disproportionately claimed Ukrainian inmates.

The devastating effect of Moscow's rule helps explain why Ukraine has been slower than most other Soviet republics to take advantage of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

THE AWAKENING AFTER CHERNOBYL

Ukraine was jolted by a catastrophe of mammoth proportions on April 26, 1986, when the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl exploded. The plant is only 60 miles from Kiev. The blast spewed radioactive particles over thousands of square miles of Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Russian territory. Moscow's official claim that only 31 people died in the disaster is widely disputed in Ukraine. Chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet's Commission on Questions of the Chernobyl Catastrophe Volodymyr Yavorivskyi contends that he knows of 540 deaths resulting directly from the nuclear explosion.⁷ Vladimir Chernousenko, the scientific director of the 20-mile exclusion zone established around the reactor, puts the number of deaths at 7,000.⁸ Among 200,000 to 250,000 clean-up workers sent by Moscow to Chernobyl, more than 1,000 are reported to have died.⁹

Chernobyl opened the eyes of millions of Ukrainians to their republic's status as a nuclear colony of Moscow: 40 percent of Soviet nuclear power is produced there. The Chernobyl disaster reinforced Ukrainians' longstanding belief that the central Soviet government cares little for the lives of Ukrainians. Moscow's negligence and the mishandling of the accident gave impetus to the rise of pro-independence democratic movements. A leading pro-independent activist, Mykhailo Horyn, summed up the feelings of millions of Ukrainians when he said last September 13: "Every citizen of Ukraine knows that Chernobyl was the result of [Moscow's] imperial policy in Ukraine. The empire cannot protect us from new Chernobyls... and therefore our future can only be seen in light of the creation of an independent state."¹⁰

7 *RFE/RL Daily Report*, November 29, 1990, p. 5.

8 "What Chernobyl Did" *The Economist*, April 27, 1991, p. 19.

9 *Financial Times*, May 24, 1991. In addition, uncounted tens of thousands are assumed to have become ill as a result of exposure to radiation. Many more will develop cancers and other potentially lethal illnesses. Some 5,800 children and 7,000 adults already have developed thyroid ailments. On the fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine announced that two million people were "threatened" by radiation and "thousands" had died in the "national tragedy." Seeking to relegate Chernobyl to history, Soviet authorities designated as dangerous only a 20-mile zone around the plant and evacuated 92,000 residents. Only three years after the explosion, in March 1989, did the Soviet government disclose that the radioactive fallout had affected a large area of northern Ukraine, encompassing the Kiev, Chernigov, Zhitomir and Kovno provinces. Altogether, some 6.5 million hectares, or 16,055,000 acres, of Ukrainian farmland and forests are believed contaminated.

10 Horyn's remarks are published as *Heritage Lecture* No. 282, "Building Independent and Democratic Ukraine."

STEPS TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

Ukraine took its first major step toward independence on March 24, 1990, when the "Democratic Bloc," a coalition of democratic, pro-independence and ecological groups led by *Rukh*, captured 111 out of 450 seats to Ukraine's top legislative body, the Supreme Soviet. There the Ukrainian democrats formed a faction called *Narodna Rada*, or People's Council, which soon grew to 151 deputies, as pro-reform communists joined the *Rada*. The hard-line communists retained the majority in the Supreme Soviet with 239 seats.

The *Rada* led the Supreme Soviet to adopt the Ukrainian Declaration of Sovereignty. This asserted the primacy of Ukrainian law over legislation passed in Moscow, and Ukraine's right to conduct independent diplomacy and conclude economic agreements with other states. It also introduced the concept of Ukrainian citizenship.¹¹

Of particular importance is the section stipulating that Ukrainian youths drafted into the Soviet armed forces must serve within the republic's boundaries, and may not be dispatched to military activities outside Ukraine without the consent of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet. Ukrainian draftees make up almost one-fifth of Soviet armed forces, the second largest ethnic group after Russians.

The next important step toward independence was last August 3, when the Communist-controlled Ukrainian Supreme Soviet established Ukrainian sovereignty over all of the republic's land, water, minerals, and other natural resources, and declared control over taxation, banking, prices and foreign economic relations. The new law did not even mention the Soviet Union.¹² In addition, the law legalizes private property by declaring "equality of all forms of property and equal rights of each."

Student Demands. Meantime, pro-independence activities accelerated. Last October, several hundred university students went on a 15-day hunger strike in a tent city in front of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet in Kiev. Among the students' demands were the resignation of Ukrainian Prime Minister Vitalii Mosol; enforcement of the law preventing Ukrainian draftees from serving outside the republic under any circumstances; nationalization of the Communist Party's property in Ukraine; and new multi-party elections for the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet. After initially rejecting the students' demands, the Communist majority of the Supreme Soviet voted on October 17 to satisfy most of them.

The students' triumph further radicalized the democratic pro-independence opposition. At its October 25-October 28 Second Congress, the popular front *Rukh*, whose membership had increased from 280,000 to 630,000 since its founding Congress in September 1989, declared officially that its goal is the achievement of Uk-

11 *Report on the USSR*, January 4, 1991, p. 23.

12 *Report on the USSR*, September 28, 1990, p. 16.

rainian independence by nonviolent means. The Congress also voted to delete from the movement's founding charter a statement in support of Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

ROADBLOCKS ON THE PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

In the wake of the October students' strike and the Second Congress of *Rukh*, the Communist hardliners began a counter-offensive. A radical nationalist deputy from Western Ukraine, Stepan Khmara, was arrested on November 17 after the majority of the Supreme Soviet voted to waive his parliamentary immunity. On November 30 the Supreme Soviet adopted a decree that severely restricts demonstrations and public meetings. These and other measures have slowed momentum toward independence. Today there is an uneasy and tense deadlock between the Moscow-oriented communist hard-liners and the pro-independence democratic opposition.

Pro-democracy progress has been slow for three reasons.

Reason #1: There is no Ukrainian-wide consensus on independence.

The formation of such a consensus is seriously handicapped by the historic split between the heavily Russified and industrialized eastern provinces of Ukraine — Kharkiv, Donetsk, Zaporozhia and Dnepropetrovsk — and such western provinces as Lvov, Volhynia, Ternopol, Chernivitsi and Ivano-Frankivsk, which were forcibly taken from Poland and incorporated in the Soviet Union in 1939.

While most Ukrainians in the western provinces are fervent Catholics, the eastern provinces are dominated by Russian Orthodox and, in the past few years, Ukrainian Orthodox Churches. While there are very few Russian speakers among ethnic Ukrainians in western provinces, many Ukrainians in Eastern Ukraine speak only Russian. Until a few years ago, even Kiev was overwhelmingly a Russian-language city.

These cultural, linguistic and religious divisions are reflected in Ukrainians' attitude toward independence. In the March 17, 1991, "All-Union Referendum on the Preservation of the Union," the three provinces of Western Ukraine voted overwhelmingly against preserving the Soviet Union; there the pro-Union vote was under 20 percent.¹³ By comparison, the pro-Union vote in the heavily industrialized and Russified provinces of Eastern Ukraine was nearly 80 percent.¹⁴ With differences this strong on the key question of independence, Ukraine's road to self-determination will be difficult.

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- 13 In addition, the three Western Ukrainian provinces put another question on the referendum: "Do you want the Ukraine to become an independent state which independently decides its domestic and foreign policies, which guarantees equal rights to all of its citizens, regardless of their national or religious allegiance?" Some 85 percent of the voters responded in the affirmative.
- 14 The voter turnout was 83 percent of all eligible to vote. Thus the preservation of the Soviet Union was approved by 58 percent of eligible voters in Ukraine.

Lacking a consensus on independence, Ukraine has failed to form a national movement similar to the popular fronts that came to power in the smaller republics of Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The result has been a splintering of pro-independence political movements among fifteen parties, with *Rukh* no longer capable of uniting them.

Among the fifteen parties, four play key roles.

The most radical is the Ukrainian National Party (UNP), founded in Lvov on October 21, 1989, and led by Petr Kutuzov. In its struggle for an independent Ukraine, the UNP rejects parliamentary methods because it considers all current political structures illegitimate. The UNP refuses to participate in elections to local and all-Ukrainian bodies and, as a result, has no representation in the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine.

A second major player is the Ukrainian Republican Party (URP), founded in March 1990. In November 1990, it became the first opposition party to be officially registered in Ukraine. The core of the Party are political dissidents who were members of the Helsinki Group, a human rights organization established in Kiev on November 9, 1976. Led by the former political prisoner Levko Lukianenko, the Republican Party seeks to mobilize the Ukrainian population for a non-violent struggle for a democratic and independent Ukraine. As a first step, the party advocates dissolution of the current Ukraine Supreme Soviet and new multiparty elections. It has 12 deputies in the Supreme Soviet.

A third player is the Ukrainian Democratic Party (UDP), formed on May 14, 1990, and led by Yuri Badzio. It opposes the new Union Treaty prepared by Moscow, and advocates an independent Ukraine, market economy and democracy. Overall, the UDP is more moderate than the Ukrainian Republican Party and insists on a more gradual transition to independence. Its delegation in the Supreme Soviet includes 12 deputies led by a founder of *Rukh*, Dmitro Pavlychko.

A fourth player is the Party for the Democratic Rebirth of Ukraine (PDRU), led by Volodymir Filenko. It was founded on December 18, 1990, by reform-oriented Communists, many of whom since quit the Communist Party. The PDRU's declared goals are a democratic Ukrainian state, protection of human rights and the rebirth of Ukrainian culture. As the party of the Communist establishment its 43 deputies comprise the largest delegation in the Supreme Soviet.

Reason #2: The movement lacks leadership.

No leader comparable to Russia's Boris Yeltsin has emerged to unify Ukraine's pro-independence democratic movements. Some popular founders of *Rukh*, such as Ivan Drach, Dmytro Pavlychko, and Volodymyr Yavorivsky, are tainted by their former membership in the Communist Party. The radical leaders of the URP, Levko Lukianenko and Viacheslav Chornovil, are from Western Ukraine and thus their appeal in Eastern Ukraine is limited.

Reason #3: The Communist leadership is politically skilled.

The Chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, Leonid Kravchuk, has proven to be a skilled political rival of the pro-independence opposition. A former Chief of the Ideological Department of the Ukrainian Communist Party's Central Committee under Shcherbitskiy, Kravchuk cleverly has accommodated some of the independence movement's demands without giving up power.

During the October 1990 student hunger strike, he skillfully avoided a head-on confrontation with the democratic opposition that could have galvanized republic-wide support for independence. Writes the popular Soviet weekly *New Times*, Kravchuk "tries to take advantage of the rising national self-consciousness and poses as a champion of Ukraine's state sovereignty." However, adds the weekly, he is constantly "looking back at Moscow...as if considering what he already can and what he cannot yet do."¹⁵

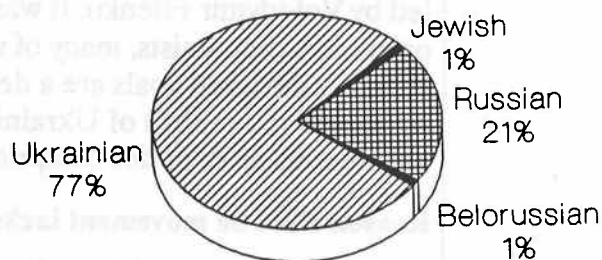
THE RUSSIANS AND THE UKRAINIANS

Yet even if the Ukrainian pro-independence democratic movements overcome their tactical problems, unite and even wrestle the power from the Communists, as did the popular fronts in Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldavia, they still would face a huge obstacle: coolness by ethnic Russians toward Ukrainian independence.

The 11 million ethnic Russians in Ukraine are 21 percent of the population. They have been used by Moscow as tools of political control – for example, through their membership in the Communist Party and secret police – and as industrial laborers in the predominantly rural and agricultural region of Ukraine.

Still, many Russian families have lived in Ukraine for generations and consider it home. If Ukraine's Russians can be persuaded to accept an independent, democratic and free-market Ukraine – in which the rights of the Russian minority carefully are preserved – then the prospects of Ukraine's peaceful exit from Moscow's domestic empire would

The Ethnic Make-Up of Ukraine



Total Population: 52 million

Source: Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, *The Hidden Nations*, William Morrow and Co., Inc. New York, NY 1990.

¹⁵ *New Times*, February 5, 1991, p. 11.

improve dramatically. If the Russian minority in Ukraine feels threatened or otherwise is unable to accept the idea of living in an independent Ukraine, Ukrainian independence may be set back years, if not decades.

Russian Opposition. So far, the Russian minority in Ukraine is politically unorganized. Preliminary data indicate that a sizeable segment of the Russian population in Ukraine may be opposed to Ukraine's independence from Moscow. A public opinion poll conducted last fall, for example, finds that, while 46 percent of ethnic Russians would accept independence, 38 percent were opposed to it and 16 percent were undecided.¹⁶ There are indications, moreover, that ethnic Russians opposed to Ukrainian independence may be trying to split the republic — most likely with Moscow's approval, encouragement, and perhaps support. A little-known group called *Novorossia* ("New Russia") is demanding creation of an autonomous Russian mini-republic inside Ukraine, to encompass Russian-speaking areas, including the populous Odessa and Dnepropetrovsk provinces in the south.¹⁷

Ultimately, of course, a major factor in Ukraine's move toward independence will be Russia's willingness to let go. If 145 million Russians decide that they cannot abide by Ukrainian independence, then Kiev's road to independence will be long and bloody. While many Russians have been remarkably casual about the decline of Moscow's control in the Baltics, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Moldavia, Ukraine may be a different case. A poll of the Russian republic's citizens last February finds that only 22 percent favor letting Ukraine secede from the Union and 59 percent firmly oppose it. No other European republic's independence goals caused such heavy opposition from the Russians polled.¹⁸

The belief that Ukraine is part of Russia cuts across political divisions among Russians, from the chauvinistic "neo-Bolsheviks" to the liberal, pro-democracy intelligentsia. The Russo-Ukrainian bond is so strong that even some of the most determined opponents of Soviet totalitarianism believe that Ukraine must remain part of Russia or, at minimum, part of a federation headed by Russia.

PROMOTING A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC UKRAINE

The dissolution of the Soviet Union into states with varying degrees of political and economic links to Moscow is an inevitable outcome of the political democratization sweeping the U.S.S.R. Ukraine may or may not emerge complete-

¹⁶ *Moscow News*, October 21, 1990.

¹⁷ *RFE/RL Daily Report*, No. 38 (February 22, 1991).

¹⁸ *Research Memorandum*, April 12, 1991, Office of Research, United States Information Agency. The poll, commissioned by the United States Information Agency, was conducted by the Moscow-based Public Opinion Research Service VP among a 1,989 randomly selected residents of the Russian republic between February 15 and March 1. The margin of error is no more than five percentage points in either direction. The European republics of the Soviet Union are Byelorussia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia, Russia and Ukraine.

ly independent once this process is finished, but its relations with Moscow will certainly change dramatically. If Kiev becomes more independent, it will affect not only the Soviet Union but the rest of Europe too. Ukraine is Europe's fifth most populous nation — after Russia, Germany, Italy, Britain and France. Given its immense agricultural and industrial potential, a democratic and free-market revolution in Ukraine could transform this once forgotten nation into a formidable European economic power within a few decades.

As these changes occur, America should begin paying attention to Ukraine. There are several reasons for this. The first is that a 52-million strong democratic and free-market Ukraine could contribute greatly to peace and stability in Eastern Europe. The second, is that Ukraine could be a huge market for American goods. Third, and perhaps most important, detaching Ukrainian manpower and industrial potential from the Soviet armed forces and the Soviet military-industrial complex would reduce greatly the threat that the Soviet Union or Russia poses to the West.

Gorbachev and U.S. critics of closer ties with the republics may charge that helping democratic groups in Ukraine will constitute interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. But such criticism should not deter Bush from assisting democratically elected governments in the republics. The republics, not Moscow, should decide whether U.S. assistance is warranted or not. The republics already have wide latitude under the Soviet constitution to conduct their foreign affairs. And many of them, including Ukraine, have passed laws asserting the precedence of republican law over Soviet law. If the republics decide that U.S. help is welcome and legal, then Washington should not be so shy in providing it.

To encourage the peaceful achievement of an independent, democratic and free-market Ukraine while guarding against charges of interfering in Soviet internal affairs, the U.S. should:

- ◆ **Identify and aid political forces in Ukraine using democratic and non-violent means to achieve independence.**

Political parties in Ukraine form, change and dissolve almost daily. Among today's 15 political parties, at least two seem to merit U.S. support. One is the Ukrainian Republican Party, led by the former political prisoner Levko Lukianenko. The Republican Party sees its mission as mobilizing the Ukrainian population for a non-violent struggle for a democratic and independent Ukraine. As a first step, the party advocates dissolution of the current Supreme Soviet of Ukraine to be followed by new multiparty elections.

The second group is the Ukrainian Democratic Party, led by Dmitro Pavlychko, a founder of *Rukh*. It opposes the new Union Treaty prepared by Moscow and wants an independent Ukraine, a market economy, and democracy.

The political campaigns of both parties are seriously handicapped by a shortage of communication equipment like telephones, fax and copying machines, word processors, printers and paper. These could be supplied by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a congressionally-funded non-governmental organization committed to promoting democracy abroad. In the 1980s, NED sent this type of equipment into Poland for use by the anti-communist forces.

◆ **Ship emergency medical supplies directly to Ukraine.**

This February 6, George Bush authorized the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) to spend \$5 million to ship directly to Ukraine \$10 million worth of emergency medical supplies assembled from private sources by the charitable organization Project Hope. This will consist mostly of equipment and medication for patients suffering from cancer and other radiation-induced diseases.¹⁹ In addition to this, Ukraine badly needs basic medical supplies like vitamins, single-use syringes, blood test kits and Band-Aids. To get these and similar types of medical supplies to Ukraine, the Bush Administration should appropriate an extra \$5 million to purchase the supplies for Ukraine and to supply them to private relief operations.

◆ **Help Ukraine develop free-market solutions to its ecological crisis.**

Seven decades of a communist economy have turned Ukraine into an ecological catastrophe. In cities like Zaporozhye in southern Ukraine, more than a quarter of newborn and young children are sick with illnesses caused directly by chemicals that have been released into the atmosphere.²⁰ The water pollution of the Dnieper, Ukraine's largest river, is 50 times higher than the world standard. To help Ukraine confront its ecological crises, America can dispatch experts from private free-market environmental groups like the Washington, D.C.-based Competitive Enterprise Institute, and the Bozeman, Montana-based Foundation for Research on Economics and Environment and Political Economy Research Center. AID should cover the cost of sending such experts to Ukraine.

◆ **Support Ukraine's effort at developing its own foreign policy.**

Ukraine seems eager to escape its diplomatic isolation. When Hungarian President Arpad Goncz visited Kiev last September 27, for instance, Ukraine and Hungary agreed to exchange consulates and to begin talks on establishing full diplomatic relations. Then on October 13-14, Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski signed an agreement in Kiev on consular and trade representation of Ukraine in Poland. Ukrainian Premier Vitold Fokin, meanwhile, visited Greece this May 10-17.

Soviet law, in fact, does not prohibit the individual republics from maintaining diplomatic contacts with other countries. Article 80 of the Soviet Constitution gives all Soviet republics the right to conduct their foreign affairs, including the right to "take part in the work of international organizations." As such, the Bush Administration need have no qualms about increasing the level of America's contact with Ukraine. The Administration should invite high-level Ukrainian officials to meet with their American counterparts in the U.S.

¹⁹ *New York Times*, February 7, 1991.

²⁰ *Report on the USSR*, January 5, 1990, p. 15.

- ◆ **Support Ukraine's November 20, 1990, request for an independent status at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).**

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was established by the 1975 Helsinki Accords to promote security and human rights in Europe. In its most recent session, in Paris on November 19-21, Ukraine asked to be admitted as an independent member. This was rebuffed by Eduard Shevardnadze, then the U.S.S.R.'s Foreign Minister. Out of deference to Moscow, America and its allies did not support Ukraine's request. Yet most of the West European representatives attending the Paris conference indicated privately to the Americans that if the U.S. endorsed the Ukrainian request, they were ready to support it as well. Although Moscow can veto a motion to admit Ukraine, it may be reluctant to buck what may be a consensus of the other nations.

The next session of the CSCE foreign ministers convenes June 18 in Berlin. There, the U.S. should announce that it favors an independent Ukrainian membership.

- ◆ **Welcome more independent policies by the Ukrainian delegation at the United Nations.**

Along with Byelorussia, Ukraine is the only Soviet republic that is a member of the U.N. Up to now, this has been a membership in name only because Moscow has dictated how the Ukrainian representative votes and speaks. As such, the U.S. representatives ignored the Ukrainian delegation. If, however, the Ukrainian U.N. delegation begins acting independently of Moscow, the U.S. should find ways to encourage it.²¹

- ◆ **Increase the broadcasts in Ukrainian by the Voice of America (VOA) and increase the staff of the Ukrainian service.**

The VOA now broadcasts four hours daily in Ukrainian, down from five hours two years ago. Meanwhile, budget constraints at the United States Information Agency (USIA), the VOA's parent organization, have forced VOA to reduce the Ukrainian staff through attrition by almost one-fifth, from 28 to 23. To signal the growing importance to the U.S. of a more independent, democratic and free-market Ukraine, Secretary of State James Baker should direct the USIA to increase from four hours to six hours its broadcasts in Ukrainian, and to bring the staff of the Ukrainian Service to full strength. Re-hiring five more staffers would cost approximately \$250,000 a year. Adding two more hours of daily broadcasts would cost approximately \$360,000.

- ◆ **Enroll more Ukrainian citizens in the Fulbright Fellowships and high school and college exchanges.**

21 For detailed suggestions on other possible areas of U.S.-Ukraine cooperation at the U.N. see Christopher M. Gacek, "Areas for U.S.-Soviet Cooperation at the United Nations," *Heritage Foundation Background* No. 831, May 24, 1991.

USIA-run exchanges always have been heavily Moscow-oriented. Of the some 25 Fulbright Scholars from the Soviet Union who visit the U.S. annually, only a couple are from Ukraine. Among the approximately 200 Soviet college students who come to the U.S. annually, only about 20 are Ukrainians. And of 75 Soviet high schools participating in the U.S.-Soviet student exchange, only four are Ukrainian. Since those Ukrainians who come to the U.S. on the exchanges are likely to be the future leaders of Ukraine, the Bush Administration should direct the USIA to increase the share of Ukrainians in Fulbright Fellowship Program and in the college and high school exchanges. At least five Ukrainians should be visiting America each year under the Fulbright Program.

◆ **Begin publishing *Amerika* in Ukrainian.**

The monthly *Amerika*, published by the USIA, is extremely popular in the Soviet Union, but appears only in Russian. At the time when non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union are gradually regaining their national identities, the exclusive-Russian publication of *Amerika* is perceived as a sign of U.S. support for Moscow's domestic empire. To correct this, USIA should publish *Amerika* in the major languages of the Soviet Union, beginning with a Ukrainian edition since Ukraine is the largest of the non-Russian Soviet republics. It would cost approximately \$1 million annually to produce 100,000 copies of *Amerika* per month in Ukrainian.

◆ **Ask Congress to double the five-person staff and expand the activities of the U.S. consulate in Kiev.**

The U.S. Consulate in Kiev opened last December 10. The office increases the ability of U.S. diplomats to gather information outside of Russia, to facilitate the travel of Americans in Ukraine, and to signal growing U.S. attention to the non-Russian peoples of the USSR. This consulate is the only U.S. diplomatic representation in the Soviet Union outside Russia. There are currently only two officers there: Consul General John Gendersen and his Deputy John Stepanchuk. A third staffer will be arriving later this year. The State Department hopes to expand the Consulate staff to five people in fiscal 1992-93. With even this, the Consulate will remain understaffed. Ukrainians who want visas to visit the U.S. for example, still would have to go to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Without extra staff, moreover, the Kiev Consulate cannot adequately organize the very popular concerts, movies, and lectures by visiting American scholars, politicians and business leaders. Doubling the staff of the Kiev Consulate from five to ten people would cost an additional \$1 million a year.

CONCLUSION

The Republic of Ukraine may be on the road to independence from Moscow. Popular movements and parties demanding independence have been formed, such as *Rukh*, and even the Communist-dominated Ukrainian legislature has passed laws mandating the supremacy of Ukrainian laws over those of the Soviet central government in Moscow.

Removing A Threat. An independent Ukraine could become a friend of the U.S. At the very least, if it so chooses, it could deprive the Soviet military of the manpower and resources to threaten the West. The U.S. could benefit from this only if the process is peaceful; Washington has no interest in supporting national wars of liberation in the Soviet Union. But while the U.S. or any other outside power cannot and should not try to control Ukraine's drive for independence, the Bush Administration could exercise what influence it has in steering Ukraine toward democracy, non-violence and a free market economy.

There are a number of things the U.S. can do to promote greater Ukrainian independence. The Bush Administration should identify those political forces in Ukraine that seek to achieve independence by non-violent means and then send them communications and printing equipment. Such groups are the Ukrainian Republican Party and the Ukrainian Democratic Party. The U.S. too can help Ukraine clean its environment by dispatching to Ukraine free-market environmental advisors.

Washington could promote a more autonomous Ukrainian foreign policy by supporting Kiev's request for a separate representation at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe; by helping the Ukrainian delegation at the United Nations to pursue policies different from those of the Soviet government; and by increasing the staff and expanding operations of the U.S. Consulate in Kiev to establish a greater diplomatic and cultural presence in the Ukrainian capital. The United States Information Agency could signal heightened attention to Ukraine by increasing the hours of the Voice of America's broadcasts in Ukrainian and by expanding the staff of the VOA's Ukrainian service. And the USIA should consider publishing in Ukrainian the highly popular *Amerika* monthly magazine, currently available in the Soviet Union only in Russian.

New Centers of Power. The Bush Administration should not shy away from promoting a free and democratic Ukraine for fear of offending Gorbachev. While Bush should continue to maintain business-like relations with Gorbachev, he should pay more attention to the new centers of power in the Soviet Union — the republics. Since they are closer to the people, and in some cases democratically elected, the republics, not Moscow, should decide whether American help is wanted. Ukraine is creating its own laws and is beginning to conduct its own foreign affairs, thereby creating a new legal basis for relations with foreign states. So long as Ukraine or any other republican government does not object to U.S. aid to democratic groups, then Washington should proceed with assistance programs, knowing not only that they are legal in the eyes of the republican governments, but desired by the people.

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Appendix

PERESTROIKA IN UKRAINE: A CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS

April 26, 1986

Explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

August 1987

206 underground Catholic bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and believers signed a letter to Pope John Paul II, appealing for legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

February 1989

The Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society is founded to promote Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture.

March 4, 1989

The inaugural congress of the Ukrainian branch of the "Memorial" society opens in Kiev, dedicated to uncovering the crimes of Stalinism.

March 26, 1989

Six top Communist Party officials, including the Party boss of Kiev, are defeated in the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies of the U.S.S.R.

June 18, 1989

Over 150,000 Ukrainian Catholics hold prayer service for Ukrainian religious freedom.

July 1989

Miners strike in Donbass, Eastern Ukraine.

September 8-10, 1989

The reform-oriented People's Movement for Restructuring in Ukraine, *Rukh*, holds its founding congress in Kiev.

September 16-17, 1989

30,000 people demonstrate in Lvov to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Western Ukraine.

September 17, 1989

Between 150,000 and 200,000 people demonstrate in Lvov to support legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

September 28, 1989

First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party (UKP) Vladimir Shcherbitsky announces his "retirement."

October 1989

The *Zelenyi svit* ("Green World") ecological association holds its founding congress in Kiev.

January 1, 1990

Ukrainian officially becomes the state language of Ukraine.

January 21, 1990

300,000 people form a human chain between Kiev and Lvov to commemorate the declaration of Ukrainian independence on January 22, 1918.

March 4, 1990

Rukh and *Rukh*-affiliated parties of the "Democratic Bloc" capture 111 seats, or 25 percent, in elections to the Ukraine Supreme Soviet.

July 16, 1990

Ukraine Supreme Soviet adopts the Declaration of State Sovereignty, which proclaims Ukrainian political autonomy from Moscow.

August 3, 1990

Ukraine Supreme Soviet adopts the "Law concerning the Economic Independence of the Ukrainian S.S.R."

October 17, 1990

The Supreme Soviet issues a decree meeting the students' demands for democratization and independence by Ukrainian students on a hunger strike in Kiev.

October 25-28, 1990

The Second Congress of *Rukh* declares total independence of Ukraine the movement's top priority.

March 1, 1991

Coal miners in Donbass (Eastern Ukraine) join the all-Union strike calling for the resignation of Gorbachev and the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R, and for salary increases, improved working conditions and food supplies.

March 17, 1991

In the "All-Union Referendum on the Preservation of the Soviet Union" 83 percent of Ukrainians vote for Ukraine's "being part of the Union of Soviet Sovereign States, based on the principles of the Ukraine's Declaration of State Sovereignty."

