As war in east continues, Ukraine moves Westward

Russia's attacks in the east marked the beginning of 2015 for Ukraine. Twelve civilians were killed and 11 were wounded by a missile fired by Russian-backed militants in the town of Volnovakha, 35 kilometers southwest of Donetsk, on January 13.

President Petro Poroshenko stated: “This is a disaster and a tragedy for Ukraine. This is more evidence after the MH17 plane, after the many civilian casualties - it is a crime that terrorists from the so-called DNR and LNR [Donetsk and Luhansk peoples’ republics] have severely violated my peace plan, which was approved and supported by the European Council and the European Union.”

It was yet more evidence also that the ceasefire agreed to in Minsk in September of 2014 was being violated almost daily. As of the beginning of 2015, it was noted that over 4,700 people had been killed and more than 10,000 injured in the fighting in Ukraine’s east that began in April 2014.

At year’s end, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that there were now more than 20,000 civilians in Ukraine since the war began, including more than 9,000 killed. In addition to the dead and wounded, more than 1.5 million were internally displaced as a result of the conflict.

Our Kyiv correspondent, Zenon Zawada reported that pro-Russian rebels in the Donbas, backed by the Russian military, on January 13 launched their biggest military campaign against Ukrainian forces since the September 5 Minsk II ceasefire protocols, staging hundreds of attacks in a fierce attempt to take control of the territory of the ruined Donetsk airport. Besides the aforementioned Volnovakha attack, a January 19 explosion near a Kharkiv courthouse injured 14, four of them seriously, and a bridge was blown up the next day in the Zaporizhia region as a cargo train crossed it. The Russian government intended its military terror campaign to boost its negotiating position with the Europeans and Ukrainians in talks to resolve the Donbas war said Volodymyr Pesenko, the director of the Penta Center for Applied Political Research in Kyiv.

Soon afterwards, news came that the Donetsk airport was completely destroyed and was no longer suitable for defense. Thus a decision was made to withdraw Ukrainian servicemen from the new terminal, reported Andriy Lyсенко, spokesman for the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO). The Ministry of Defense reported the most difficult situation was towards Debaltseve, where Kremlin-backed militants from the new terminal, reported Andriy Lyсенко of ATO. The Ministry of Defense reported the most difficult situation was towards Debaltseve, where Kremlin-backed militants had attacked the town of Volnovakha, 35 kilometers southwest of Donetsk, on January 13.

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Meanwhile in Baroz, Switzerland, at the World Economic Forum, President Poroshenko on January 21 accused Russia of sending more than 9,000 troops into Ukrainian territory. He demanded that Russia immediately implement all of its obligations under the Minsk peace plan, close Russia’s border with Ukraine, “and withdraw all the foreign troops from my territory.” Mr Poroshenko said that in addition to the thousands of troops in Ukraine, Russia had about 500 tanks, heavy artillery and armored personnel carriers. The president asked: “If this is not aggression, what is aggression?”

Ukraine’s Parliament on January 27 adopted a statement branding Russia an “aggressor state” – a move that deputies hoped would pave the way for punishment under international law. The Verkhovna Rada also voted that day to define self-styled “people’s republics” in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as “terrorist organizations” and to appeal to the international community for additional nonlethal military aid and stronger sanctions against Russia.

Russia continued sending its “humanitarian” convoys into Ukraine throughout the year. On January 8, the 11th such convoy was reported. By the end of the year, there’d been at least 17 so-called humanitarian convoys from Russia into eastern Ukraine. All but one of the 44 vehicles crossing the border on December 24 were labeled “humanitarian help from the Russian Federation,” the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported.

Political prisoners in Russia

Nadiya Savchenko, the Ukrainian air force pilot who was fighting in the east with the volunteer Aidar Battalion when she was abducted on Ukrainian territory by pro-Russian forces in June 2014 and taken to Russia, was on a hunger strike at the beginning of 2015. She had begun this protest against her illegal imprisonment on December 13, 2014, and continued it for 83 days. Ms. Savchenko was charged by Russian authorities with complicity in the deaths of two Russian journalists and, remarkably, with illegally crossing the border – never mind that she was kidnapped with a sack over her head. She faces a sentence of up to 25 years in prison if found guilty.

In April, Ms. Savchenko’s mother launched a global campaign to free her daughter. Maria Savchenko, 70, told the Associated Press that Nadiya is a political prisoner and that Russian prosecutors have shown “no evidence” that her daughter provided guidance for a mortar attack that killed two Russian state TV journalists at a checkpoint in eastern Ukraine, as Moscow claims. Ms. Savchenko launched her global campaign in Germany, where she pleaded for help from lawmakers and wrote to Chancellor Angela Merkel of New York, her second stop. She was traveling with her daughter’s Russian lawyer, Mark Feygin.

On December 11, Ms. Savchenko, 34, started a second hunger strike, vowing to continue until the end of what is clearly a politically motivated trial, at which time she would go on a “dry” hunger strike, refusing both food and water.

Another political prisoner being held in Russia was Oleg Sentsov, a filmmaker from Crimea who opposed Russia’s annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula. Mr. Sentsov and three other Ukrainian citizens were arrested in May on suspicion of planning terrorist attacks in the Crimean cities of Syvmerpol, Yalta and Sevastopol. At his trial in Rostov-on-Don, which started on July 21, Mr. Sentsov, who denied all the charges, said, “I don’t consider this court a court at all, so you can consider whatever you want.” In his final statement, he said: “A court of occupiers by definition cannot be just.”

The court found him guilty on August 25 and handed down a sentence of 20 years in a maximum-security prison. His co-defendant, Oleksandr Kolchenko, received a sentence of 10 years. Earlier, two others arrested with Messrs. Sentsov and Kolchenko on the trumped-up charges, Oleksiy Chmyryr and Yemadny Almanap, were each sentenced to seven years in prison. When asked by the judges if the ruling was clear to them, Messrs. Sentsov and Kolchenko sang the Ukrainian national anthem and chant ed: “Glory to Ukraine!” Glory to the heroes!”

Amnesty International likened the proceedings in the Sentsov-Kolchenko case to the Soviet “trials” of the Stalin-
Sanctions against Russia

Sanctions on Russia due to its invasion of Ukraine continued to be extended and ramped up during 2015. The European Union’s Foreign Ministers Council voted on January 29 to recommend extending Crimea-related sanctions until September and imposing new economic sanctions. The day before, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) voted to extend sanctions restricting Russian activity in the organization until the end of April. The consideration of new sanctions was prompted by the January 24 terrorist attack by pro-Russian forces on a residential neighborhood of Mariupol, where 31 residents were killed and more than 100 were injured. The attack was condemned by PACE and the EU Foreign Ministers Council, which both cited the direct responsibility of the Russian government.

Sanctions were widened by the U.S. and the EU in September on dozens of Russian and Ukrainian individuals and entities with connections to Crimea’s annexation and the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine. In an announcement published in the U.S. Federal Register on September 2, the U.S. administration said it was adding 29 new Russian companies and individuals to the U.S. sanctions list.

The European Union’s Foreign Ministers Council voted on September 15 to extend economic and financial sanctions against Russia until September and imposing new economic sanctions. The announcement followed the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine and said Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down by a Russian-backed terrorist. It noted that Minsk II agreement’s military and security clauses leave Ukraine in a position of even greater vulnerability; while the political clauses threaten (more directly than Minsk I) to insert Russia through its proxies into Ukraine’s constitutional processes.

Still fighting continues despite ceasefire

A second attempt at a ceasefire in Ukraine’s east was brokered on February 12 in Minsk by the heads of state of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. Western leaders worried it was the last chance to avoid an escalation in violence in the Donbas war, particularly with the U.S. involvement in providing lethal arms. The Minsk II ceasefire agreement’s free-fire zone was agreed by representatives of the Ukrainian and Russian governments, the “separatist” forces and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (collectively known as the Trilateral Contact Group) – consisted of 13 points, including a establishing a ceasefire as of midnight February 15, removing all foreign armies from Ukrainian territory and withdrawing heavy weaponry from what was in effect a newly created buffer zone.

The new agreement emerged after a week of negotiations involving the leaders of what’s known as the “Normandy format” countries: French President Francois Hollande, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. Western and Ukrainian leaders hailed the new agreement as a critical step towards de-escalating the war. “It’s not a complex solution and of course not a breakthrough, but Minsk II could be a step that can remove us from the spiral of military escalation toward a political impasse after weeks of violence,” said German Foreign Affairs Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

At the same time, much skepticism surrounded its prospects – even in the short term – particularly since many of the agreement’s points were repeated from the first agreement, which was never upheld by the Russian-backed forces. The Weekly editorialized: “It remains to be seen whether Minsk II will be any better than Minsk I. Should we expect this ceasefire to work, when the previous one failed so abysmally? The devil is in the details and most importantly, hinges on the willingness of the aggressor to cease and desist.”

Until February 18 when President Poroshenko announced the talks. President Poroshenko and his advisors vowed them to run in elections next year under a special law to amnesty to the Russian-backed terrorists and allowing work for fulfilling the Minsk accords – though without any revealed dates – that is based on granting immunity and amnesty to the Russian-backed terrorists and allowing them in elections not to be prosecuted for their crimes.

Meeting at a summit in Paris on October 2, Russian and Ukrainian reached verbal agreements towards resolving the war in the Donbas, including withdrawing armaments from the conflict line between the EU and cancelling illegal elections planned that were to be held in the next few weeks. The meeting, which also involved the leaders of Germany and France, had a bare-bones framework for fulfilling the Minsk accords – though without any revealed dates – that is based on granting immunity and amnesty to the Russian-backed terrorists and allowing them in elections not to be prosecuted for their crimes.

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2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

they continued to pray for the repose of the souls of the passengers and crew. Memorial services were held throughout Ukraine; in Kyiv people laid flowers on the steps of the Dutch Embassy. President Poroshenko explained in an address that “the Ukrainian people took this catastrophe as a personal tragedy.” At the same time, previously unseen video footage was released by News Corp. Australia of “separatists” stirring through the wreckage of MH17 soon after it was shot down by a Buk missile, realizing that this was a civilian aircraft, and then calmly going through the belongings of the dead. Australia’s Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said it was “cruel beyond the words.” The country’s prime minister, Tony Abbott, said the video showed how “the rebels did not hold any kind of weapon by accident; in fact, this was obviously very sophisticated weaponry.”

Then on July 29, Russia vetoed a UN draft resolution to create an international tribunal to investigate and try those responsible for firing the missile believed to have brought down MH17. Eleven other Security Council members back the proposal by Malaysia, Australia, the Netherlands and Ukraine, while Angola, China and Venezuela abstained. The supporters of the resolution were: ten of the five permanent members: the United States; and eight of the 10 non-permanent members: Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria and Spain. Dutch Prime Minister Rutte said Russia had “failed to stand up and be counted in the quest for international justice.” He added that countries involved in a Dutch-led investigation will now focus on other legal options “at both the international and national level... supported by a broad international coalition” because “the perpetrators... must not be allowed to escape punishment.”

The long awaited Dutch Safety Board report on the MH17 disaster was released on October 13. It said the passenger plane was downed by a Russian-made Buk missile. It did not specify the exact location from which the missile was fired, but it did identify a 220-square-kilometer area mostly under the control of the separatists at the time. The missile detonated less than a meter to the left of the aircraft’s cockpit, according to the report, killing the pilots instantly and causing the aircraft to break apart.

Board head Tjibbe Joustra stressed that investigators sought to answer the question of why Malaysia Airlines was flying over a conflict zone. He said the airline should have recognized the risks, but noted that the carrier was not alone: 51 airlines were flying over eastern Ukraine at the same time, in the apparent belief that their aircraft were flying at high enough altitudes to avoid danger. Mr. Joustra also said Kyiv should have closed the air space over eastern Ukraine because of the conflict with pro-Russian separatists. Predictably, the Kremlin criticized the report and its conclusions. The announcement came after months of delay in response to a Russian request for a report.

In November, the country noted the second anniversary of the beginning of the Euro-Maidan movement. Unfortunately, the anniversary also brought to the forefront the fact that not a single conviction had come about against those who perpetrated violent events on the Maidan resulting from the authorities’ crackdown on what came to be known as the Revolution of Dignity. “What is necessary to wait until the second anniversary of the Maidan to announce what we already know on the Maidan?” Oleh Rybachuk, a former head of the Presidential Secretariat, wrote on the gazeta.ua news site. “The law enforcement bodies are not reformed,” he added.

Corruption and lack of reforms

Ukraine’s top law enforcement officer, Procurator General Vitaliy Yarema, submitted his resignation on February 9 amid mounting criticism of his failure to prosecute any officials in the Yanukovych administration for alleged economic crimes, violence against the historic Euro-Maidan protest and separatism in the Donbas region. “It’s very good that we achieved the resignation of the procurator general, who showed no results,” Self-Reliance National Deputy Yegor Sobolev told the February 10 parliamentary session during which Mr. Yarema’s resignation was approved. “That’s the first time in Ukrainian history that a procurator general left who suited the president, suited the majority of political forces but didn’t suit society.

Mr. Yarema resigned ahead of a February 17 report in the Wall Street Journal that stated the European Union was soon to begin sanctions against members of Mr. Yanukovych’s entourage – starting with four out of 22 targeted – for lack of evidence provided by the Ukrainian government to back up corruption allegations. “I stated several months ago that, in the view of the president, the people were removed from the Yanukovych entourage through the fraud of the procurator general. Vitaliy Yarema should be held politically responsible and resign,” wrote National Deputy Serhiy Lebchenko on his Facebook page the same day as the resignation.

To replace Mr. Yarema, the Verkhovna Rada on February 10 approved the president’s nomination of Viktor Shokin, who had served as deputy procurator general since December 2006. Fiery debate preceded the vote in which critics warned he’d perform just as badly as Mr. Yarema, having served at the heart of Ukraine’s corrupt Yanukovych administration. “It’s a typical picture of the Verkhovna Rada,” the president’s spokesman, Emiliy Zavada wrote. “But political experts contacted by this correspondent insist the latest moves are largely for show and do not signal any change in the Yanukovych administration.”

The Ukrainian government soon afterwards unleashed a new round of criminal investigations and arrests against Yanukovych administration functionaries, among them “the three odious judges” – as they were widely labeled – who were involved in illegal rulings that drew global attention. They are two other Yanukovych functionaries of a higher profile – the former chair of the Party of Regions parliamentary faction, Oleksandr Yefremov; and his deputy, the late Mykhailo Chechetov – who were arrested by Ukrainian authorities. Mr. Chechetov, a key functionary in the Party of Regions most famous for leading the January 2014 vote in the Verkhovna Rada for what was dubbed the dictatorship laws, was found dead on February 28 outside his 17th floor apartment in what was determined by police to be a suicide. A week earlier, a Kyiv court had ordered that Mr. Chechetov, 61, be placed under house arrest.

At first glance, the efforts of the new procurator general, Viktor Shokin, would inspire optimism that President Petro Poroshenko is finally punishing the crimes committed under his predecessor after a year of inaction,” Mr. Zavada wrote. “But political experts contacted by this correspondent insist the latest moves are largely for show and to cool boiling public discontent, and may not even lead to punishment. All the key insiders of the administration of President Viktor Yanukovych remain at large, many hiding in Russian Federation; some have even begun to get their sanctions dropped by the European Union.”

The National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine was finally launched on April 16 by President Poroshenko at a ceremony in which he revealed its first head will be Artem Sytnyk, a former prosecutorial investigator who has distinguished himself with investigations that led to incarcerations. The announcement came after months of delay in creating the bureau and criticism that the government was doing enough to address corruption.
Deoligarchization, fighting corruption, ensuring transparency

Saakashvili, the president referred to him as an "independent, decisive person" and assigned him the priorities of deoligarchization, fighting corruption, ensuring transparency in the state customs and tax-collecting services, and defending the rights of citizens. As of 2015, a lot remained to be done in Odesa.

On June 18, the Verkhovna Rada voted to approve President Poroshenko’s request to dismiss Valentyn Nalyvaichenko as head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). While the president argued that Mr. Nalyvaichenko had failed to fulfill his responsibilities, Mr. Poroshenko’s critics argued that the dismissal was revenge for Mr. Nalyvaichenko’s unapproved attempts to eliminate the president’s allies – alleged to be corrupt – from both the SBU and the Procurator General’s Office. The conflict over Mr. Nalyvaichenko, who some alleged was aligned with oligarch Dmytro Firtash, was the biggest since the coalition government emerged in November 2014. Most political observers commented that the conflict was merely the latest chapter in the power struggle among Ukraine’s oligarchs, including Mr. Poroshenko himself.

Another Yanukovych insider who eluded arrest was Serhiy Kliuyev, who apparently fled the country within days after Ukraine’s Parliament voted on June 3 to strip him of his political immunity. By June 10, he was declared missing by the Security Service, an absentee from his personal affairs minister, who confirmed a week later in Parliament that he fled to Russia through the occupied territories of Donbas. The government’s failure to make arrests of key Yanukovych officials infuriated critics, who believed that top state officials could have reached deals enabling their avoidance of detention and prosecution for their alleged crimes. “I think that I’m not alone in suspecting that a non-aggression pact, a ring of protection exists between the current and past leadership of the country,” said National Deputy Yevgen Shabolyev, chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Preventing and Countering Corruption.

Charges of selective justice emerged yet again with the case of Hennadiy Korban, a business associate of oligarch Igor Kolomoisky, who was arrested on October 31 and charged with stealing from the private Country Defense Fund. As well as organizing the kidnapping of two government officials in his defense, Mr. Korban said through his lawyers that he didn’t steal from the fund, which he himself had created to aid the war effort, and that he had no involvement in any kidnappings. Mr. Korban’s arrest sparked mixed reactions among the public, with many saying the president was targeting his opponents. Mr. Poroshenko was widely criticized also for pursuing his business interests while serving as president, and there were allegations in September that he was involved in orchestrating attempts to bribe national deputies from the Radical Party faction to remain in the coalition government. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk also was suspected of involvement in corruption scandals; indeed, such accusations were made by Mr. Saakashvili, head of the Odesa Oblast State Administration. Mr. Saakashvili told Channel 5 television: “All the oligarch interests control the Ukrainian government.” He also spoke about the lack of reforms: “Decisions about reforms are not being made. The government is calling reforms, I can’t call reforms.” The result of Mr. Saakashvili’s TV interview was a war of words with the prime minister.

Procurator General Shokin himself was the target of much criticism from the West. His integrity and credibility were called into question after he resisted European Union recommendations that he replace the four procurators he had appointed to a commission to establish a Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office. These procurators were identified by Transparency International as Yanukovych administration holdovers who were loyal to the current president and would compromise the independence of the specialized prosecutor’s office.

Criticism that had been circulating among Western circles became public in late September, when U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt said in a speech to the Odesa Financial Forum that corrupt procurators are “openly and aggressively undermining reform.” Ambassador Pyatt underscored: “The true measure of Ukraine’s commitment to fight corruption is the number of officials from the current administration in prison for corruption. The authorities’ willingness to prosecute all corrupt officials and oligarchs, regardless of their political party or personal wealth, is a critical indicator of its commitment to the rule of law. On this indicator, Ukraine post-Revolution of Dignity still comes up short.”

EU Representative to Ukraine Jan Tombinski warned that the consequences extended beyond Ukraine’s dysfunctional law enforcement system. In an October 22 letter to Ukraine’s Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin, Mr. Tombinski warned that the failure to launch by year’s end the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office and, in turn, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, would cost Ukrainians their visa-free regime planned for launch in 2016.

But there was some good news in the battle against corruption and implementation of reform in Ukraine. A graduation ceremony of new Kyiv patrol police officers marked the success of the support provided by the non-profit coordinator in Ukraine of the OSCE was held on July 2. According to the official website of the government of Ukraine, Prime Minister Yatsenyuk presented certificates to the graduates and gauded their own corrupt business schemes, but hope in you. And each of you will take an oath of loyalty to the Ukrainian nation. You are the new face of Ukraine. You are the new Ukrainian police. You are also the representatives of our new European Ukraine.

The establishment of the new patrol police in the Ukrainian capital, initiated in January by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was the first step in nationwide police reform. Over 33,000 persons – 35 percent of them women – applied and undertook tests to evaluate their general and individual skills, as well as health and physical abilities. As a result of the selection, about 2,000 recruits underwent initial training courses between April and June. “We are going step by step in developing police reform in Ukraine,” said Internal Affairs Minister Arsen Avakov. He said some 6,000 new police officers would be trained by the end of the year and that about 170,000 police officers require re-training country-wide.

On November 25, a group of activists, including 15 national deputies of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc – most of whom were involved in the Euro-Maidan – announced they were forming a group, the Anti-Corruption Platform, with the intention of exposing and fighting corruption both within their faction and beyond. The announcement came a day after a closed-door meeting of faction deputies in which the reformists accused establishment politicians of not only indulging in their own corrupt business schemes, but even undermining their reform projects. “These were situations of the so-called ‘deoligarchization’ that began last...
Special status for the Donbas

Ukrainian lawmakers on March 17 approved a draft law to grant special status to the rebel-held areas in the country's east. It was part of a package of legislative proposals made by President Poroshenko that had been sharply criticized by both Russia and the pro-Russian separatists. The bill outlined the boundaries of particular districts in the areas under pro-Russian separatist control that could be granted special status with limited self-rule. That was a key part of the Minsk II ceasefire deal reached. The bill said rebel-held areas in Donetsk and Luhansk regions will be granted their special status after holding elections in accordance with Ukrainian law and under international observation.

On July 16 the Rada voted to send for the Constitutional Court's review constitutional amendments submitted by the president, including an amendment creating what was now called “specific procedures” for local self-government on the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts occupied by Russian-backed terrorists. Although legislation creating specific procedures had been twice earlier approved by Parliament, an amendment was also needed to the Constitution of Ukraine. In his remarks endorsing the amendment on specific procedures, President Poroshenko also assured Parliament that it wouldn't lead to federalization, or creating an autonomous entity within Ukraine like Crimea.

Plight of Crimean Tatars

Crimean Tatars commemorated the 71st anniversary of their mass deportation ordered in 1944 by Joseph Stalin, which displaced around 200,000 people and cost tens of thousands of lives. Nearly half of those deported died of starvation or disease en route to the places of their forcible resettlement. Crimean Tatars were allowed to return to their homeland and following the collapse of the Soviet Union. RF/E RL reported that a special event called “I Am a Crimean Tatar” was held in Kyiv on May 18 to remember the deportations victims. Organizers said the goal of the gathering was twofold: to commemorate Crimean Tatars who died during the deportation to Central Asia that started on May 18, 1944, and to honor those who lived on and after Crimea's annexation by Russia in March 2014.

A resolution passed by the Verkhova Rada on November 12 recognized the mass deportation of Crimean Tatars from their homeland in 1944 as genocide. A Day of Remembrance for the victims of the genocide of the Crimean Tatar people will now be held annually on May 18. The resolution also says that “the Verkhova Rada of Ukraine states that the systemic pressure on the Crimean Tatar people, the repression of Ukrainian citizens on a national basis, the organization of ethnically and politically motivated prosecutions of the Crimean Tatars on the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine by the public authorities of the Russian Federation, starting from the date of temporary occupation, are a conscious policy of ethnocide of the Crimean Tatar people.”

On September 8, Crimean Tatar leaders called for a blockade of Crimea. Speaking at a press conference in Kyiv, Refta Chukharyov, chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, said: “...every day we see evidence of pressure, detentions, searches and pogroms organized by the occupation authorities against the Crimean Tatars and other national minorities.” Pointing out that Ukraine was still delivering goods to the occupied peninsula with almost no obstacles, he said: “We believe that this is wrong because this way the Ukrainian state feeds those who occupied our land and supports Kremlin power, which now opposes Ukraine.” Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev noted that this was not only a question of foodstuffs, Ukraine supplies 85 percent of electricity, and about 80 percent of water, especially irrigation water, to Crimea. “Before the occupation, such costs were covered by tourism or business trips. Now Ukraine does not get anything,” said Mr. Dzhemilev. The Kyiv-based group Crimea Gov Blockade issued a series of demands: release political prisoners; stop interference in Crimea Tatar and Ukrainian media activity; ensure foreign journalists' and monitors' access to Crimea; stop criminal proceedings and administrative persecution of Crimean Tatars and other citizens of Ukraine; and lift the ban on Crimea Tatar leadership visiting Crimea.

On November 22, Crimean Tatars launched their biggest countermasser since the beginning of the Russian occupation of their homeland by raising four electricity lines, situated in the neighboring Kherson Oblast, that account for 70 percent of the peninsula's electricity. By the time they woke up, the majority of Crimean residents lacked access to electricity, water, heat, gas and electricity. As a result, thousands of people were without water, heat, gas and electricity. The news.allcrimea.net website reported. Mr. Dzhemilev's, the president's ombudsmen on Crimean Tatar affairs, said on November 23 that activists had cut the electricity in order to force the release of political prisoners being held in Crimea and Russia, among other political aims.

Changing the narrative

The Ukrainian government in 2015 took a major step in changing the narrative of World War II in Ukraine. Ukraine made the crimson poppy flower a symbol of the victory over Nazi Germany, a part of a shift from the Soviet legacy. Kyiv said the Kremlin was using to influence neighbors and promote self-serving myths about World War II. First Lady Maryna Poroshenko attended a “Remembrance Poppy” ceremony on April 7 as part of events marking the 70th anniversary of the Nazi surrender in May 1945. “It is the time to come when we have to look for the ideas that unite our country and nation,” she said. “The second world war affected each and every Ukrainian family. The poppy is a symbol of remembrance that pays tribute to all heroes who sacrificed their lives for a better future.”

The head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory Volodymyr Vyatroych, said that Soviet-era commemorations of the Allied victory had turned the “dreadful tragedy” of World War II into a celebration of the “triumph of Communist ideas.” He noted that the initiative of commemorating fallen Ukrainians with the Remembrance Poppy had been established the previous year. In 2015, the initiative gained legislative status in the form of a presidential decree that made May 8 the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation. Mr. Vyatroych said: “It is extremely important to honor the victims and heroes of the Ukrainian nation. For the memory of Nemtsov’s assassination in the Red Army, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the armies of Poland, France, Great Britain and...
Poroshenko, who was noted here as leading a country on a long-term path to independence and democracy, expressed optimism about the future of Ukraine. He stated, "I am confident that Ukraine will continue to move forward on the path of independence and democracy, and that this path will lead us to a brighter future."

"There is a need for us to be patient and persistent, to continue working towards our goals, and to remain committed to the ideals of freedom and democracy," Poroshenko said. He added, "We must continue to work towards a future where Ukraine is a strong, independent, and democratic nation, and where the people of Ukraine are free to live their lives as they choose."
**2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW**

“stretched its hand to Ukraine and is doing everything – and more – that other states and people of the free Western world stretch their hands out to Ukraine as well.” According to RFE/RL, he also underlined that “Poland’s outstretched hand is not just an indication of its concern and moral support but an understanding of the historic processes turning Ukraine into an equal and extremely important partner and neighbor.” Without mentioning Russia by name, the Polish president pointed out that “now, and especially now, the Western world must understand the importance of Ukraine’s security.” “One cannot tolerate that the aggressor’s soldiers, tanks, armored personal carriers and anti-aircraft installations are present in Ukraine’s east,” he said, adding that “only the blind cannot see their lies today.”

President Komorowski also said that European Union nations recognize Ukraine’s territory in borders established by the 1991, reiterating the EU’s refusal to accept the annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea by Russia. “The changes of borders against the will of the Ukrainian nation will never be accepted by us and will always be condemned by us.”

Mr. Komorowski’s successor as president of Poland, Andrzej Duda, visited Kyiv on December 14-15. Mr. Duda went to great lengths to demonstrate Poland’s commitment to Ukraine. He announced that he will advocate for Mr. Poroshenko and his delegation to “have a seat at the table” at the next NPTO summit, which will occur in Warsaw in early 2016. He also shared his plans to convene a bi-annual presidential consultation committee to discuss projects and initiatives, the two leaders agreed on settling remaining conflicts over culture in order to ensure regional cooperation, peace and security and defense. “It is deep honor to the victims of the tragic pages of history, the common responsibility of Ukraine and Poland is to ensure their descendants a peaceful present day. We reached full agreement on this issue,” the Ukrainian president noted.

Among the other key agreements to emerge from the talks was the 1 billion euro euro currency swap – exchanging that equivalent amount of Ukrainian hryvnia. This was described by Mr. Poroshenko as an effort to enhance Polish and Ukrainian trade upon the January 1 launch of the Ukraine-EU Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), the reforms agreed to offered opportunity to the Ukrainian government and business for the free trade area’s launch, and even offered the Polish market as a springboard from which to promote Ukrainian products on the Polish market.

As for cultural issues, Mr. Poroshenko lauded the cooperation that had begun between Polish and Ukrainian institutions and museums. In the past, Russia has manipulated tragic chapters of history, such as the Volyn massacres of 1943, to ignite enmity between Poles and Ukrainians. “The Ukrainian side is ready for a frank and constructive dialogue on the questions of our common history and we agreed for this to occur in the framework of our consultation committee,” the Ukrainian president said. “History has taught us well that when Ukrainians and Poles talk we gain.” I am sure you won’t allow that. And our approach will be very responsible.”

Ukraine: The United Nations

On September 17, Ukraine’s Ambassador to the UN, Yuriy Sergeyev, tweeted that thus far 70 countries of the UN General Assembly’s 193 members were in favor of stripping Russia of its veto power on the U.N. Security Council. In a resolution unanimously adopted on September 16, the Ukrainian Parliament called for urgent reform of the Security Council, in which Russia holds veto powers as one of the five permanent members. The veto was also often used to “cover up the crime of aggression by a permanent member of the UN Security Council.”

On September 4, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko told Voice of America that Russia should be stripped of its veto power on the Security Council. In his address to the U.N. General Assembly on September 29, Mr. Poroshenko stated: “Abuse of the veto right is a ‘licence to kill’ – is unacceptable. Ukraine stands for the gradual limitation of the veto right with its further cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used any- cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of the gradual limitation of the veto right with its further as a ‘license to kill’ – is unacceptable. Ukraine stands for the gradual limitation of the veto right with its further cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used any- cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of the gradual limitation of the veto right with its further cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used any- cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used any- cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used any- cancellation. Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used any-
2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Our Churches: praying for peace in Ukraine

Religious events in 2015 were varied, including a visit by Pope Francis to the United States and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky. Most often, though, religious leaders from Ukraine appealed to the West for increased humanitarian assistance for Ukraine as it defends against Russian aggression and reminded the world of historical examples of Russia's aggression against Ukrainians, such as the Holodomor.

Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate was in Washington on February 3-7 to attend the annual National Prayer Breakfast. The patriarch explained that he had come "to pray together for world peace" and to interact with and remind American leaders that Ukraine is asking the U.S. to fulfill its duty as a signatory of the Budapest Memorandum to help Ukraine defend its territory. During a press conference at the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, the patriarch called on the United States to help Ukraine protect itself against Russian aggression, not only with humanitarian assistance, but with military aid as well.

Patriarch Filaret also met with congressmen and senators – Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) – to brief them on the situation in Ukraine and to award Sen. McCain the Order of St. Volodymyr, first degree, for his continuous work on behalf of Ukraine. Patriarch Filaret also attended a meeting on February 6 at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, where he suggested that with ample modern weapons and other military equipment from the West, Ukraine would gain the upper hand in fighting against Russian aggression. He added that Ukrainian soldiers are willing to die in their fight to protect their native land, while Russian soldiers are not willing to die for the sake of acquiring foreign land.

The University of Alberta hosted the Sanctuary Project – whose full name is Sanctuary: The Spiritual Heritage Documentation Project – workshop on February 17. The project focuses on documenting sacral culture on the Canadian prairies and connecting scholars with the community. The aim of the project is to facilitate interaction between museum personnel and church decision-makers who need to deal with sacred objects. It is sponsored by a grant from the Killam Foundation through its Connection Program, with additional support from the Kule Chair in Ukrainian Ethnography and the Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies (CIUS). During the workshop, participants discussed resolutions on the needs of rural parish communities as well as a guidebook outlining best practices and policies to follow when dealing with sacred objects, including ownership once a transaction is complete between a church and a museum. An online database includes links to resources provided by the Historical Resource Management Branch of Alberta Culture and Tourism, the Alberta Museums Association and the Royal Alberta Museum.

Patriarch Filaret calls for U.S. military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine during a meeting at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation on February 6.

In an up-and-on April 16, CRIS hosted a talk by Prof. John-Paul Himka and Natalie Kononenko of the Sanctuary Project, who reported on fieldwork in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Among the areas of examination were ritual practices – Easter, Christmas, baptisms and weddings as described by the parishioners or clergy – prayer books, church architecture and iconography. The role of the church on the prairie land of Canada was that of keeper of tradition and culture, such as the baking of traditional ritual breads, pysanka writing or embroidery, but also other things such as baseball, to help assimilate the new immigrants.

The annual St. Thomas Sunday pilgrimage, known in Ukrainian as “Prosvita Nedelia,” attracted thousands to the Metropolia Center of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. (UOC-U.S.A.) on April 18-19 in South Bound Brook, N.J. Divine Liturgies were served at St. Andrew Memorial Church with Bishop Saba of the North American Diocese of the Georgian Orthodox Church joining Metropolitan Antony and Bishop Daniel of the UOC-U.S.A. A general prayer service was held at the memorial cross, in memory of the victims of the Holodomor, Chornobyl, those who served in the armed forces of the U.S. and of Ukraine, as well as Christian victims in the Middle East and the heroes of the Euro-Maidan protests (Revolution of Dignity). Commemorations were made at the gravesites of those interred at St. Andrew Cemetery, beginning at the crypt of Patriarch Mytlayev, the first patriarch of Kyiv and all Ukraine, at Holy Resurrection Mausoleum. The Ukrainian Cultural Center was busy with vendors and exhibitors, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion welcomed visitors of the vast historical and cultural roots of Ukraine. Answers to visitors’ questions were provided by Natalia Honcharenko and Dr. Michael Andrec.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate has been losing parishes in Ukraine since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, but more number shifts began to show in April 2015 when the Moscow Church officially supported the Russian invasion while denouncing the Ukrainian side. This trend continues to reduce Russian Patriarch Kirill’s influence and, thereby, Moscow’s influence in Ukraine.

Vladimir Fesenko of the Kyiv Center for Applied Political Research, said “the current leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate has made a very serious error by shifting from formal neutrality toward the Russian side of the conflict in Ukraine to open support of the Russian side and opposition to Ukraine. ‘This can have very sad consequences for this Church and for its place’ in Ukraine. Both parishioners and clergy have voted with their feet by leaving these parishes or have become increasingly critical of the bishops and of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The key event that triggered this shift, for most, was the fact that the UOC-MP Metropolitan Hilarion did not stand in honor of Ukrainians who had died defending their country. The Rev. Bogdan Timoshenko of the UOC-KP said that the Moscow Church had less of a position to talk about reuniting with the Ukrainian Church, and as it dissolves, its members, priests and hierarchs will shift toward the Ukrainian side, rather than a formal unification.

On May 8, a Ukrainian Catholic delegation from the Sheptytsky Institute in Ottawa visited the apostolic nunci of Canada, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, to inform him of the situation in Ukraine and to call for solidarity with Ukraine in its defense of its territory.

The Sheptytsky Institute hosted a Colloquium on the Future of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in North America on May 9-10 at Holy Spirit Seminary in Ottawa. The event, sponsored by the Ukrainian Patriarchial Institute and the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute (MASI) of Eastern Christian Studies, attracted clergy as well as scholars. Led by the Rev. Dr. Andrij Chirovsky, topics focused on current challenges facing the Ukrainian Catholic Church in North America, especially the opportunities presented by the Revolution of Dignity and challenges created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The gathering of theologians also agreed that the Ukrainian Catholic Church should use the term Greco-Catholic instead of Greek-Catholic, which it called a misnomer from the Ukrainian. The participants also agreed to create a scholarly society for Ukrainian Greco-Catholic intellectual endeavors in and for North America.

The UOC-U.S.A. received a $10,000 donation from the Ukrainian Women’s National Association of America on May 18 for its charitable outreach projects in Ukraine. During the presentation at the Consistory Offices of the Metropolia of the UOC-U.S.A. in South Bound Brook, N.J., UNWLA President Marianna Zajac presented the check to Bishop Daniel. Metropolitan Antony was present for the official ceremony, lauding the work of the UNWLA in assisting the needs of the Ukrainian communities in the U.S. as well as in Ukraine.

The Weekly’s columnist, Dr. Myron Kuropas, lauded the work of the Rev. Chirovsky with the MASI in Ottawa, and the 25th anniversary of the founding of the institute with a three report on the institute’s progress. The institute, Dr. Kuropas explained, was made possible in Canada with the support of Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk and consultations with the Rev. Joseph Andriychuk, rector of Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Interparochial Seminary at St. Paul University in Ottawa.

Pope Francis signed a decree on July 16 that recognized Metropolitan Andrey “Sheptytsky, leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Catholic Church, ‘alive.’” The move was a step in the process toward sainthood that was made possible by the opening of Soviet archives in the former Soviet space. Metropolitan Sheptytsky was also recognized for saving Jews during the Holocaust. The year 2015 marked the 150th anniversary of the Catholic church’s birth. Bishop Borys Gudziak noted that, “The Soviets did not liquidate the Greco-Catholic Church while he was alive.” He was a public leader and, after five months later, the Soviets arrested all the bishops and moved toward declaring the Ukrainian
2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Catholic Church illegal.

On July 17, the Rev. Dr. Peter Galadza, the MAS acting director, issued a statement on the recognition of Metropolitan Sheptytsky as “venerable” by Pope Francis. “During this time of foreign aggression against Ukraine – as well as turmoil in so many other historically Eastern Christian lands – this recognition brings particular consolation.” Governments, the Rev. Galadza continued, as well as Jews themselves have argued for the archbishop’s beatification. The archbishop was also a champion of dialogue between Catholic and Orthodox Churches. “It confirms the institute’s mission and compels us even more earnestly to follow Sheptytsky’s saintly example,” the statement concluded.

A monument to Sheptytsky was unveiled in Lviv on July 29 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Catholic hierarchy’s birth. Blessed by Patriarch Sviatoslav, the monument sits near St. George Cathedral. President Petro Poroshenko and his wife, Maryna, were in attendance among the multitude. A special program was held at the Lviv Opera House to mark the occasion. Construction of the monument began in May 2015. Sculpted by Andrij Koverko, with designers and architects Ihor Kuzmak and Mykhailo Fedyk, the 3.6-meter-high statue is cast from bronze and features Metropolitan Sheptytsky in a monastic robe, holding a cross with his head bowed.

Bishop Gudziak was among the panelists during a discussion on issues facing families in the 21st century during the annual Catholic conference held at the Napa Institute on August 1 in Irvine, Calif. The conference attracted more than 300 clergy, business leaders, Catholic journalists, Church activists and philanthropists, this year under the motto “Equipping Catholices in the Next America.”

In describing the situation in Ukraine, Bishop Gudziak, who was more up-beat in his assessment, explained: “When our Church came out of the underground in 1990, our Church had been decimated by decades of intense Soviet persecution. The ranks of our clergy had been reduced to only 300, mostly elderly priests with an average age of 75. Today, our Church in Ukraine, despite war and persecution, has grown dramatically, with more than 3,000 priests with an average age of 38. Our seminaries are producing hundreds of new priests every year and vocations are strong.”

Bishop Gudziak added, “The catacombs are not romantic – the underground is real... Fear and distrust entered into the DNA of the population... We know that all relationships, particularly marriage and family relationships, are based on trust. And over the last century, the trust of the people of Ukraine has been tried in ways we cannot even imagine.”

Noting the situation in Ukraine after the Euro-Maidan protests, Bishop Gudziak stated: “There’s a long road ahead. There’s bewilderment, there’s frustration. But we should trust that the Lord is working in history... Let us be peaceful and joyful in our faith in God who is the God of history, who will not let His Truth be trampled. And as the story of the Church in Ukraine shows, He leads His people from a land of slavery to the Promised Land.”

Another major religious event in 2015 was the visit by Pope Francis to the United States, including stops in Philadelphia, Washington and New York. The pope’s visit coincided with the conclusion of the eighth World Meeting of Families on September 22-25 in Philadelphia that was attended by Metropolitan Stefan Soroka and the Rev. Taras Lonchyna. On September 26, Pope Francis celebrated mass at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral Basilica in Philadelphia and on September 27, he celebrated a mass on Benjamin Franklin Parkway that attracted more than 800,000. Ukrainians could be spotted dressed in traditional embroidered shirts, waving Ukrainian flags and that of the Vatican, as well as in uniforms of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization.

Pope Francis met with Patriarch Sviatoslav on October 14 during the pontifical synod on the family hosted by the Vatican. During their exchange, when Patriarch Sviatoslav explained the dire humanitarian situation due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, he presented the pope with a medal commemorating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Metropolitan Sheptytsky. Pope Francis signed a decree recognizing the heroic virtues of Metropolitan Sheptytsky and told the patriarch, “Ukraine is in my heart and will always remain there.”

On the morning of November 7, Patriarch Filaret met with members of the Ukrainian American community as well as political leaders – including Rep. Kaptur, who is the co-chair of the Ukrainian Congressional Caucus at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill. While acknowledging the support of the international community, the patriarch highlighted that there remained little faith for international talks after the security guarantees of the Budapest Memorandum were not upheld – first in Crimea and then in the Donbas. But, he added, President Vladimir Putin was beginning to doubt himself, and there was reason to believe that Ukraine can overcome its challenges. However, Ukraine was in desperate need of humanitarian assistance from the West and support to set and keep Ukraine on its path toward democracy, he underscored.

Ukraine’s religious leaders – representatives of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, representing 85 percent of the citizens of Ukraine – met with Obama administration officials in Washington on November 9 at the White House. Included in the delegation from Ukraine were Ukraine’s Chief Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, Ukrainian Orthodox Patriarch Filaret and Ukrainian Catholic Patriarch Sviatoslav. Also attending the meeting were Ambassador of Ukraine to the U.S. Valeriy Chaly, Rostyslav Pavlenko, deputy head of the Presidential Administration; and Nadia K. McConnell, president of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation. In a letter to President Obama, the religious leaders urged the president to increase humanitarian assistance, especially with winter approaching. After the meeting at the White House, the leaders continued their appeal during a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington that was organized by the Sound the Alarm for Ukraine Coalition, moderated by Ambassador John Herbst of the Atlantic Council. Following the press conference, the religious leaders of Ukraine visited the Holodomor monument that was unveiled and blessed on November 7.

Patriarch Sviatoslav, joined by Metropolitan Stefan Soroka, Bishop John Bura and Bishop emeritus Basil Lotsten, Bishop John Mchytre of the Latin-Rite Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and clergy from the Philadelphia Archeparchy, celebrated a divine liturgy at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia on November 15 that was attended by nearly 1,200. The liturgy celebrated consecrated life, and Patriarch Sviatoslav cited, as examples to follow, the lives of Metropolitan Sheptytsky and Blessed Sister Josaphata Hordachewskia, who founded the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate and who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2011 during his visit to Ukraine. The patriarch blessed icons of Metropolitan Sheptytsky and Sister Josaphata that were written by iconographer Chystyna Dochwitz, who received the Metropolitan Sheptytsky medal from Patriarch Sviatoslav.

The patriarch also celebrated divine liturgy at the Ukrainian National Catholic Shrine of the Holy Family in Washington on November 8, following the blessing of the Holodomor monument in Washington on November 7.

While in the U.S., the patriarch also visited parishes in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including Assumption Catholic School in Perth Amboy, N.J., where he met with students and teachers, and answered a variety of questions from his young audience.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky after his release from Russian tsarist imprisonment 1917. (Photo reproduced from the book “Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky and the Establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States” by the Rev. Dr. Ivan Kaszczak.)

During their news conference on November 9 at the National Press Club, where they discussed the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, (from left) are: Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst (partially hidden), Patriarch Filaret, Peter Voitsekhovsky (U.S.-Ukraine Foundation) and Patriarch Sviatoslav.
U.S.-Ukraine relations: support at a time of war

Supporters of Ukraine thought they had won a great victory at the end of 2014 with the passage and the signing of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act that they thought would indeed provide Ukraine with lethal weapons it needed to defend itself from Russian aggression. But that struggle continued in 2015, as the Obama administration continued to rely on sanctions against Russia and non-military aid to Ukraine despite the existential threat to this strategically vital of the U.S.

Probably the biggest news in U.S.-Ukraine relations came on December 6-8, when Vice-President Joe Biden visited Ukraine — his fifth trip as vice-president and his fourth since the Euro-Maidan — to reassure Kiev that the U.S. stands with the people of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. The vice-president watched the vice-president’s address, or a video of it posted on YouTube, knew that his words of concern about Ukraine’s people and the nation’s future were sincere. He modulated his delivery from a booming voice to a soft whisper-like tone, expressing the unacceptable nature of Russia’s actions in Ukraine and appealing to Ukraine leaders to do what’s right and “build a better future for the people of Ukraine.”

The first news of the year about the U.S.-Ukraine relationship came with the State of the Union address on January 20, in which President Barack Obama mentioned Russian aggression in Ukraine. He stated, “...we are demonstrating the power of American strength and diplomacy. We’re upholding the principle that bigger nations can’t bully the small — by opposing Russian aggression, supporting our partners, and reassuring our friends and allies. Last year, as we were doing the hard work of imposing sanctions along with our allies, some suggested that Mr. Putin’s aggression was a masterful display of strategy and strength. Well, today it is America that stands strong and united with our allies, while Russia is isolated, with its economy in tatters.”

But there were many who thought those boisterous words were not borne out by reality. Furthermore, the address made no mention of providing concrete help for Ukraine to counter the Russian invasion of its territory.

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on January 14 released a statement regarding the importance of implementing the Ukraine Freedom Support Act. “Russian-supplied proxies in eastern Ukraine continue to cause havoc on the lives of innocent people in the region, as well as impede prospects for regional peace. ...These most recent attacks by Russian-supported forces serve as further proof that the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014, which passed Congress unanimously and was signed into law in December, must be fully implemented. The legislation requires the president to impose sanctions on Russia’s defense sector, and authorizes the president to impose sanctions on Russia’s energy and financial sectors. It also authorizes increased military and non-military assistance for Ukraine.” Sen. Menendez stated, “I urge the administration to fully implement this legislation to demonstrate through verifiable action our fight against Russian aggression.”

President [Vladimir] Putin’s upending of the international order, and to create the conditions for a more democratic and peaceful Ukraine.”

Sen. Menendez followed up on January 29 with a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry, strongly urging the Obama administration “to provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to defend itself.”

Sens. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) on February 3 urged President Obama and NATO to rapidly increase military assistance to Ukraine to defend its sovereign borders against escalating Russian aggression. They were joined by Sens. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Mark Kirk (R-IL), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) and Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.).

In their joint letter the 15 senators wrote: “Russia’s affront to established international norms is a direct threat to decades of established European security architecture and the democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian people. It must not be allowed to succeed. We believe it is time to increase military assistance to Ukraine and urge the U.S. and NATO to move quickly. Despite the welcome imposition of U.S. and EU sanctions and mounting international isolation, Russian President [Vladimir] Putin appears willing to gamble his country’s economy and world standing to further his blatant military invasion of another nation. ...Such a dangerous international bully will only stand down when faced with credible resistance.”

Even as news stories more and more frequently reported that the Obama administration was considering lethal aid to Ukraine, The Washington Post’s Carol Morello reported on February 5 that Secretary Kerry had arrived in Kiev, “bearing a modest package of humanitarian aid but stopping short of offering the expanded military assistance sought by Ukraine.” She also noted: “Kerry announced on his arrival that the United States would provide an additional $16 million in humanitarian aid to buy blankets, repair homes, obtain wheelchairs and provide counseling for the victims of ongoing war in Ukraine. There was no mention of defensive military equipment.”

In a joint appearance with President Poroshenko, Mr. Kerry said the U.S. wants “a peaceful resolution” to the conflict in Ukraine. According to a transcript released by the U.S. State Department, he added: “But we cannot close our eyes to tanks that are crossing the border from Russia and coming into Ukraine. We can’t close our eyes to Russian fighters in unmarked uniforms crossing the border and leading individual companies of so-called separatists in battle. We can’t close our eyes to modern rockets and modern radar capacity and other capacities that have crossed the border in order to prosecute this conflict across sovereign lines, across international borders, against all the promises that were made in the Minsk ceasefire agreement.”

In Munich on February 7, Vice-President Biden said that, unless Russia changed course in its involvement in Ukraine, the international community would continue to impose “costs” on Moscow for its “violations of international norms.” He said Russia was disregarding Ukraine’s sovereignty in its involvement in eastern Ukraine, and acknowledged the “unconventional Russian separatist forces” that he termed the “trained fighters” in eastern Ukraine “directly answer to Mr. Putin.” The U.S. vice-president told an audience that included world leaders and senior officials that no country “should ever have a situation where a country or independent country had the sovereignty right to choose its own alliances” — a warning that Russia cannot keep Ukraine out of the European Union or NATO against its will. He also left open the possibility of Washington providing defensive military aid to Ukraine, but said, “Let me be clear: we do not believe there is a military solution in Ukraine.”

Soon afterwards, on February 9, Sens. Portman and Durbin announced the launch of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, which goal is to strengthen the political, military, economic and cultural relationship between the United States and Ukraine. Its two co-chairs said the caucus would immediately focus on the need for a sustained U.S. commitment to Ukraine in the face of a Russian-backed separatist offensive.

Sen. Portman said: “I look forward to working with Sen. Durbin and our caucus members to establish the Senate Ukraine Caucus as a key voice on Capitol Hill for stronger U.S.-Ukrainian relations.” Sen. Durbin noted: “We form the Senate Ukraine Caucus at a time of real peril for the people of Ukraine... Ukraine needs a steadfast ally in the United States. This bipartisan group sends a clear message that Ukraine has the unflinching support of the Ukrainian community in Illinois and in the United States.” Sens. Ayotte, Murphy, Brown and Kirk were announced as vice-chairs of the caucus. The first meeting of the Senate Ukraine Caucus took place on February 26.

Expressing their disappointment with the position of Western leaders on the Ukrainian crisis, Sens. McCain and
2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Lindsey Graham (R-SC) on February 17 stated: “The chancellor of Germany and the president of France, with the support of the president of the United States, are legitimizing the dismemberment of a sovereign nation in Europe for the first time in seven decades. The two senators underscored that the U.S. must provide defensive weapons to Ukraine and apply additional sanctions on Russia. They noted: “It is inexcusable to adhere to a failed ceasefire agreement as Russia and its Ukrainian proxies escalate their uncompromising siege of Debaltseve. Western leaders say there is no military solution to the conflict in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin clearly does not think so. He continues his aggression, and in the absence of greater Western support for Ukrainian forces, a Russian-imposed military solution is exactly what will continue to unfold in Ukraine, just as it has in parts of Georgia and Moldova.”

The Ukrainian Weekly’s editorial of February 22 opined: “Here in the U.S., President Barack Obama continues his hand-off approach to Ukraine. At home, he has Vice-President Joe Biden doing the phone calling, and sometimes allows Secretary of State John Kerry to get a word in, while in the international arena, he’s let Germany and France take the lead – with the disastrous results of Minsk 2. And just what was the goal of Minsk 2? Many say it was to stop dead in its tracks the move to supply Ukraine with lethal weapons just as the U.S. was leaning toward doing that. Instead we’re left with the administration’s new National Security Policy of ‘strategic patience’ – never mind that Russia has violated every major post-World War II international agreement, from the U.N. Charter and the Helsinki Accords to the Budapest Memorandum.”

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Ukraine’s Euro-Maidan demonstrations, Congressional Ukrainian Caucus co-chairs Reps. Mike Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), Sander Levin (D-Mich.) and Mary Karptur (D-Ohio) on February 24 introduced a resolution that called for the United States to assist Ukraine with economic, social and government reform efforts; urge President Obama to immediately act on approved financial and defensive military aid; and encouraged Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to continue anti-corruption efforts.

“A year ago, the people of Ukraine rallied behind the ideas of economic and governmental reform during the Euro-Maidan demonstrations; today, the United States must take action to see their goals achieved,” said Rep. Fitzpatrick. “This bipartisan resolution calls on Congress and the White House to work in the best interest of our friend and ally, Ukraine, and support a safe and sovereign nation through common sense measures: Supporting serious reform efforts, calling on President Obama to follow through with the provision of financial and defensive military aid, and encouraging the continuation of anti-corruption efforts in Kyiv.”

A press statement by Secretary of State Kerry, titled “One Year Anniversary of the Maidan Protests in Ukraine,” was released on February 21. Mr. Kerry noted the events of 2014 and referred to his moving visits to Euro-Maidan—Venues, where he paid his respects to the fallen. “We will never forget those who lost their lives and raised their voices for freedom and dignity … the Euro-Maidan protesters stood up against injustice and sparked the birth of a new Ukraine,” Secretary Kerry stated. “Today we are united with Ukraine in somber remembrance of the sacrifices made by the ‘Heavenly Hundred.’ We also recognize the efforts of the people of Ukraine to make progress over this difficult year. From Liviv to Lahansk, from Chernihiv to Sevastopol, Ukrainians are coming together to define their own future.”

On March 1, the U.S. said that it had evidence that Russian generals were directing the fighting in Ukraine’s east. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt said on the Ukrainian channel Inter TV: “We believe that Russian generals are involved in the conflict in the Donbas, and that the Russian officers command tactical military operations in the Donbas. We know that Russia is using modern electronic missile guidance systems of the air-to-surface class … We know that the regular troops of the Russian army took part in the occupation of Debaltseve, and in military actions that continued even after the Minsk agreements had come into force.” The ambassador added: “This conflict may be ended by one phone call – a call from Russian President Vladimir Putin.”

U.S. Army Europe Commander Ben Hodges said on March 3 that the U.S. military estimated some 12,000 Russian soldiers were supporting pro-Moscow separatists in eastern Ukraine and that about 29,000 Russian troops were in Crimea. The Russian forces are made up of military advisers, weapons operators and combat troops. Speaking in Berlin, Commander Hodges said that helping Ukraine with weapons would increase the stakes for President Putin at home. “When mothers start seeing sons come home dead, when that price goes up, then that domestic support begins to shrink,” he said. Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the U.S. joint Chiefs of Staff, also voiced support for arming Ukraine on March 3. Speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he said Washington “should absolutely consider” providing Kyiv with arms through NATO.

On March 4, 14 bipartisan group of House leaders and committee chairs – eight Republicans and three Democrats – sent a letter to President Obama writing: “In the wake of events in Crimea, which appear only to have consolidated Russian and separatist gains since the first Minsk agreement, we urge you to quickly approve additional efforts to support Ukraine’s efforts to defend its sovereign territory, including through the transfer of lethal, defensive weapons systems to the Ukrainian military.” The signatories were: Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio); House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.); Permanent Select Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-Calif.); Rep. Eliot L. Engel (D-N.Y.); ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee; Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-Texas); Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.); ranking member of the Armed Services Committee; Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.); Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), ranking member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.); Defense Appropriations Subcommittees Chairwoman Kay Hagan (D-N.C.); Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.); and State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-Texas). The House of Representatives held a two-hour hearing on March 4, during a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the topic “Ukraine Under Siege,” in which Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Peter Vischny (D-Ind.) wrote: “First, you should designate Ukraine as a Major Non-NATO Ally. Second, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2015 contains $175 million within the European Reassurance
Initiative Fund specifically to provide aid to Ukraine and the Baltic states that has a substantial portion of funding be reprogrammed to that fund thereby increasing the amount of funding available for assistance.”

Reps. Frelinghuysen and Visclosky, along with six other House Appropriations subcommittee chairs, have already returned from a bipartisan fact-finding trip to Kyiv where they met with President Poroshenko, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak to discuss ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. Delegation members told President Obama that the situation in Ukraine is “alarmingly: “As you are aware, President Putin is using Ukraine as a test bed for a new type of warfare, including by supporting state-sponsored insurgents to carry out this campaign. The Russians are clearly managing the command and control of the insurgency and have imoted Ukraine using the façade of this insurgency for plausible deniability. This is overwhelmingly overwhelming the communication battle in Europe and Ukraine itself and is showing success in dividing Ukraine’s neighbors.”

On April 30, there was yet more information, and confirmation, that Russia was directing the “rebels” in Ukraine. The Associated Press reported that U.S. officials briefed on intelligence from the region said Russia has significantly deepened its command and control of separatist forces in recent months. That led the U.S. to quietly introduce a new term, “combined Russian-separatist forces,” in order to avoid using the expression sometimes in a single statement lambasting them for a series of ceasefire violations.

On May 27, the U.S. announced $18 million in additional humanitarian assistance for Ukraine to help those affected by Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. The funds from the Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration were to support the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Population Fund to meet the most critical protection and assistance needs of people affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine, including the provision of food, hygiene items, medical supplies, and essential household items such as blankets, plastic sheeting and construction materials to repair homes.

An important report on the extent of Russia’s aggression in Ukraine was released by the Atlantic Council on May 28 titled “Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin’s War in Ukraine.” In the report, the authors said satellite images confirmed the movement of Russian troops and camp build-ups along the Ukrainian border and that Russia was sending soldiers and military equipment from these “staging grounds” into Ukraine. The report further asserted that Russian commanders order their troops to conceal the identifying features of military vehicles and remove insignia from their uniforms before joining separatist forces in eastern Ukraine.

On September 30, the United States announced an additional $7.5 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance for those affected by the conflict in Ukraine, bringing the total U.S. humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the start of the crisis to nearly $49 million. The funding was to support efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to meet critical protection and assistance needs, including by supporting family reunification efforts and providing food, hygiene items, medical supplies, emergency shelter and household items such as blankets. The U.S. also reiterated its call for full and unfettered access to ensure humanitarian relief can reach civilians in need.

On November 16 the U.S. announced nearly $15 million in additional humanitarian assistance through USAID. The funds were for emergency shelter assistance, including for up to 100,000 people getting the upcoming winter and to provide safe drinking water and support hygiene and sanitation programs to stem the spread of disease. The assistance was meant also to provide employment opportunities to get people and businesses back on their feet and help households replace lost assets.

On November 14 the United States delivered two AN/TQA-36 radar systems to Ukraine at a ceremony in Kyiv. President Poroshenko, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and opportunities to review the equipment and was briefed by U.S. military personnel on its capabilities. The U.S. Embassy Kyiv pointed out that the radar systems will help defend Ukrainian military personnel against rockets, mortars, artillery attacks, the most lethal threat to Ukrainian personnel and civilians. The equipment was delivered on a rapid timeline – less than two months after President Obama delegated to the secretary of state the authority to draw down up to $20 million in defense articles and services and up to $1.5 million in non-lethal commodities and services to provide these systems to Ukraine. The provision of these systems brought total U.S. security assistance committed to Ukraine in response to the crisis to more than $265 million since 2014.

On December 12, 2015, the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, held a briefing on “Human Rights Violations in Russian-Occupied Crimea”.

The scene on November 14 at the airport in Yavoriv, Lviv Oblast, where the U.S. delivered two counter-battery radar systems to Ukraine to bolster the country’s defense and internal security operations.

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On November 9, 2014, President Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, which authorized among other things, $300 million in assistance for Ukrainian forces fighting Russian-backed insurgents, including $50 million for defensive lethal assistance and counter-artillery radars. “We welcome this important decision that has demonstrated unity in the position of the U.S. administration and Congress in support of Ukraine in counting Russian military aggression,” Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in its statement.

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We observed from afar the courage, the self-determination with great humility that our delegation comes to Maidan.

Mr. Poroshenko, the vice-president commented: "Ukraine is in the cup – what happens in the next year is likely to determine the fate of the country for generations.

In conjunction with Mr. Biden's visit, the White House, Office of the Vice-President, announced that, "pending consultation with Congress, the White House plans to commit approximately $190 million in new assistance to support Ukraine's ambitious reform agenda." The assistance package aimed to help Ukraine: elevate the fight against corruption through law enforcement and justice sector reform; attract investment through streamlining regulations and transparently privatizing state-owned enterprises; promote economic growth through better trade policy; and build a long-term democratic foundation through constitutional and good-government reforms in key sectors.

The fact sheet released by the White House pointed out: "With this announcement, the United States now has committed $2 billion in loan guarantees and nearly $760 million in security, programmatic and technical assistance to Ukraine since the end of the Yanukovych regime in 2014. The proceeds of U.S. loan guarantees have helped Ukraine to stabilize its economy and protect the most vulnerable households from the impact of needed economic adjustments. The administration will continue to work with Congress and its international partners to support Ukraine as it defends its sovereignty, stabilizes its economy and advances its reform agenda."

Ukrainian officials visit D.C.

During 2015, there were many visits to the United States of officials from Ukraine.

During a four-day visit to Washington in late January, Ukraine's Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Vadym Prystaiko expressed his optimism that the military and economic aid Ukraine needs to survive its current military and economic crises would soon be forthcoming from the United States. "The United States and other lifting sanctions, Ukraine is very thankful to the United States for firm support at most important points of our development," he said.

Mr. Prystaiko's Washington visit during a daylong conference at the Atlantic Council on developing a trans-Atlantic strategy for the Europe's East. Two days later, that think tank joined with The Brookings Institution and The Chicago Council on Global Affairs in presenting a report on "Preserving Ukraine's Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do." authored by eight foreign policy experts, including two former U.S. ambassadors to Ukraine – Steven Pifer and John Herbst – who underscored three recommendations: The White House and Congress should commit serious funds to upgrade Ukraine's defense capabilities, specifically by spending an additional $1 billion each in the next two fiscal years. The U.S. government should alter its policy and begin providing lethal assistance to Ukraine's military. The administration that provided for aid to the 28 NATO countries about also providing military assistance to Ukraine.

The vice-chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Andriy Parubiy, came to Washington during the last week of February in an effort to convince the United States to provide the Ukrainian armed forces with lethal and defensive weapons. During his three-day visit on February 24-26, he presented his government's case in meetings on Capitol Hill with Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman McCain, Speaker of the House Boehner and members of the Senate and House Ukrainian caucuses. He also met with Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland and senior officials at the Defense Department and National Security Council, as well as with other leading Washington foreign policy experts.

During a brief news conference at the Embassy of Ukraine, Mr. Prystaiko stated: "Ukraine has to ascertain: are we alone or not alone. We have to find out if the country that guaranteed our security in the Budapest Memorandum is willing to check Ukraine at this difficult moment." Ukraine needs arms assistance now, Mr. Parubiy underscored, adding that he brought with him a list of the lethal and nonlethal weapons Ukraine's armed forces need, agreed upon by the ministries of defense and foreign affairs, and other Ukrainian government institutions.

Ukraine's new minister of finance, Natalie Jaresko, came to Washington on March 16-17, seeking U.S. assistance in helping to get her country's economy working normally during very difficult and uncertain times for Ukraine. The American-born minister discussed her government's plans for recovery with senior officials at the White House, the Treasury and State departments and congressmen, and later talked about them in a packed conference room at the Brookings Institution, a leading Washington think tank. Seventy years of communism, and 23 years of incomplete economic reforms, mismanage- ment, corruption by previous regimes, she said, "has left the country in a complex and difficult economic situation" Ukraine's economy, 1.1% industrial output had gone down by 20 percent in 2014 and the hryvnia had depreciated by 70 percent, pushing the public sector debt to "very dangerous levels." Ukraine is very thankful to the United States for economic aid, but new financial assistance is needed, she added. Ukraine's government needs additional support, in the form of financial and humanitarian assistance, military equipment "to put an end to this conflict," and economic assistance to "develop strong, lasting agricultural production and lighten its sovereign debt burden.

Diplomatic tie 
U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden in a tête-à-tête with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk of Ukraine on July 13 in Washington.
 scramble for power, and they are capable – that can lead Ukraine forward,” he said.

In mid-April, when three top Ukrainian government officials in charge of improving their country’s economy and its international economic relations spent four days in Washington, meeting with leading officials at the US Chamber of Commerce, the Bank for Recon-struction and Development, the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as ofﬁcials at the U.S. Department of Commerce, to discuss Ukraine’s current ﬁnancial-economic situation, its process in reforming the economy and plans for additional reforms in the future. Economy Minister Aivaras Abromavicius noted that the conclusion of the visit that they went for,” he told members of the press at the Embassy of Ukraine on April 20. “There is a clear support for our government and our Parliament by Washington among the American politicians, businesspeople and bankers, and also among the international community.” Minister Abromavicius was accompanied to the Washington meetings by Finance Minister Yatsenyuk and the governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, Valeria Hontaryeva.

Four Ukrainian national deputies from the civil society movement of the Euro-Maidan Revolution of Dignity, joined by ofﬁcials from Ukrainian government agencies and think tanks, brought their message of determination and hope to the Obama administration, Congress and academia in Washington, the US capital, from the 6th to the 11th of April. The delegation included National Deputy Valeriya Hontaryeva, National Deputy Oleksiy Skrypnyk and Oleksandr Duhin, who represent three new political parties in Parliament, the Poroshenko Bloc, Self-Reliance Party and Party Radical, that belong to the majority coalition. Also part of the delegation were: Taras Oliynyk, ﬁrst deputy head of the State Agency for E-Governance in Ukraine; Oleksiy Gridyv, advi-sor to the Minister of Defense; Maj. Yuriy Moskal’sets (ret.), director of the Center for Military Reform; and Anatoliy Fenchuk, president of Ukrainian Strategy, a Kyiv-based think tank.

In May, President Obama criticized Russia’s “increasingly aggressive” stance on Ukraine, as a result of which Moscow’s aggression had killed since April 2014. He said, “We had a chance to discuss the situation in Ukraine and the increasingly aggressive posture that Russia has taken.” He urged Russia to “stop supporting separatists and to withdraw all its forces from eastern Ukraine,” which continued to be embroiled in sporadic ﬁghting despite the ﬁnal Minsk II agreement signed in February. Prime Minister Yatsenyuk came to the US capital on June 8-10 for talks about the crisis in Ukraine caused by Russia’s invasion; he met with U.S. government ofﬁcials, congressional representatives of international organizations and influential American organizations. The prime minis-ter’s tight schedule included a surprise White House meeting with Vice-President Biden, who had just returned from a visit to Ukraine. Mr. Yatsenyuk said he and Finance Minister Jaresko, who had also traveled to Washington, had some 30 meetings. “And the level of support expressed by the U.S. vice-president, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the secretaries of the Treasury and Commerce — in other words, the American establishment — was unprecedented,” he said. The prime minister’s views in describing the major problem: “We are facing a real war with Russia.”

Noted on the presidential campaign trail during a campaign stop at a town hall in New Hampshire on August 12, Ohio Governor John Kasich, a candidate for the Republican nomination for U.S. president, said the United States should be aiding Ukraine against Russian aggression. “For the life of me, I cannot under-stand why we are not giving the Ukrainians [the ability] to defend themselves against Putin and the Russians,” Gov. Kasich said. He explained that the Ukrainians should get the help they deserve. “They’ve been through hell over the course of their existence, and we’ve got to let them ﬁght for themselves.”

Meanwhile, Republican candidate Donald Trump responded with blunt indifference to Ukraine’s possible membership in NATO. “I wouldn’t care. If [Ukraine] goes in, great. If it doesn’t go in, great,” Mr. Trump said in an interview with NBC on August 16. Mr. Trump also said that Europe should bear the brunt of the responsibility for standing up to Russia in the Ukraine conﬂict. “I don’t like what’s happening with Ukraine. But that’s really a problem that affects Europe a lot more than it affects us. And they should be leading some of this charge,” he said. At an August 14 campaign event, Mr. Trump said U.S.-Russian ties have become “pretty well-destroyed” under President Obama and that if elected, he “would have a great relation-ship with Russia and Putin.” Asked whether he would roll back sanctions against Russia, Mr. Trump said: “It depends, depends. They have to behave also.”

On the occasion of Ukraine’s Independence Day two Republican candidates for the presidential nomination released statements.

Gov. Kasich’s message stated, in part: “The repeated violations of the Minsk cease-ﬁre protocols must stop. Efforts to erode the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine must stop, and Crimea and Donbas must be returned to Ukraine. . . .The United States must do everything in its power to provide Ukraine with the means to defend itself. Congress gave the president the authority to help arm Ukraine — by large bipartisan majorities — but its requests to the U.S. for help have been denied. The Obama Administration needs to reaffirm the commitment to Ukraine, a vital ally and key to stability in Europe.”

On August 3, in remarks to the United States Chamber of Commerce, the new Ukrainian ambassador to the United States, Valeriy Chaly, presents his letters of credence to U.S. President Barack Obama on August 3.
The Peace Corps returned to Ukraine, following a program suspension of more than one year due to the conflict in the country's east, when seven volunteers arrived on May 20 in Kyiv.

administration has even gone a step further and prohibited the sale of the defensive weapons systems Ukraine urgently needs. This must stop and we must help Ukraine protect its independence. That means providing the anti-tank, anti-aircraft and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance systems it needs.

In his message, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, said: "After 24 years of independence, I want to pledge unwavering support for an independent, sovereign and democratic Ukraine. Unfortunately, after unchecked Russian aggression and a lack of leadership under the Obama-Cinton foreign policy, Ukraine's future remains unclear. Last week, Russian-backed separatists shellcivilians in eastern Ukraine, and rebel leaders declared they were preparing for a full-fledged war. As I said during the first debate earlier this month, America must provide Ukraine with the lethal military assistance needed to defend itself against Vladimir Putin's power grab in the region." Mr. Walker suspended his campaign in September.

Hillary Clinton, the former U.S. secretary of state who is leading contender to be the next president, called for a stronger response to Russia's actions in Ukraine and Syria, saying Moscow's objectives were "to stymie, to confront and to undermine American power whenever and wherever." In italy veiled criticism of the Obama administration's current approach to Russia, Ms. Clinton said that Washington should be doing more in response to Russia's interference in Ukraine. "I have been, I remain convinced that we need a concerted effort to really up the pressure on Russia's interference in Ukraine. The warning stated, in part: "The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer all travel to Crimea and the eastern regions of Donestk and Luhansk, and recommends those U.S. citizens currently living in or visiting these regions to depart. Russia-backed separatists continue to control areas in the Donetck and Luhansk oblasts, where violent clashes have resulted in over 9,000 deaths. There have been multiple casualties due to land mines in areas previously controlled by separatists and separatist leaders have made statements indicating their desire to push the front line to the administrative borders of the Donetck and Luhansk oblasts. Individuals, including U.S. citizens, have been threatened, detained or kidnapped for hours or days after being stopped at separatist checkpoints. The situation in Ukraine is unpredictable and could change quickly. U.S. citizens throughout Ukraine should avoid large crowds and be prepared to remain indoors should protests or demonstrations escalate...."
Ukrainian women at the CSW carried banners in protest against Russia's war in Ukraine and distributed literature explaining the courage of Lt. Savchenko. The summer was especially busy for diaspora organizations. On June 5, the Weekly reported that the Australia-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce would be fully operational by the end of the year to pursue business opportunities between the two countries. This project was initiated by the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organizations (AFUO) and Dr. Petro Matiaszek was named the chamber’s Kyiv-based president and Pete Sianigel the Sydney-based interim chair.

AFUO President Stefan Romaniw stated, “The Australia-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce will become a key facilitator for Australian businesses seeking opportunities in Ukraine and vice versa. It will help grow the current $150 million trade relationship for the benefit of both countries, and it will support the new Australian Embassy in its trade work in any way that it can.”

According to Dr. Matiaszek, market feedback suggests many potential areas of mutual benefit including international education, aviation, aerospace, mining services, resources (such as manganese, gas and uranium), hospitality, fashion, outsourcing of services and manufacturing, agriculture, as well as governance systems. Other areas of activity for the Australia-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce are organizing a business delegation exchange and advocating visa reform for travel between Australia and Ukraine.

Also in June, Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko met with UWC leaders, President Eugene Czolij and Secretary General Stefan Romaniw, and UCC President Pavlo Grod. UCC President Grod was in Kyiv as part of a delegation that accompanied then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper on a visit to Ukraine ahead of the G-7 summit.

Mr. Poroshenko noted that the UWC is a powerful force in the protection of Ukraine’s interests in the world. He also expressed the necessity of countering Russian propaganda and promoting objective information on events in Ukraine. Telling the truth to people all over the world is an extremely important mission not only for the Ukrainian president, Foreign Affairs Ministry government and civil organizations, but also for the diaspora, the opinion of which plays a significant role,” he emphasized. Ukraine’s president also positively evaluated the results of the G-7 summit in support of Ukraine, noting not only its position on the issue of compliance with the Minsk agreements, but also the G-7’s stand that the annexation of Crimea was illegal. He highlighted the importance of a visa-free regime for Ukrainians with the countries of the EU and also with Canada, Japan and Australia.

The UWC leadership also attended a ceremony at which President Poroshenko posthumously presented the Hero of Ukraine award to the family of Senior Lt. Ivan Zakhov, who died heroically defending the Donetsk airport. Additionally, Mr. Grod and the UWC delegation met with Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Culture Vasyl Hrybko, who thanked the UWC for its support for Ukraine during its battle for territorial integrity, democracy and European choice.

UWC President Czolij reported that the UWC had established a mission in Ukraine in order to better coordinate actions. The established council includes Ukrainian diaspora representatives from 48 countries. On August 1-2, with their indigenous homeland under occupation, the second World Congress of Crimean Tatars gathered in Ankara, Turkey – the country with the largest Crimean Tatar diaspora population. This world congress attracted 184 Tatar groups from 12 countries, representing some 200 Crimean Tatar organizations. The number of registered guests at the congress (410) defied the organizers’ expectations. Russia had mobilized all of its best efforts to prevent the World Congress of Crimean Tatars from meeting at all by threatening Crimean Tatars living in occupied Crimea, setting up a rival Crimean Tatar body it could control and applying diplomatic pressure on the Turkish government.

Andrij Dobriansky, executive board member of the UCGLA and the sole representative of Ukrainian diaspora organizations at the congress, addressed the delegates by calling on government leaders in the U.S. to “Put aside political differences and stand together with all of the people of Ukraine and enact sectoral sanctions against Turkey.” The congress was also addressed by Ukraine’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin, who declared that the so-called annexation of Crimea in March 2014 “is temporary – because it is illegal.” In a statement read by Mr. Klimkin, Ukraine’s President Poroshenko affirmed that “Ukraine will never in any circumstances accept the violation of the rights of the Crimean Tatar people to live freely on their own land.” Mr. Poroshenko pledged that Ukraine, together with its international partners, “will devote all its efforts to restore legality on the peninsula and the return of Ukrainian power to Crimea.”

Given the current military occupation of Crimea, this second world congress proclaimed as its goal the development of a strategy of resistance for the worldwide Crimean Tatar diaspora. The newly elected president of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars, Relat Chubarov, remarked, “Despite repressions by Russia, the Crimean Tatars will never accept its policy and are struggling against it.”

In September the UWC held its three-day annual general meeting in Madrid. The meeting was held at the world-renowned Cervantes Institute and was attended by 64 delegates and 53 guests from 20 countries. Working sessions addressed the issues of countering Russian disinformation, defending the human and national rights of Ukrainians, coordinating international efforts to support Ukraine and developing humanitarian initiatives, including the UWC-sanctioned project “Patriot Defence.” On September 13, the UWC held a peaceful march – whose theme was “Ukrainians throughout the world with Ukraine” – through central Madrid. Its aim was to demonstrate support of the Ukrainian people in their struggle for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the fall of 2015, The Weekly highlighted noteworthy stories about the work of Ukrainian diaspora women’s organizations. First, the WIFWO held its general meeting in Stockholm on September 3-5, during which over 50 participants discussed current issues in Ukraine and planned the way forward. Reports of the previous year reflected the fact that Ukrainian women’s organizations are directing most of their energies toward raising funds for the rehabilitation of soldiers wounded in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, support for families of those killed and wounded, the collection and distribution of humanitarian aid and protective equipment, as well as organizing demonstrations and actively disseminating truth about Ukraine.

On September 29, Ukrainian diaspora members in New York also met with Dalia Grybauskaite, the president of the Republic of Lithuania, at an informal high-level discussion titled, “Future of Eastern Europe: Empowerment of Women.” President Grybauskaite had invited world leaders from Central and East Europe and representatives of several international organizations to discuss ways to draw the international community’s attention to the situation of women in countries affected by armed conflicts, as well as help women survivors of wars, especially in Georgia and Ukraine. The discussion highlighted the suffering of more than 1.6 million people – two-thirds of whom are women and children – who have been forced to flee their homes.

Among those invited to attend was Ukrainian Congress Committee of America President Tamara Oleny and Ukrainian National Women’s League of America.
President Marianna Zajac. The delegation from Ukraine included Vira Savchenko, sister of Ukrainian POW Nadiya Savchenko; National Deputy Maria Ionova, vice-chair of the Committee on European Integration; and National Deputy Svitlana Zalischuk, chair of the Subcommittee on Euro-Atlantic Cooperation and Euro-Integration of Committee on Foreign Affairs.

President Grybauskaite underscored that women have made a significant contribution to managing the consequences of armed conflict. She added that women help rebuild destroyed cities and communities, and take care of refugees and the wounded. Therefore, they should be provided with opportunities to take an active role in restoring peace and resolving conflicts. According to U.N. estimates, between 1992 and 2011 women made up only 9 percent of peace negotiators around the world.

Continuing the theme of women, Ukraine's First Lady Maryna Poroshenko hosted a roundtable discussion on September 30 at the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations for women leaders of various Ukrainian diaspora organizations that are helping Ukraine. All present gave short overviews of the work of their respective organizations, after which Dr. Poroshenko posed questions to the speakers in order to better understand their activities. The purpose of the meeting was for participants to share their thoughts about the collective goal of supporting Ukraine through its crisis. Dr. Poroshenko ended the meeting by thanking the Ukrainian diaspora for being "an efficient diplomatic bridge between Ukraine and America."

Also in the fall, the Ukrainian Heritage Consortium of North America (UHCNA) held its fourth conference in Washington at the Library of Congress on September 18-20. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), co-chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus and the conference’s keynote speaker, commended the UHCNA for its work, emphasizing the importance of collecting and preserving the record of Ukrainian culture and immigration to America. "This is a critical element in America's history that has a major influence on our country's policies today," she noted, adding that this aspect is neglected by mainstream cultural and political policymakers. She also offered suggestions on how to make the Ukrainian story more prominent and pledged to continue her own efforts in that regard.

On October 28, the first bilingual historical marker recalling Canada’s national internment operations of 1914-1920 was unveiled at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv and blessed by Patriarch Sviatoslav. On a previous visit to Canada, Patriarch Sviatoslav had agreed it would be appropriate to display a commemorative plaque in a Ukrainian Greek-Catholic church as most of those interned during Canada’s national internment operations of 1914-1920. Standing on the left is Canada’s example in respecting the dignity of individuals and for Ukraine itself.

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On October 28, the first bilingual historical marker recalling Canada’s national internment operations of 1914-1920 was unveiled at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv and blessed by Patriarch Sviatoslav. On a previous visit to Canada, Patriarch Sviatoslav had agreed it would be appropriate to display a commemorative plaque in a Ukrainian Greek-Catholic church as most of those interned during Canada’s national internment operations of 1914-1920.

Two days after the report of the raid, RFE/RL reported that Ms. Sharina denied the charges and claimed that Russian authorities had framed her by planting extremist books in her collection. While under detention, Ms. Sharina became ill. Russian news agencies reported that the court decided to put Ms. Sharina under house arrest and charged her with incitement of ethnic hatred, which can result in up to four years in prison.

In November, the UWC called upon Ukrainian communities to join the international effort to combat Russian disinformation by helping to document such incidents. The East StratCom Team of the European External Action Service, the European Union’s diplomatic service, was tasked with analyzing Russian disinformation, revealing its fundamental aims and tendencies, and reacting and effectively preventing further similar steps by the Russian Federation. In order to de-bunk myths of the Russian Federation, East StratCom had recently created a network that includes representatives of mass media, think tanks, individual experts, officials and non-governmental organizations that are to be the source of facts on Russian disinformation.

The Ukrainian diaspora ended the year as it began, with joyous holiday spirit. As in years past, thanks to the efforts of Austrian Scouts who travel each year to Bethlehem and bring the Bethlehem Peace Light to Vienna, member of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization all over the world were once again able to disseminate this symbol of peace, hope and love throughout their communities, including a great many in North America.

On December 19, Plast scouts visited the Presidential Administration of Ukraine to present the Bethlehem Peace Light to President Poroshenko. Andriy Luzan, a member of the national supervisory of Plast in Ukraine, said, "We urgently need peace and that is why we brought this symbol of peace to you, Mr. President." President Poroshenko responded, "Let this light be lit in homes in Chernihiv and Crime, Zakarpattia and Luhansk. Let it demonstrate the unity of Ukraine and bring peace to all these homes."

Plast scouts share the Bethlehem Peace Light with Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko on December 19.
Ukrainians and Canada: A solid partnership

The main event in Canada in the year 2015 was one that potentially touched every citizen: the federal election held on October 19. It not only brought victory to the Liberal party — which gained a majority and governing position — but Prime Minister-designate Justin Trudeau’s 104-member Liberal caucus included at least seven Members of Parliament with Ukrainian lineage.

Alberta-born Chrystia Freeland beat her rival 27,806 votes to 15,969 in her new riding of University-Rosedale. Joining her in the caucus is Borys Wrzesnewskyj, who returned to Parliament after losing in the previous election (Don Valley West).

While outgoing Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper was a huge supporter of the Ukrainian government and its fight against Russian-backed separatists, the Canadian Ukrainian Congress (UCC) said it expects his Liberal successor to take a similar stand. In a meeting on October 13 with the UCC, Mr. Trudeau made it clear that Ukraine is a foreign policy priority for a Liberal government under his leadership.

The Liberals have three Ukrainian Canadian newcomers from Ontario: Julie Dzerowicz reclaimed the longtime Liberal Toronto riding of Davenport by defeating NDP incumbent Andrew Cash. Lawyer Don Rusnak, the son of Ukrainian and Ojibway parents, won for the Liberals in the riding of Thunder Bay-Rainy River. Next door in Manitoba, two Ukrainian Canadians now sit for the Liberals in the House of Commons: Mary Ann Mihychuk is the new MP for the Winnipeg riding of Kildonan-St. Paul, and Terry (T carc) Duguid, Liberal (Winnipeg South Manitoba).

The UCC identified four Ukrainian Canadians who will return to Ottawa to serve in the Official Opposition: James Bezan in Manitoba, Ron Amorosbe and Jim Eglinski in Alberta and Michael Byun in British Columbia.

Prime Minister Trudeau made good on his election campaign promise to confront “the bully that is Putin” when he met him at the G-20 summit in Turkey. “I pointed out that although Canada has shifted its approach on a broad range of multilateral and international issues, we remain committed to the fact that Russia’s interference in Ukraine must cease,” Mr. Trudeau said. Mr. Putin apparently answered the Canadian prime minister’s “you should go away from Ukraine” with a disdainful “it’s impossible, since we are not there.”

Mr. Trudeau’s tough stance on Mr. Putin received cheers from the Ukrainians. “The Ukrainian Canadian community is pleased that Prime Minister Trudeau has taken a principled position in response to the aggression of the Russian Federation which has invaded and occupied sovereign Ukrainian territory in Crimea and Donestk and Luhansk,” Paul Grod, UCC president said.

During the election campaign, Mr. Trudeau had promised “gender parity” in his cabinet — an equal number of men and women. The cabinet includes two female Ukrainian Canadian ministers: high-profile journalist and author Ms. Freeland was tapped to serve as international trade minister and mice minister during her stint in the Manitoba provincial government. Another Ukrainian Canadian woman who will play an important role, but in the Conservative opposition, is Ms. Amorosbe, who became the interim Conservative leader, when Mr. Harper resigned. Ms. Amorosbe held nine Cabinet portfolios in Stephen Harper’s government.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress on October 20 congratulated Mr. Trudeau and the Liberal Party of Canada for the results of the 2015 Canadian federal election. “On behalf of Canada’s 1.3 million Ukrainian Canadian community, I congratulate Mr. Trudeau on his election as prime minister and all the members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons,” stated Mr. Grod. “I look forward to working with Mr. Trudeau and his government, in addressing key issues of importance to the Ukrainian Canadian community.”

For the record, among the Members of Parliament elected in the October 19 elections, more than 10 are of Ukrainian heritage. The 10 confirmed MPs of Ukrainian descent are: Julie Dzerowicz, Liberal (Davenport, Ontario); Chrystia Freeland, Liberal (University-Rosedale, Ontario); Borys Wrzesnewskyj, Liberal (Bobbokie Centre, Ontario); Kyle Peterson, Liberal (Newmarket-Aurora, Ontario); Terry (Taras) Duguid, Liberal (Winnipeg South, Manitoba); Mary Ann Mihychuk, Liberal (Kildonan-St. Paul, Manitoba); James Bezan, Conservative (Selkirk, Interlake, Manitoba); Ron Amorosbe, Conservative (Sturgeon River-Parkland, Alberta); Jim Eglinski, Conservative (Yellowhead, Alberta); Mark Warawa, Conservative (Langley-Aldergrove, British Columbia).

Support for Ukraine

At the beginning of 2015, the RCMP welcomed the announcement by Minister of International Trade Ed Fast of more than $50 million in additional support by Canada to Ukraine during a trade and development mission to Kyiv on January 25-26. Minister Fast met with Alvaras Abramovics, Ukraine’s minister of economic development and trade; Oleksya Pavlenko, minister of agrarian policy and food; and Natalia Jaroslo, minister of finance.

Minister Fast announced that the provision of 100 Improved First Aid Kits (IFAKs) has been earmarked for funding as part of the assistance package that had been announced on November 26, 2014, by Minister of National Defense Rob Nicholson to the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) Patriot Defense project, which has trained over 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers in first aid and distributed over 9,500 IFAKs. “The IFAKs Canada is providing will help save the lives of brave Ukrainian soldiers” stated Ulfia Supran, the UWC’s director of humanitarian initiatives.

Minister Fast and Abramovics also announced that Canada and Ukraine will conclude a free trade agreement. “Preparatory work is currently under way by our officials for a full round of face-to-face negotiations, in Kyiv, in the near future. The Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement will be an ambitious and comprehensive agreement, creating new market opportunities and predictable conditions for businesses,” they noted in a joint statement. That agreement was signed on July 14 during a visit to Canada by Ukraine’s Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

The support for Ukraine by Canada announced on January 26 totalled more than $50 million, and included: $19.7 million to Société de Coopération pour le Développement International; to promote the growth of small and medium-sized dairy businesses in Ukraine; $13.5 million over six years to address the limitations of small and medium-sized grain producers in Ukraine; $118 million to Agriete Canada transitional and long-term governance and economic reform in a more inclusive, transparent way; and $20 million in additional support to the Economic Advisory Council.

“The economic and development aid, as well as expert advice that Canada is providing will help Ukraine’s fragile economy. As Ukraine wages a brutal war on Ukraine, Canada continues to show that its commitment to helping the Ukrainian people defend their independence and freedom will not waver,” stated Olenna Kozary, chair of the UCC’s Ukraine Advisory Council.

On February 17, new economic sanctions imposed by Canada targeted 37 Russian and Ukrainian individuals as well as 17 Russian and Ukrainian entities. Prime Minister Harper said Canada “remains steadfast in its commitment to stand with the people of Ukraine in the face of the Putin regime’s ongoing military aggression, which has already cost the lives of more than 5,300 people.” RFE/RL reported that the move was made in coordination with the European Union and the United States, which has also punished Russia for what they say is its military backing of the separatists in eastern Ukraine.

On June 29, still more economic sanctions and travel bans were announced. The country’s 1.3 million Ukrainian descent affected included Aleksandr Dugin, a leader of the Eurasian Youth Union. The entities subject to economic sanctions were: Gazprom, Gazprom Neft, Surgutneftegas and Transnet Eurasian Youth Union. Canada also imposed a ban on Russian-occupied Crimea that prohibited the import and export, the transfer, provision or communication of technical data or services provision. Trade agreements with Canada would continue to stand with the people of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Harper visited Ukraine on June 6 in advance of the G-7 summit in Germany. He was accompanied by UCC leaders, including President Grod. As noted in a June 23 statement by Ms. Kozary of the UCC’s Ukraine Advisory Council, the visit once again demonstrated “that Canada stands firmly beside Ukraine.” Ms. Kozary also noted: “His statements clearly set forth Canada’s position: ‘I don’t think Russia under Vladimir Putin belongs in the G7. Period.’ Prime Minister Stephen Harper told the Associated Press, ‘Canada would very, very strongly oppose Putin ever sitting around that table again. It would require consensus to bring Russia back and that consensus will just not happen.”

Defence Minister Jason Kenney visited Canadian Armed Forces personnel in Yavoriv Ukraine, on June 27, and he announced more than $15 million in additional Canadian
support to democracy and institution-building in Ukraine. "Canada is fully engaged in supporting Ukraine in its efforts to maintain sovereignty, security and stability in the face of the Putin regime's unjustified aggression," the minister stated.

Before that fourth trip to Ukraine – his fourth – Mr. Kenney told The Ukrainian Weekly, in an interview conducted by Christopher Galy, that "It's far to say that we've been the most forward-leaning Western democracy, diplomatically and politically" in terms of supporting Ukraine. He also noted that NATO should have an open-door policy, adding, "We would be very happy if Ukraine were to decide to pursue NATO membership."

As previously announced on April 14 by Minister Kenney and Gen. Tom Lawson, chief of the Defence Staff, the Canadian government was providing additional military resources to help train and build the capacity of Ukraine's forces. Canada is deploying 200 Canadian Armed Forces personnel to Ukraine until March 31, 2017. With the US, Canada is also providing individual and unit tactics training to Ukrainian National Guard personnel. A news release from the office of the prime minister underscored: "Canada's position on Ukraine has been clear since the outset: we recognize the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and will never recognize the illegal Russian occupation of Crimea or any part of that country.'"

On June 2, Sen. Raynell Andreychuk, a Ukrainian Canadian, was elected co-chair of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council (UNIC) of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Sen Andreychuk stated she was honored to be elected and stated: "Amid growing public support for Euro-Atlantic integration within Ukraine society, and as Ukraine continues in its development as an independent and sovereign democracy, the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council will work towards building trust and understanding between Ukrainian parliamentarians and their counterparts throughout the Atlantic Alliance." The UNIC was created by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in 1998 to bring greater transparency to the implementation of the NATO-Ukraine Charter and to demonstrate parliamentary interest and involvement in cooperation between NATO and Ukraine.

At the end of the year on December 17, Minister of International Trade Freeland, together with Minister of International Development and La Francophonie Marie-Claude Bibeau, announced funding to increase trade and investment between Canada and Ukraine that will help small and medium-sized enterprises in Ukraine access Canadian and global markets. Canada will contribute $13.6 million to the Canada-Ukraine Trade and Investment Support project between 2016 and 2021.

Minister Freeland made the announcement following her meeting with Nataliya Mykolska, deputy minister of economic development and trade, representative of Ukraine, on the margins of the World Trade Organization’s 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Minister Freeland commented: "Canada is committed to supporting Ukraine’s government and private sector to take advantage of new trade opportunities arising from implementation of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. By bolstering the growth and competitiveness of Ukraine’s small and medium-sized businesses, we are building mutual prosperity for both our countries."

On June 6 in Kyiv, President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada with their spouses, Dr. Maryna Poroshenko and Laureen Harper, met with Nataliya Mykolska, deputy minister of economic development and trade, representative of Ukraine, on the margins of the World Trade Organization’s 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Minister Freeland commented: "Canada is committed to supporting Ukraine’s government and private sector to take advantage of new trade opportunities arising from implementation of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. By bolstering the growth and competitiveness of Ukraine’s small and medium-sized businesses, we are building mutual prosperity for both our countries."

Ukraine’s new ambassador

President Petro Poroshenko on September 24 appointed Andriy Shevchenko as ambassador of Ukraine to Canada. Mr. Shevchenko is known in Ukraine as a TV journalist, politician and civic activist. In Canada, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) welcomed Mr. Shevchenko’s appointment. "We congratulate President Poroshenko for appointing such a strong and professional voice for Ukraine in Canada," stated UCC President Grod. The significant relationship between our two countries and the serious ongoing issues in Ukraine, including the illegal occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the ongoing invasion of Luhansk and Donetsk by the Russian-backed forces, it is very important for Ukraine to have a very capable representative in its embassy in Ottawa."

Mr. Grod commented: "I look forward to working with Ambassador Shevchenko to further the strong relationship that exists between Ukraine and Canada and with the Ukrainian Canadian community. There are a number of significant initiatives that we will need to work on, including the ratification and implementation of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, strengthening the defense of Ukraine’s independence and sovereignty, negotiating a Canada-Ukraine Defense Cooperation Agreement, ensuring Ukraine is included in Canada’s Automatic Firearms Country Controls List, assisting in Ukraine’s continued democratic development, and strengthening ties with the Ukrainian community in Canada."

Visitors from Ukraine in Canada

Vironhama Rada Vice-Chair Andriy Parubiy made an official visit to Canada on February 21-24 on the invitation of House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer. On Saturday evening, February 21, an expanded meeting of UCC’s Advisory Board was held in Mr. Parubiy to discuss the current situation in Ukraine.

In Ottawa, together with a UCC delegation, Mr. Parubiy met with Minister of International Trade Ed Fast to discuss Canada-Ukraine bilateral economic relations, with Minister of National Defense Keeney to discuss Canada’s leadership and support for Ukraine in the face of Russia’s invasion and continued aggression; and with Prime Minister Harper. Members of the delegation also met with several other MPs, including Paul Dewar, official opposition foreign affairs critic.

In a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Nicholson, Mr. Parubiy discussed the security situation in eastern Ukraine, including concerns over Mariupol and the steps taken toward reform by Ukraine’s government. Minister Nicholson said Canada is committed to working closely with the government of Ukraine. Mr. Parubiy thanked Canada for taking a leadership role in supporting Ukraine and for the new economic sanctions and travel bans imposed against Russian and Ukraine individuals and entities.

While in the Canadian capital, Mr. Parubiy on February 23 attended a commemorative photo exhibit organized by EuroMaidan Ottawa on the first anniversary of the brutal sniper attacks in Kyiv that killed over 100 peaceful protesters on the Maidan in 2014. In choosing these particular pieces for exhibition, we were consciously trying to capture the zeitgeist of the Euro-Maidan," noted Yaroslav Baran, one of the exhibit organizers. "Tremendous things happened on that square. A revolution was born."

EuroMaidan Ottawa is a grass-roots organization in solidarity with the Ukrainian anti-government movement; it seeks to help raise awareness and assist in the strengthening of democracy and rule of law in Ukraine. Since November 2013, EuroMaidan Ottawa has organized over 20 demonstrations, commemorative services and public speaking events to raise awareness in Canada about the Ukraine crisis; it has raised over $25,000 in support of Ukraine – ranging from medical supplies and sleeping bags for Ukrainian soldiers on the front to direct support for internally displaced Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

Also on February 23, Mr. Parubiy participated in a remembrance ceremony at the Confederation Flame on Parliament Hill that paid tribute to the heroes of the Revolution of Dignity.

Another high point of his visit was the fund-raising reception and dinner "Tribute to the Brave Defenders of Ukraine," held at the Golden Lion restaurant in Toronto and attended by 400 people. The featured speeches were given by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Chris Alexander; the chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group, MP Ted Opitz; and several other MPs, among them Mr. Bezan.

Serhiy Kuza, leader of the Free People (Vilni Lady) network in Ukraine and a national activist in the civil society movement, in March and April conducted an 11-city tour of Canada, during which he spoke about "Ukraine’s Citizen Response to Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine." During his visit to Ottawa, Mr. Kuza was hosted in Parliament by the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group and met with government officials. Mr. Kuza discussed Ukraine’s citizen response to Russian aggression and civic support for Ukraine’s military. He also shared with the Canadian public the deep appreciation for the Ukraine – ranging from medical supplies and sleeping bags for Ukrainian soldiers on the front to direct support for internally displaced Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

Vira Savchenko, the sister of illegally imprisoned Ukrainian air force pilot, Nadiya Savchenko, was welcomed to Canada by the UCC. She was in Canada to raise awareness of the illegal arrest and imprisonment of her sister by the authorities in Russia. Nadiya was abducted by Kremlin-backed terrorists in the Luhansk Oblast in June 2014, illegally removed from Ukrainian territory and imprisoned in Russia. She is a victim of Russia’s war against Ukraine and a political prisoner. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights and governments across the globe have called for Ms Savchenko’s immediate release.

On April 25-28, Vira Savchenko was in Toronto, where she participated in the roundtable discussion "Reforms, Security and European Ukraine," and was hosted at a banquet by "Dopomaha Ukraini," the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce and the UCC. She also met with political leaders and members of Parliament in Ottawa.

The Embassies of Ukraine in Canada, in coordination with the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, on July 14 organized a business leaders’ roundtable discussion with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk of Ukraine. The discussion coincided with the prime minister’s visit to Ottawa on July 14 to sign the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. A roundtable with community leaders was held after the business roundtable.
Koliady and shchedrivky began the year for Ukrainians in Canada. At the start of the Julian-calendar Christmas season (January 7 to 19), a group of Ukrainian carolers composed of members of Ottawa’s Akord Ukrainian Men’s Choir performed a series of carols in Ukrainian at prime minister’s residence. They offered the traditional Ukrainian Christmas greeting, “Khrystos Narodyvsia,” and then asked “Do you welcome carolers?” Laureen Harper invited the group inside, where the group sang koliady and shchedrivky and presented a traditional Ukrainian Christmas greeting, “Vinhramuha.” The caroling was organized by the National Office of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

Throughout the year, the war in Ukraine was on the minds of people across Canada. In a statement released on February 21, the UCC strongly condemned the violations of the Minsk agreements by the Russian Federation and Russian-led, -staffed, -funded and -controlled terrorist organizations in the Donetek and Luhanski oblasts. The statement underlined that, while withdrawing from Debaltseve, Ukrainian forces were shelled by Russian artillery several times and wounded and over 89 Ukrainian soldiers missing in action. “The list of crimes committed by the Russian Federation and the terrorist entities it supports in Ukraine is long and growing daily,” it showed. The Ugk’s position was that “the Ukrainian army must be significantly increased.” The UCC underscored, “Canada, the U.S., and their NATO allies must: 1. Provide Ukraine with defensive weapons, equipment and training it needs to defend its territorial integrity. 2. Significantly increase the provision of communications and intelligence capabilities of Ukraine’s armed forces; 3. Increase sectoral sanctions against the Russian Federation and financial services.”

On March 3-7, the vice president of the World Jewish Congress and chairman of the Confederation and Communities in Ukraine, Josef Zissel, spoke to both Ukrainian and Russian Jewish communities in Toronto and Ottawa, calling for a united effort to confront Russian aggression. In 1988 he had set up Ukraine’s first Jewish organization and had been a fervent defender of Ukraine’s independence and democratic path.

The purpose of his visit was to propose a project – the Coalition for Democratic Choice – to stand up to Mr. Putin’s aggression against the Ukrainian rule. Recognizing that the first post-Soviet country that has been able to resist Russia’s aggressive policy aimed at re-integrating post- imperial territories into a new Eurasian Union, Mr. Zissel posed that such an initiative come from Ukraine. He explained that the war launched against Ukraine is being waged on three fronts: propaganda, economic and military. He also pledged well developed civil society. Mr. Zissel advised that many Coalitions for Democratic Choice could be created in strengthening democracy to counter Russian propaganda in their respective countries.

A traveling exhibit highlighting and exploring the relationship between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities was mounted by the organization, Ukrainian Jewish Encounter (UJE) which, since 2008, has been studying and supporting this encounter. “A Journey Through the Ukrainian-Jewish Encounter from Antiquity to 1914” was shown by the Jewish Museum of Canada, at St. Vladimir Institute in Toronto, and was later shown in Edmonton and Montreal.

Because Jewish-Ukrainian relations have also had to bear stereotyping, the exhibit focused on “an integrated narrative of these two peoples... presented in the belief that there is a shared history.” The exhibit consisted of 5 large panels, each dedicated to one or more topics – for example, the 13th-16th centuries, Russian rule in the 1750-1790s, Hasidism, the 1861 reforms, modernist Ukrainian writers. To accompany the telling of the internment story. It should be noted that the center’s museum offers guided tours in French, English or Ukrainian. It was established with the help of a major grant released in installments over five years, from Canada’s First National Internment Recognition Fund.

On October 24, the UCC-Manitoba Provincial Council hosted a one-day symposium and unveiled a statue on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature in honor of the victims of Canada’s internment operations. The commemoration in Winnipeg began with a symposium in the Manitoba Legislature. Five scholars presented papers on the internment of Ukrainians. Peter Melnyk (Department of Alberta Culture) provided the historical background; Bohdan Kordan (University of Saskatchewan) focused on human rights during the internment operations. Prof. Iryna Konstantiuk (University of Manitoba) spoke on resource development for schools in social studies. James Komorowski (University of Manitoba) provided a bibliographical survey of publications, while Andrea Malhot (First World War Internment Recognition Fund) informed the audience of the projects underwritten by the Fund.

The statue unveiled on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature was commissioned by the UCC-Manitoba Provincial Council and created by Ontario artist John Botel. The statue depicts an internnee with fingers pointing to himself as if asking “Why me?”; similar representations of the statue are located at five other internment sites across Canada.

Holodomor awareness

November 28 is Holodomor Remembrance Day in Canada, and Prime Minister Trudeau issued a statement in which he called the Holodomor “one of the darkest chapters of human history.” He pointed out that the Holodomor “tried to break the Ukrainian people, but they endured, persevered and ultimately won their independence. Their descendants continue to make indescribable contributions in countries around the world – including right here in Canada. On this somber anniversary, we pause to remember the victims, families and communities who suffered as a result of the Holodomor, and we strengthen our resolve to continue promoting and upholding basic freedoms, rights and dignity to help ensure that atrocities like this never happen again.”

The prime minister also took the occasion to underline that “Canada stands firmly against Russia’s ongoing military aggression in Ukraine. We believe that, along with the international community, Canada can play an important part in bringing this conflict to an end. As a country, we also remain committed to helping rebuild the democratic, economic and security institutions that will help Ukraine flourish once more.”

In order to spread awareness in Canada of the Holodomor, the Canada-Ukraine Foundation (CUF) came out with an innovative project: the Holodomor Mobile Classroom (HMC). A 40-foot RV was customized with the installation of audio-visual multi-media capabilities such as 3D virtual reality, 360-degree video and a history learning experience about the Holodomor. This federally funded initiative is intended to educate Canadians about the Famine-Genocide engineered by Joseph Stalin in Ukraine in 1932-1933. Bobhan Omsbuk, past chair of CUF, led the organization on the project, arranged for the purchase of the vehicle, while its outfitting was funded by the Canadian government through its Multiculturalism Inter Action Program. The award of the funding was announced by Minister for Multiculturalism Jason Kenney who said, “It is by remembering the tragedies and atrocities of the past that we can equip ourselves to prevent them from happening again. That is why this national bus, which will reach Canadians of all ages and backgrounds, is an important initiative.”

The project also received support from the provincial ministries of Manitoba and Ontario. The CUF is working in partnership with the UCC, the UCRC and the Holodomor Research and Educational Consortium (HREC), Valentina Holodomor Teaching Center. In its first year, the IMC said it would focus on visits to schools in Ontario, as well as festivals and community events. In subsequent years, the HMC will tour the country. The Holodomor Mobile Classroom was the focus of a commemoration at the Ontario Legislative Assembly on November 24. The customized RV with the words “Holodomor – The Ukrainian Genocide” emblazoned across it was a striking sight. Ontario Minister of Education Liz Sandals and MPP Evan Baker cut the ribbon to launch the mobile classroom.

As noted by Minister Sandals, “The province of Ontario committed $75,000 to raise awareness of the Holodomor in public schools, who will benefit from the state-of-the-art audio visual experience featuring a 28-foot video wall. A facilitator will lead an interactive lesson that develops critical thinking skills, lessons that underscore the importance of human rights and the rule of law as well as the concept of genocide.”

Ms. Kuryliw, director of Education for the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, conducted six workshops in southern Ontario on the topic of the Holodomor April 12 has become a time for recognition and remembrance of those who have fallen victim to and survived genocides, and it is important that we ensure the place of the Holodomor in these commemorations,” Ms. Kuryliw explained. On April 24, the Canadian House of Commons passed a motion designating April as Genocide

Verkhovna Rada Vice-Chairman Andriy Parubiy with Ukrainian Canadian community members on February 23 during a ceremony at the Confederation Flame on Parliament Hill that paid tribute to the heroes of the Maidan.
2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Holodomor Mobile Classroom is launched at the Ontario Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park on November 24.

Remembrance, Condensation and Prevention Month, recognizing and commemorating the victims and survivors of the Holodomor, the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide and the Armenian Genocide.

Ms. Kuryliw conducted a workshop for history and social studies teachers titled "The Genocidal Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933, its historical significance in the past and present" at the Professional Development Day of the Toronto District School Board. She also held workshops for history teachers and curriculum leaders of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board on April 21 and for teachers and administrators at the "Equity and Inclusivity Conference" which included sample lesson plans, information on new resources, new published materials and DVDs, and a pamphlet on the Holodomor Memorial Day that is held annually on the fourth Saturday in November.

The teachers were particularly pleased to receive handouts detailing the curriculum applications of the Holodomor materials. Students were especially interested in making connections between events in the 1930s and what is happening in Ukraine today. Ms. Kuryliw noted. IRIE said it plans to publish "Holodomor in Ukraine, the Genocidal Famine of 1932-1933" a workbook for students and educators.

The Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Center will launch its commemorative online exhibit on the victims of the Holodomor. It is the work of sculptor Petro Drozdovsky.

Eugene Melnyk and Bohdan Onyschuk co-chaired the 2015 SUSK Congress.

In other news in the Ukrainian Canadian community, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress meets on September 26-27 in Ottawa, the UCC held its annual general meeting to discuss the priorities of the Ukrainian Canadian community and the action plans for the coming year. The priorities focused on building Ukrainian Canadian communities and assistance for Ukraine; as well as next year's triennial congress and major anniversaries.

While in Regina in May for the unveiling of the Holodomor monument, the UCC delegation held meetings and site visits in preparation for the 25th triennial Congress of Ukrainian Canadians to be held in 2016. The convocation will mark the 75th anniversary of the UCC and the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. On September 26 27 in Ottawa, the UCC held its annual general meeting to discuss the priorities of the Ukrainian Canadian community and the action plans for the coming year. The priorities focused on building Ukrainian Canadian communities and assistance for Ukraine; as well as next year's triennial congress and major anniversaries.

The board was also presented with the UCC "Ukraine Appeal" giftbox and the program to coordinate humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

The keynote speaker at the UCC's gala banquet was former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst who spoke about the Russian involvement in the incursion of Ukraine. Ukrainian Ukrainian World Congress President Eugene Czolij took the opportunity to present the UWE Taras Shevchenko medals to Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education and to the UCC Manitoba's Taras Shevchenko 200th Anniversary Committee.

Ukrainian Canadian miscellany

In other news in the Ukrainian Canadian community, the Canadian-Ukrainian Foundation organized a second medical mission to Ukraine to deal with reconstructive surgical procedures on victims of the Euromaidan movement. A medical team of 32 professionals, assembled entirely from volunteers across Canada, included surgeons, anesthetists and nurses. Forty-nine patients from across Ukraine, with complex post-traumatic defects received treatment for a total of 116 operating hours. The medical personnel performed 53 reconstructive procedures between May 10 and 16.

Funding for the medical missions comes largely from "United for Ukraine," a fund-raiser organized by the UWF in September 2014, and attended by Prime Minister Harper. Wayne Gretzky and the program to coordinate humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

The Holodomor National Awareness Tour

Fund-raising efforts for the mission, "I am grateful to the Canada Ukraine Foundation and to the thousands of Canadians who donated to our mission," said Dr. Antonyshyn, the lead surgeon. The CUF expressed thanks for the support of Stryker Canada, which once again awarded the medical mission a grant that provided for virtual surgical hardware and implant materials for the medical procedures.

The 2015 SUSK Congress was held May 7-10 in Montreal. The Ukrainian Catholic Education Foundation as well as the Montreal branches of the Ukrainian National Federation and the UCC were major supporters of this conclave of the Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union (known as its Ukrainian acronym as SUSK). The new board members included Cassian Silskykyych (president), Anastasia Hnatyk (vice president, finance), Boris Bilaniuk (vice president, East), Alex Prokipchuk (vice president, Centra) and Andriy Seb (vice president, West). Congress sessions included "Current Ukraine: Historical, Economic and Social Sides of the Story"; "Current Ukraine: Helping Ukraine and Getting Involved"; and "2016," although members; and a workshop on social media tools. The keynote address was delivered by former SUSK President Artem Lahovy.

Also in 2015, two Ukrainian community institutions in Edmonton were the benefits of a Government of Alberta Community Improvement Program that supports projects which rehabilitate existing community facilities. The funds were allocated to the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex (UYUC) and St. Joseph Catholic Ukrainian Church as part of the "Canada 150" Community Infrastructure Program that celebrated Canada's 150th anniversary. A special presentation was made on July 28 by Alberta Minister of State for Multiculturalism Tim Uppal to the two Ukrainian community groups. Accepting the gifts – totalling $350,000 – were Ivan Fedyna, president of the board of directors of the UYUC, and Larissa Podilsky on behalf of St. Joseph Cathedral.

For nearly 50 years, the UYUC has been a mainstay of Ukrainian community life in Edmonton. The "Domicka" opera was done in 1973, the church became a home to numerous organizations. St. Joseph Ukrainian Catholic Parish began to serve the spiritual needs of Ukrainian settlers in 1904. The parish rejoiced at the visits by Metropolitan Andre Sheptytsky in 1910 and 1921. In 1941, a new larger church was built, which became a cathedral in 1948. Work has already begun on renovating the historic site, although numerous donations will be required to complete the work.

A record number of visitors caught the Ukrainian spirit on September 18-20 as the 19th annual Bloor West Ukrainian Festival. In honor of the end of non-stop entertainment, traditional food, cultural displays and activities for all ages. It is one of the world's largest Ukrainian street festivals, and in 2015 it attracted a total of 70,000. The three-day festival featured several stage shows featuring performers from throughout Canada, as well as the United States, Ukraine and Estonia; the Festival Parade, with 74 entries and 3,100 participants; and an exhibit by the Ukrainian Canadian Artists of Canada; a full day of film screenings at the Runnymede Public Library; and a youth program.

The gala Saturday evening show featured Edmonton's Voila Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of Detroit, Winnipeg's Zrada band and the Zubriva folk band from Toronto. The evening's headliner hand 01 Vinta got the audience rocking with its "Ukrabilly" music. Festival Chairman Jurij Klusas closed the event on Sunday with thank-yous to all involved. The traditional festival finale, the double-tier Hopak performed by the Barvinok Ukrainian Folk Ensemble on the stage and the ground level, concluded the festivities.

On September 22 the Ukrainian Canadian Congress unveiled the official logo for the celebrations marking the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. The logo was designed by the Ukrainian Canadian artist Oleh Lesiu, a native of Liviv.

The artist explained that the logo consists of three parts: the top part symbolizes the traditional movement of Ukrainians to Canada; the waves of the ocean to be overcome, the waves of people that brought new hopes and dreams to a new land. In the central part of the logo, people are formed into three beautiful birds – "zhuravli" in Ukrainian – appear often in Ukrainian music and folklore. They are a symbol of migration. The third part, a maple leaf – the national symbol of Canada, while the wings of the craness are ultimately transformed into a maple leaf – the national symbol of Canada.
Ukrainians in the U.S.: Active on many fronts

Ukrainians in the United States were active in 2015 with protests, demonstrations, rallies, political and cultural events, as well as anniversaries. Following is a chronological account of the major developments.

On January 25-26 Ukrainian Americans converged on Washington to mark the 1919 “Day of Unity” of Ukraine. Events included a protest in front of the White House that attracted more than 100 people, another protest in front of the Russian Embassy that called for the release of Nadiya Savchenko, as well as a reception at the Embassy of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian community in Chicago honored Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) on January 25 with an award presented by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) – Illinois Division at St. Volodymyr and Olha Ukrainian Cultural Center as part of Unity Day celebration. Joining the celebration were Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Reps. Danny Davis (D-IL) and Mike Quigley (D-IL) who have also been instrumental in supporting U.S. aid for Ukraine. Other award recipients included Andrew Podymsky of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives in Cleveland, and Olga Fedak for her many years of service to the UCCA. Showing solidarity with Ukrainians were Robert Basiuk, deputy consul-general of Poland in Chicago, and the honorary consul of Lithuania. Other representatives of the Polish, Lithuanian and Estonian communities also attended the event.

The fallen heroes of the Revolution of Dignity were commemorated with a vigil and memorial service at St. Volodymyr and Olha Ukrainian Catholic Church on February 22 in Chicago’s Ukrainian Village neighborhood. Hundreds also gathered to mark the one-year anniversary of the end of the Euro-Maidan protests and the Heavenly Hundred’s sacrifices. Also present were clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches, as well as representatives of the Lithuanian and Georgian communities. The local Ukrainian organizations, including UCCA-Illinois and Orange Wave, had organized a presentation and a gathering with Sen. Durbin, co-chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus. The Consulate of Ukraine in Chicago sponsored a meeting with former president of Lithuania, Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, who underscored the parallels between Ukraine’s and Lithuania’s struggles for independence from Russia.

On January 30, the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York hosted an evening fund-raiser “Invisible No More: Orphans and Street Children in Ukraine,” that was co-sponsored by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. In introducing the senator’s work advocating for Ukraine, he thanked the Ukrainian American community of the greater Boston area. Walter Boyko, president of the UAHF, spoke at both presentations, recalling the historical progression of the UAHF.

The Chicago vigil in memory of the Heavenly Brigade on February 22.

On March 4 as part of the Ukrainian Days advocacy events and more than 94,000 orphans live in Ukraine. Alla Korzh, director of Sublimitas, explained the challenges facing Ukraine’s orphans and street children, and expressed his strong support of the Sublimitas mission.

There was a screening of the documentary film “Bomzhi and Street Children in Ukraine,” that was co-sponsored by the Ukrainian American Cultural Center, as part of Unity Day celebrations. The presentation was led by the imprisoned pilot’s lawyer, Mark Feygin, and Maria Savchenko, Nadiya’s mother. During the event included Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), Ambassador John Menendez, Sens. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and John McCain, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2013. Ayla Bakkali, U.S. representative of the Crimean Tatar Brotherhood, was recognized with the Friend of UNIS award.

On February 25, the Ukrainian National Museum on April 20. The presentation was led by the imprisoned pilot’s lawyer, Mark Feygin, and Maria Savchenko, Nadiya’s mother. During the previous week, Mr. Feygin was working in Washington with the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus and Sen. McCain, among others, to promote Ms. Savchenko’s prisoner of war status. Mrs. Savchenko explained her daughter’s patriotic spirit and courage.

The Ukrainian National Women’s League of America hosted a briefing on the Savchenko case during a meeting at The Ukrainian National Museum on April 20. The presentation was led by the imprisoned pilot’s lawyer Mark Feygin, and Maria Savchenko, Nadiya’s mother. During the previous week, Mr. Feygin was working in Washington with the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus and Sen. McCain, among others, to promote Ms. Savchenko’s prisoner of war status. Mrs. Savchenko explained her daughter’s patriotic spirit and courage.

The Kiev Mayor Vitali Klitschko met with the local Ukrainian community during a working lunch meeting hosted by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America at the Ukrainian East Village Restaurant in New York on April 26. Key topics raised by both the community and Mr. Klitschko were the rampant corruption that hinders reforms, the nearly 2 million internally displaced people within Ukraine as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the need to combat Russian disinformation.

The UCCA also met with Mejlis Chairman Refat Chubarov on April 28 at the UCCA office in New York. The small gathering of local community leaders discussed the situation of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine and in occupied Crimea. Mr. Chubarov was in town for the 14th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Ayla Bakkali, U.S. representative of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, helped arrange the meeting. Mr. Chubarov explained that 20,000 Crimean Tatars had been displaced from Crimea, half of whom were internally displaced within mainland Ukraine. Arguing for tougher sanctions against Russia, Mr. Chubarov also called for increased military aid for Ukraine. He thanked the Ukrainian American community for its advocacy on these issues and reminded it to include Crimea in its discussions.

The U.S.-Ukraine Foundation’s Humanitarian Aid Program sent a 40-foot tractor trailer on April 29 to Ukraine. The container, filled with 20 tons of medical supplies and valued at $300,000, was left for Ukraine from the Fairfax, Va., county regional office of the Brother’s Foundation. A portion of the donated goods came from the Pittsburgh area, where Dr. Alexander Kirichenko, a radiation oncologist at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, led donations from Allegheny Health Network, Butler Health System, Trinity Health System in Steubenville, Ohio, and St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church in McKees Rocks, Pa. In the Washington area, Tetjana Neeley, the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation’s humanitarian aid coordinator, worked the logistics of donations; international shipping was thanks to Meest; delivery logistics in Ukraine were handled by Kozhm Motezh, which was to distribute the donated goods to hospitals primarily in eastern and central Ukraine, where the need is the greatest.

The Ukrainian American Heritage Foundation of Boston – a 95-year-old institution – voted to curtail its activities and to divide the bulk of its assets between the two Ukrainian churches in Boston. St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church was presented a check in the amount of $125,000 on April 26 and Christ the King Ukrainian Catholic Church received the same amount on May 3. Metropolitan Antony of the UOC-U.S.A., a former presiding archbishop of the UOC-Catholic Church, was recognized with the Friend of UNIS award by UNIS Director Michael Sawkiw Jr. and National Home in Hartford, Conn., to hear an address by Ambassador Zygimantis Pavlionis the Friend of UNIS award. The Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) also was recognized with the Friend of UNIS award.

Ambassador John Menendez, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2013, was awarded the UNIS Friend of Ukraine award. He thanked the Ukrainian American community of the greater Boston area. Walter Boyko, president of the UAHF, spoke at both presentations, recalling the historical progression of the UAHF.

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) was honored on May 2 for his support of Ukraine during a reception held at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey in Whippany. During the ceremony, Sen. Menendez was presented a plaque from the Ukrainian National Association of U.S. Army Veterans and the Friend of UNIS award from the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. In introducing the senator’s work for Ukraine, Yurii Symczyzk, fraternal coordinator for the UNA, said, “How fortunate we are that he was appointed chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2013. His leadership role directly resulted in the Senate adopting such a supportive role for Ukraine. It was he, along with Sen. [Bob] Corker [R-Tenn.], who introduced the Ukraine Freedom Support Act. Without his leadership, our community’s voices may not have been heard.”
Sen. Menendez commented, “Frankly, I’m disappointed with the Obama administration, required [by the Ukrainian Freedom Support Act] to report to Congress on its plan for increasing military assistance to Ukraine, it was two months late in sending it. And when the report finally arrived, it did not include a section on lethal defensive assistance – assistance the administration has not provided to the Ukrainian military in contravention of the will of Congress and the recommendation of a cadre of current and former administration officials and experts.”

Ms. Olexy, president of the UCCA, noted: “You have understood from the start that the international community, and especially the United States, cannot remain passive in the face of Russian aggression in Ukraine, for remaining passive will only invite further aggression. ... You have led and continue to lead congressional efforts to penalize Russia for its invasion and illegal occupation of Crimea, for its support of terrorists in eastern Ukraine.”

On May 3, a former ambassador to Ukraine, William Green Miller was awarded the Alexander B. Cherny Medal by the Ukrainian Federation of America for “his outstanding leadership and deep commitment to U.S.-Ukraine relations” during an annual awards ceremony held at the Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center in Jenkintown, Pa. The event was attended by former Rep. Charles Dougherty, former co-chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, who thanked Mr. Miller for his work that has spanned seven decades.

The UCCA celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding on May 20 during a reception at the Senate Visitor’s Center in Washington. Members of Congress present at the reception were: Reps. Michael Turner (R-Ohio), chair of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces; Bill Pascrell (D-N.J), Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), Sander Levin (D-Mich.), Mike Fitzpatrick, (R-Pa.), as well as the Embassy of Latvia, the CEEC, Polish American Congress, Lithuanian-American Community, Joint Baltic American National Committee and Jewish American organizations, as well as the Open World, Open Society and Soros foundations, the American Foreign Policy Council and Atlantic Council think tanks, Ukrainian American credit unions, the UNA and other organizations, as well as clergy of the Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Ukraine’s Minister of Youth and Sports Dmytro Zhdanov met with Ukrainian American youth development organizations at the UCCA office in New York on June 2. Organizations represented at the event included Polish Ukrainian Scouting Organization USA, the Ukrainian American Youth Association, the Federation of Ukrainian Student Organizations of America (SUSTA), the Ukrainian Sports Federation of the U.S.A. and Canada (USASK) and the Self Reliance School of Ukrainian Studies in New York. Additional exchange programs in sports between Ukraine and the U.S., especially for children in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, were discussed.

Former Prime Minister of Ukraine Yulia Tymoshenko met with UCCA representatives on June 3 in Washington to discuss how the diaspora can assist Ukraine. Ms. Tymoshenko said that defensive military equipment from the US would be the only way for Ukraine to maintain its territorial integrity, adding that the equipment would need to be a sufficient deterrent against further Russian escalation. She said Ukraine’s economic future was also in question and also cited the humanitarian crisis facing the country.

The Ukrainian National Credit Union Association (UNCUA) held its annual meeting and spring conference on June 5-6 in Washington, with 31 participants representing 13 Ukrainian American credit unions participating. Issues discussed during the first day included challenges in increasing membership, the U.S. credit union industry, as well as regulatory issues in Washington. The second day’s events included reports by management and various committees as well as the election of a new board. The year 2015 marked the 60th anniversary of the SelfReliance Credit Union.

More than 400 community members pack the hall at the Ukrainian National Home in Hartford, Conn., on March 9 to hear U.S. Sens. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) address the current crisis in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Congress Committee of America President Tamara Olexy speaks on May 20 at the organization’s 75th anniversary event in Washington about the goals the UCCA set for itself in 1940 and what they are today given current developments in Ukraine.

On June 7, the Ukrainian Nationality Room at the University of Pittsburgh marked its 25th anniversary with a concert of Ukrainian music, song and dance at the Frick Fine Arts Building Auditorium that attracted an audience of 170 people. The Ukrainian Nationality Room is one of 29 nationality rooms at the University of Pittsburgh’s Cathedral of Learning, which reflects the city’s rich ethnic heritage. Founded on June 17, 1990, the project was the culmination of years of grass-roots fund-raising. A presentation about the Ukrainian Nationality Room, its design and features was given by Dr. Roman G. Bubelnych, chairman of the Ukrainian Nationality Room Committee. Greetings were delivered by E. Maxine Bruhns, director of the Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs.

On June 8, the UCCA hosted a meeting with Ukraine’s Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko in Washington at the Embassy of Ukraine. During their visit to Washington, Mr. Yatsenyuk and Ms. Jaresko met with high-level officials from the Obama administration and members of Congress. At the American Jewish Committee’s Global Forum in Washington, Mr. Yatsenyuk became the first prime minister of Ukraine to be invited to address that forum in person. A private dinner that was hosted by the AJC and attended by the Ukrainian delegation allowed the organizers to speak candidly with the prime minister and finance minister of Ukraine.

Jewish leader Joseph Zissels, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress and executive vice-president of the Congress of Ethnic Communities of Ukraine was hosted by the UCCA on June 11 in New York. Mr. Zissels, a former political dissident who had been imprisoned in the Soviet gulags did not hold back when explaining the realities on the ground in Ukraine as it is under attack by Russia. He noted that the widespread corruption would require a generation-al shift in attitudes through education. Having been on the Maidan during the protests of 2013-2014, Mr. Zissels noted how civil society in Ukraine has defied expectations again and again, and has worked to include 7 million to 8 million volunteers. This, he added, will be studied by future generations when discussing social activism in the 21st century.

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Ukrainian Americans, representatives of several waves of immigration from Ukraine and their progeny, fill New York’s Times Square with the blue and yellow colors of Ukraine’s national flag in a flashmob on August 23.

United States

The Holodomor Memorial in Washington, which was dedicated on November 7.

Kristina Giansengo

2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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2015: The Year in Review

Ukrainian National Association: a year of changes, milestones

For our community’s oldest and largest fraternal organization, the Ukrainian National Association, 2015 was a year of some welcome changes and financial milestones, as well as the continuation of fraternal and cultural activities that have helped to aid in the fight for independence in Ukraine. The best news came in early December when it was reported that the UNA’s surplus amount exceeded $20 million, with net income over $8.3 million.

On December 11-13, the UNA General Assembly met at the St. Andrew Memorial Church and Cemetery in South Bound Brook, N.J., during its 68th annual national convention that was held on October 2-3. Designed by Canadian artist John Jaco, the memorial honors those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, including those currently serving in the ongoing global war on terrorism. The installation was blessed by Mr. Sawkiw and led the program of events.

Treasurer Roma Lisovich followed up Mr. Kaczaraj’s report by noting that, by the end of 2015, the UNA’s assets were expected to reach $200 million, making this organization not only the largest Ukrainian fraternal organization but also the fifth largest Ukrainian organization (in terms of assets) in the United States (ahead of the UNA Alumnae Auxiliary). The presentation of net income for the first nine months of 2015, was up to nearly $8.3 million.

In other UNA news, the 2015 Almanac of the Ukrainian National Association commemorated the centennial of the founding of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Ukrayinski Sichovyi Stril’ky), the first Ukrainian military formation of the 20th century. Another section of the almanac focused on the first anniversary of what has come to be known as the “Revolution of Dignity” that grew out of the Euromaidan movement. This was the 102nd annual almanac published by the Svoboda Press for the UNA.

While we’re on the topic of the UNA General Assembly, it should be noted that there were some changes in the membership of that body. Dr. Wasyl Szeremeta, a three-term member of the UNA Auditing Committee, accepted the position vacated by Mr. Gavdanovich. In other UNA news, the 2015 Almanac of the Ukrainian National Association reported that the UNA Alumnae Auxiliary (UNAA) has been published since 2001. Each one is a veritable treasure trove of information. The UNA Scholarship Program continued to support young UNA members’ dreams. Fifty-six students received a total of $12,465 in scholarships for the 2015-2016 academic year – four of them being awarded special scholarships established by individuals or entities who care deeply about the future of our Ukrainian-American community. Photos of the scholarship winners appeared in the Ukrainian Weekly’s September 27 issue. The editorial in that same issue commented on the UNA’s long-standing commitment to youth, as exemplified by the many youth programs and activities it has supported through the years.

The UNA began a new outreach to the community in 2015, hosting a presentation by Dr. Petrusia G. Kottar, a well-known chiropractor and alternative health care pro-
2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In a photo taken during the summer season, students on the staff of Soyuzivka – the majority of them from Ukraine – are seen with student coordinator Bohdana Pyzyk, who happens to be an advisor on the UNA General Assembly.

Part of the crowd of thousands that enjoyed the grand concert at the sixth annual Ukrainian Cultural Festival, which was held at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center on July 10-12.

The front page of the special section in The Ukrainian Weekly’s September 27 issue that spotlighted UNA scholarship recipients for the 2015-2016 academic year.

UNA congratulates 56 students and families for the 2015-2016 school year.

The Ukrainian National Association has been a part of these festivals for decades and continues to support them in keeping with our motto, ‘UNA and the Community – Partners for Life!’ As a sponsor and vendor at various festivals for decades and continues to support them in keeping with our motto, ‘UNA and the Community – Partners for Life!’

Headliners were Dzidzio, Serhiy Fomenko (Foma), Oksana Poroshenko.

At the health and wellness presentation at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey on November 21 (from left) are: UNA National Secretary Christine Kozak, New Jersey District Chair and Branch 37 Secretary Oksana Stanko, Dr. Petrusia G. Kotlar and UNA Fraternal Coordinator Yuriy Symczyk.

It was also a festival for a cause. To that end, the UNF held a fund-raising gala on Friday night of the festival to benefit the International Alliance for Fraternal Assistance (IAF) – specifically its project to establish a modern prosthetics and rehabilitation center to help Ukraine’s wounded warriors. The fund for the rehab center is dedicated to the memory of Markian Pidashsky (known to his comrades in arms as “Franko”), a Ukrainian American graduate of West Point who was killed in action in Ukraine on August 19, 2014, during the fierce battle for Ilovaisk. One of the founders of the IAF, Viktoria Voronoych, told The Weekly: “Current rehabilitation practices in Ukraine are outdated and inadequate. Our wounded Ukrainian heroes deserve proper long-term rehabilitation and care for an opportunity to return to a full and active life. This project will help make that happen.” The IAF had been recognized on March 12 by the Ukrainian Association of Charity Givers as the best local charitable NGO in Ukraine, receiving an award that was presented by Ukraine’s First Lady Maryna Poroshenko.

The new board of directors of UNF was announced as follows: Ms. Kazarac, president; Ms. Lisovich, treasurer; Ms. Kozak, secretary; Roman Hawryluk, Mark Olexy, Dr. Szeremeta and Taras Sochan.

The Ukrainian National Association for the 2015-2016 school year.

In addition to scholarships, the UNF also presented a certificate of recognition for the UNA’s continued support of the university and its students.

At the beginning of the year, the UNA announced that after 13 years of planning and preparation, it had realized its goal of charitable status for the Soyuzivka Heritage Center as the Ukrainian National Foundation Inc. (UNF), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization became the owner of Soyuzivka. The UNF should be noted, is an affiliated company that performs charitable activities on behalf of the UNA. The Treasurer Lesiowch explained in a January 25 article: The new status for Soyuzivka “has many advantages, two of them most important: the ability to apply for government and private grants, and the ability to attract higher donor dollars as donations carry a tax-deductible benefit.” She added that a new organizational structure for the UNF “provides the opportunity for the board of the UNF with help of professional specialists, to develop and implement a concrete development plan for Soyuzivka Heritage Center.”

That same article announced: “In order to increase community involvement in Soyuzivka, the Ukrainian National Foundation, its board of directors was expanded to seven members, including four independent members representing various segments of the Ukrainian ‘hromada.’” The newly expanded board of directors is: Vasyl Popadiuk and two top-notch dance troupes, the Vasyl Popadiuk and two top-notch dance troupes, the Ukrainian Dance Ensemble.
The year in sports: Ukraine and the diaspora

Although Dinipro Dnipropetrovsk's Europa League final on May 26 was a 3-2 loss to Spain's Sevilla on the pitch in Warsaw, Poland, one can pitch the notion it was a win for Ukrainians everywhere – and a highlight of sports news in 2015.

Fans who could not afford the trip were awarded transportation and tickets by the club. It was a great opportunity for Ukrainian sports fans affected by Russia's aggression to escape, cheer for their countrymen and lift their spirits.

The pro-Ukraine crowd in Warsaw sided loud displeasure with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The expression of solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression – during a major European soccer event that attracts millions of viewers worldwide – was a diplomatic slap in the face to Russia with soccer at its medium. Quite a contrast to Russia using the Sochi Olympics to high-five the "normalcy" of Russian expansionism, or to invade Crimea during the Paralympic Games. It is during times like this that soccer is more than a sport – it can serve as an international venue, a forum on world events – where fans can passionately cheer for their team while exuberantly showing support for their homeland.

In Olympics news, Serhiy Bubka announced on January 29 that he would challenge Sebastian Coe for the presidency of the IAAF. The challenge proved unsuccessful.

A shocker occurred in late November when boxing champion Wladimir Klitschko lost his four heavyweight titles to challenger Tyson Fury. Nonetheless there were many gold medals won, victories to celebrate and sporting events to commemorate during 2015.

Here’s our highlight package in sports, beginning with our sports writer's annual The Ukrainian Weekly Sport Awards:

**Male Athlete of the Year** – Oleksandr Usyk, boxing.

**Female Athlete of the Year** – Anna Rizatdinova, rhythmic gymnastics.

**Coach of the Year** – Serhiy Rebrov, Dynamo Kyiv.

**Team of the Year** – Dynamo Kyiv, soccer.

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Below, in alphabetical order by sports, is a listing of the top Ukrainian sportswomen and sportswomen during 2015.

**ARCHERY**

- **Team of the Year** – Dynamo Kyiv, hockey.
- **Coach of the Year** – Serhiy Rebrov, Dynamo Kyiv.
- **Female Athlete of the Year** – Anna Rizatdinova, rhythmic gymnastics.
- **Male Athlete of the Year** – Oleg Verniaiev, artistic gymnastics.
- **Grasshopper of the Year** – Serhiy Rebrov, Dynamo Kyiv.
- **Team of the Year** – Dynamo Kyiv, soccer.

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**BASEBALL**

- **Tampa Bay's third baseman, Evan Longoria, Ukrainian**

**BASKETBALL**

- **Kelly Olynyk shows lots of promise for the rebuilding Boston Celtics, while Alex Len proved himself worthy of a No. 5 overall National Basketball Association draft**

**BOXING**

- **Ukraine's women's relay BIATHLON team Julia Dzhynam, Natalya Burgyda, Val Semerenko and Iryna Varvynets**

**BIATHLON**

- **Ukraine's women's relay BIATHLON team Julia Dzhynam, Natalya Burgyda, Val Semerenko and Iryna Varvynets**

**BIOGEO**

- **Ukraine’s Alpines skiers (from left) Dmytro Mitsyak, Olha Knysh, Rostyslav Feshchuk, Tetiana Tikun, Ivan Kukhauskyy and Bogdana Matosetska, competed at the World Alpine Ski Championships on February 2-26, in Beaver Creek, Colo., with some financial assistance from the Tryzub Ukrainian American Sport Center.**

**BOTANICAL**

- **Legendsry NHL goaltender Terry Sawchuk was the subject of a docu-drama by Danny Schur that premiered on September 26.**

**BRIDGE**

- **Champion Vasyl Lomachenko won by ninth-round KO against Gamaliel Rodriguez on May 2 in Las Vegas, a bout more exciting than the hyped Mayweather-Pacquiao headliner fight.**

**CANOEING**

- **Ukraine’s five-medal winner was in the junior women’s 500-m C-1 race.**

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**CANNING**

- **Ski jumping and discus throw at the TNTExpress Meeting in Sweden on June 12-13 in Klado, Czech Republic.**

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- **Ukraine won 46 medals – eight of them gold – at the Balu 2015 European Games on June 12-28. Ukraine was repre-**

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2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Ukrainian American Youth Association’s team from Tryzub Ukrainian American Sport Center sponsored travel expenses to two skiers and the ground transport for Ukraine’s women’s Alpine Ski team, allowing them to compete at the World Championships in Turkey.

The 61st annual ski races of the Garphanth Ski Club were held in Hunter N.Y., on March 7 with 81 racers from seven teams competing in the NASTAR course. May 16 saw the Ukrainian Nationals (Tryzub) Rangers 11-13 boys soccer squad capture the NCCS Eastern Classic tournament. Alina Sheskopryk (63 kg) and Dmytro Salnikskei (50 kg) won gold in the U-17 division at the European Weightlifting Championships in Sweden on August 1.

Diaspora sports

In diaspora sports news Chornomorna Sitch Ukrainian Athletic Educational Association had celebrated its 90th anniversary with a gala banquet on November 15, 2014, in Whippney, N.J. The jubilee was highlighted in the 51st edition of Sitch’s annual journal, Our Sport. Tryzub Ukrainian American Sport Center sponsored travel expenses to two skiers and the ground transport for Ukraine’s women’s Alpine Ski team, allowing them to compete at the World Championships in Turkey.

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Academia: A 400th anniversary, scholarly conferences and books

The year 2015 was marked by a very significant commemoration, namely the 400th anniversary of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. One highlight of the celebrations was the June 28 attendance of President Petro Poroshenko at the convocation at National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NAlKMA). In view of the fact that Pylyp Orlyk - the author of the first Constitution of Ukraine – graduated from Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the president dedicated most of his speech to the necessity of constitutional amendments, among them provisions for decentralization.

The anniversary celebrations continued throughout the year with a series of programs. A benefit reception and banquet took place on October 1 at the Kyiv International Art and Conference Center known as the Ukrainian Home. Then, on October 12-14 approximately 50 researchers and academics from six countries gathered at NAlKMA for a scientific conference. Finally, the celebrations culminated with an outdoor concert on October 15 with thousands in attendance, where Dr. Vyacheslav Brylyshkovsky, the university’s honorary president, and President Poroshenko were the featured speakers.

To honor and commemorate Kyiv-Mohyla Academy’s 400th anniversary and its role in Ukraine’s history, the National Bank of Ukraine issued a valuable limited edition of silver commemorative coins in 5 hrv and 2 hrv denominations and Ukraine’s Postal Service issued new stamps and envelopes. In addition, the second volume of the Encyclopedia of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (1819-1924) was published.

Euro-Maidan and the current war

As part of International Week on campus at the University of Alberta, the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) hosted a symposium on the Ukrainian experience and Soviet politics, providing an opening to a more complete history of Europe.

In the CIUS-cosponsored book launch at the St. Josaphat Ukrainian Home and Educational Center (Oseredok), in Toronto, Mr. Kurkov gave a lecture at the University of Toronto’s Munk Centre which was co-sponsored by the Petro Jacyk Center for the Study of Ukraine, the Center for East European Russian and Eurasian Studies and CIUS. Mr. Kurkov is a world-renowned Ukrainian novelist, movie scriptwriter and essayist, who has published 18 novels, seven books for children and more than 30 film scripts. His works have been translated into 36 languages. He is Ukraine’s best-selling author abroad.

Holodomor

On February 4, at Winnipeg’s Canadian Museum for Human Rights (EHRM) some 500 people interested in learning more about the Holodomor attended an evening organized by the CMHR and the Holodomor Awareness and Education Committee of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), Manitoba Council. Titled “Covering or Uncovering the Truth: Media Reporting on the Holodomor,” the event examined how a free press could both alert the world and document human rights abuses, while at the same time contributing to their cover-up.

An international symposium on “Starvation as a Political Tool” from the 19th to the 21st Century held at the University of Toronto, brought together leading scholars to discuss how starvation has been used, or became a way to discriminate against or punish or eliminate national, ethnic, racial or religious groups. The October 22 symposium was the second major academic event marking the Holodomor in comparative perspective organized by the Holodomor Research and Educational Consortium.

Historian Timothy Snyder delivered the Toronto Annual Ukrainian Famine Lecture to a crowded auditorium at the University of Toronto on November 4. Speaking on the topic “The Ukrainian Famine as World History,” the speaker’s major theme was that a proper understanding of the Holodomor, aside from its centrality to the Ukrainian experience and Soviet politics, provides an opening to a more complete history of Europe.

The book “Tell Them We Are Starving: The 1933 Diaries of Gareth Jones” was released in May as part of The Holodomor Occasional Papers Series.

International visitors

The noted Ukrainian writer Andrey Kurkov was invited by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) to deliver the 49th annual Shevchenko Lecture, which served as the keynote event of a three-day symposium held on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Euro-Maidan revolution. Mr. Kurkov’s talk, delivered on March 9 before an audience of almost 200 at the University of Alberta, was titled “How Many Maidans Does Ukraine Need to Become Different?” Before coming to Edmonton, Mr. Kurkov also gave lectures in Winnipeg and Toronto. In Winnipeg he gave two talks – one at the University of Manitoba and the other at the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Center (Oseredok). In Toronto, Mr. Kurkov gave a lecture at the University of Toronto’s Munk Centre which was co-sponsored by the Petro Jacyk Center for the Study of Ukraine, the Center for East European Russian and Eurasian Studies and CIUS. Mr. Kurkov is a world-renowned Ukrainian novelist, movie scriptwriter and essayist, who has published 18 novels, seven books for children and more than 30 film scripts. His works have been translated into 36 languages. He is Ukraine’s best-selling author abroad.

Father Bohdan Prach, rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv since 2013, on April 30 took part in the CIUS-sponsored book launch at the St. Josaphat Cathedral Hall of his two-volume study on the clergy of Peremyshl Eparchy between 1939 and 1989. He then visited the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and the dean of arts at the University of Alberta on the following day. The objective of this meeting was the signing of a new memorandum of understanding between CIUS and UCU to facilitate the work of the Petro Jacyk Program for the Study of Modern Ukrainian History and Society.

In late April, Yale University announced that Svyatoslav (Slava) Vakarchuk, who holds an advanced degree in phys-

President Petro Poroshenko (above left) speaks on June 28 at the convocation of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, at which graduates, faculty and friends (above right) form the letters KMA and the number 400 to mark the anniversary of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.
ic, has served in the Verkhovna Rada and leads the most popular rock band in Ukraine, Oksean Elty, had been selected to the prestigious Yale World Fellows Program Class of 2015. Throughout his Yale World Fellowship program, lasting from mid-August to mid-December Mr. Yakarchuk was active in contributing as a lecturer at various American universities, including Harvard, Columbia and the University of California, Berkeley, displaying a far-ranging knowledge of history and deep understanding of events in Ukraine.

At Fordham University on November 20, Mr. Yakarchuk delivered a lecture titled “Ordinary Citizens in Extraordinary Times: Civil Society in Ukraine,” primarily focusing on the role that civil society plays in the development of a country. He proposed that Ukraine can be transformed when young talented Ukrainians can get a Western education so that they can come back with new ideas and bring about changes in their home country.

Scholarly events

On May 29 Dr. Kateryna Goncharova delivered a lecture on “Ukrainian Cultural Heritage as a Force for Social Change,” at the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington. Her talk was co-sponsored by the Washington chapter of the Shevchenko Scientific Society. Dr. Goncharova heads the Scientific Research Section of the Ukrainian State Research and Project Institute for Historic Preservation. She has worked in research, management and scientific support in the development of projects for the preservation of several UNESCO World Heritage sites. Dr. Goncharova studied the U.S. experience in historic preservation based on public-private partnership, community engagement and neighborhood revitalization. Her goal is to modify these approaches and implement them in Ukraine.

Sponsored by the Shevchenko Scientific Society’s DC chapter and the Embassy of Ukraine, the June 12 tribute to Prof. Larissa ML. Zaleska Opyshkevych was held at the Embassy in Georgetown. During the tribute Dr. Bohdana Urbanovych, president of the Washington chapter of the Shevchenko Society congratulated Prof. Opyshkevych on her 80th birthday and read excerpts from the many greetings received from the U.S. and abroad. Next, a short film was shown depicting high points in Prof. Onyshkevych’s academic and civic life, and poet and Shevchenko Society administrator Vasyl Malcho outlined her scholarly achievements. Not to be outdone by the other presenters, Prof. Opyshkevych herself delivered an eye-opening lecture about the contemporary Ukrainian poet and playwright from Poland Tadeusz Karabowycz.

A conference inspired by the 70th anniversary of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany in World War II stimulated discussions by academics and policy analysts at a gathering held at the University of Alberta on October 23-24. “Contested Ground: The Legacy of the Second World War for Eastern Europe,” was a successful joint undertaking of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and the Center for U.S.-Ukrainian Relations. It brought together an impressive array of experts from 12 countries.

Presenters took as their starting point the impact of the second world war on Eastern Europe.

A gala banquet at the conclusion featured a keynote address by James Sherr of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), who received a standing ovation for his incisive, albeit sobering, analysis of the civilization problems that continue to motivate the Russian actions that are fomenting both regional and global instability.

New publications

Prof. Lubomyr Lutschik, editor of The Holodomor: Occasional Papers Series, on May 9 announced publication of “Tell the World We Are Starving. The 1933 Soviet Diaries of Gareth Jones,” (No. 2 in the series). The new book provides facsimiles from three pocket note-books, as well as a transcription of their contents, that British journalist Gareth Jones wrote during a three-week stay in the USSR during March 1933, when famine was devastating Ukraine. According to Dr. Ray Gamache, a media historian and the book’s transcriber, the diaries constitute one of the most important independent verifiable records of a horrific event, now known as the Holodomor, recorded as it was unfolding in Ukraine.

Harvard University’s Serhii Plokhy, Director of the Ukrainian Research Institute, released a book that traces Ukraine’s history from the time of the ancient Greek settlement to the Maidan. “The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine,” is based on the premise that we need to take a look at Ukraine’s part in order to understand its present and foresee its future. This work examines Ukraine as a gateway between East and West, situated as it is between Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East. Dr. Plokhy was honored on November 14 with the Omelan and Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East. Dr. Plokhy was honored on November 14 with the Omelan and Tatiana Antonovych Foundation award for his work as a historian and author of history books that insightfully analyze Ukraine’s past and present and shed light on what may be in store for its future.

New archival fellowship

During International Week in January CIUS at the University of Alberta announced the establishment of a new archival fellowship in Ukrainian, including Ukrainian Canadian, studies. CIUS invited applications for one or more archival fellowships in this field. The fellowship is open to applications from students, graduate students or scholars wishing to collect archives or assist existing archival institutions to catalogue and digitize their Ukrainian archival collections. The fellowship is made possible through the support of the Stephanie Bukachewych-Pastushenko Endowment Fund.

Culture and the arts in all its expressions

The year 2015 witnessed the celebration of three important and distinguished diaspora luminaries: graphic artist Jacques Hnizdovsky, linguist and scholar Yuri Shevchok and painter Zenon Opyshkevych. Ukrainian artists, musicians and performing groups grew in number and traveled across oceans to garner new audiences and advance Ukrainian art and culture. At the same time, organized protests against Russian musicians who publicly promoted Vladimir Putin’s aggression spread throughout many cities in the North America. Throughout 2015, the Russian invasion and annexation of Ukrainian territory continued to have a profound effect on the cultural and artistic life of Ukrainians.

Centuries-old art held hostage

On April 8, Amsterdam’s district court ruled that Ukraine was eligible to claim rights to the Scythian gold artifacts from an exhibition sent out before the Russian invasion of Crimea. Among the items on loan were 565 rare treasures from Crimean museums, which remain in boxes in a storage facility awaiting a court decision about where they should be shipped.

The “Crimea: Gold and Secrets of the Black Sea” exhibit was originally gathered from five Ukrainian museums, four of which are located in Crimea. Back in March 2014, following Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian government had claimed the entire collection as state property and demanded that the entire collection be returned to Kyiv. Crimean museums filed their own lawsuit in November 2014 in Amsterdam demanding that the Allard Pierson Museum return the Crimean part of the collection. Amid fears that Russia would lose the treasures if returned to occupied Crimea and then permanently move them to St. Petersburg or Moscow, the Amsterdam museum said it could not return the treasures until the legal ownership was clear.

Meanwhile, a collection of stolen 17th century Dutch masterpieces was alleged to have resurfaced in rebel-held eastern Ukraine 10 years after the paintings had been missing. On December 7, the Westfries Museum in the Dutch city of Horn announced that two men approached the Dutch Embassy in Kyiv in July offering to sell the 24 paintings back. The men claimed they found the collection in a villa in eastern Ukraine and asked $5.6 million for it – half its value when stolen in 2005.

Arthur Brand, an expert on stolen art traveled to Kyiv while the Westfries Museum Director Ad Geerlink warned these works were in danger of being sold on the black market after the museum’s own efforts to retrieve them failed. The Ukrainian government is working part with Holland in the ongoing investigation.

Photography on exhibit

Chicago’s Ukrainian National Museum (UNM) hosted three exhibits devoted to photography.


Composer Roman Hurko at the October 18 premiere of his Liturgy No. 4 commissioned by the Vesninka Choir in Toronto.

| Walter Korobeynyk |
2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A view of the exhibit “Conflict Zone: Ukraine. The War in Ukraine Through the Eyes of Ukrainian Photojournalists,” which opened at the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago on May 8. At Chicago’s exhibit is a photo by Alexey Furman that won first prize in the portrait category in the Picture of the Year International 2015 contest.

An exceptional photo exhibit opened, called “Viktor Gumiak: Road from the Maidan,” on January 16. The photographs of Mr. Gumiak, a photojournalist and volunteer fighter of the Aidar Battalion offered a striking glimpse into the realities of war in Ukraine. Mr. Gumiak was killed in October 2014 during an attack in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) zone in the Luhansk region while he was evacuating wounded soldiers. Born in Ternopil, Mr. Gumiak was co-founder of the LUFA photo agency in Lviv and a frequent contributor to Reuters, UNIAN and Insider. He devoted many years to Plast National Scouting Organization in Ukraine, where he was a beloved leader and role model. The evening’s guest speaker was Nolan Peterson, a former U.S. Air Force pilot and veteran who had also spent six months as a war correspondent in the ATO zone with Ukrainian soldiers. This exhibit later traveled to Cleveland and other Plast centers in the United States.

On May 8, the UNM opened the exhibit “Conflict Zone: Ukraine. The War in Ukraine Through the Eyes of Ukrainian Photojournalists.” This exhibit featured a selection of 50 photographs by 13 young Ukrainian photojournalists who served on the front lines of the war in eastern Ukraine as correspondents. The powerful images depicted the everyday life of soldiers, the grief-stricken faces of civilians, as well as the hope and resilience of the Ukrainian people. The idea for this show came from Jerry Kytis, a Vietnam veteran and the curator at the National Veterans Art Museum. UNM approached Alexey Furman, a Ukrainian photojournalist and Fulbright Scholar to recruit his colleagues for this exhibit. Mr. Furman’s photos had previously appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and National Geographic Magazine Ukraine. His photo of a shell-shocked woman from a hospital in Mykolayivka won first prize in the portrait category in the Picture of the Year International 2015 contest. The organizers planned to display this exhibit in cities throughout the United States, including colleges and universities.

The third exhibit at Chicago’s UNM, “Outtakes” showed the sports photos of Charles Cherney and opened on March 13. A Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer, Mr. Cherney was born in Chicago and is of Ukrainian heritage. He joined the Chicago Tribune as a team journalist and was also a two-time winner of the Chicago Press Photographers of the Year award. Mr. Cherney’s images delighted sports enthusiasts and included moments from Chicago sports teams: the Bears, the Bulls, the Cubs and the White Sox, as well as the Blackhawks, going back to the late 1970s.

Photos from the Maidan were also shown at the exhibition “Maidan. Ukraine. Road to Freedom” at the Stay Gallery in Downey, Calif., which opened on January 24. The Ukrainian Art Center Inc. of Los Angeles displayed posters and photos, as well as implements used by Ukrainians to fight tanks and bullets: barbed wire wrapped around sticks, metal shields, gas masks and Molotov cocktails. Gallery viewers also heard recordings from the Maidan — explosions, gunfire and people shouting.

Included in the program was the West Coast premiere of “Dancing Diplomats,” a movie documenting the joint project between Voloshky Dance Ensemble and the Kirovohrad Philharmonic in 2012.

Three luminaries

Over the course of two days, March 12-13, the Ukrainian Studies Program at Columbia University’s Harriman Institute presented a scholarly forum titled “Khariv – City of Ukrainian Culture: An International Conference in Honor of Yuri Shevelov.” Prof. Shevelov (1908-2002) was not only one of Khariv’s greatest native scholars but also a renowned professor of Slavic philology at Columbia University. The panels were dedicated to the extraordinary linguistic, literary and cultural legacy of this giant of Ukrainian studies.

Born of German parents, Prof. Shevelov grew up in Khariv, the one-time capital of Ukraine and cradle of the Ukrainian Renaissance that became an indivisible part of his life. This conference illustrated the importance of Khariv not only as a political capital, but also as a mecca for Ukrainian artists who created dynamic and unprecedented cultural achievements in literature, art, theater and film, notably in the 1920s.

A visionary intellectual, Prof. Shevelov predicted new threats from Russia unless Ukraine set out to fulfill its colonial modern potential of what he called “unity in variety.” He published over 600 scholarly texts on Ukrainian and Slavic philology and argued against the commonly held view of one original and unified East Slavic language, from which the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian languages diverged.

The year 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of renowned Ukrainian American painter and printmaker Jacques Hnizdovsky (1915-1985). His works have been widely exhibited and many are in permanent collections of museums worldwide. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston has a large collection of his prints, and his archives are housed in the New York Public Library.

Born in the Ternopil region of Ukraine, Mr. Hnizdovsky moved to the United States in 1949. He was inspired by woodblock printing in Japan, as well as the woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer. His popular woodcuts often depict plants and animals – a favorite theme from his many trips to the Botanical Gardens and Bronx Zoo in New York.

On March 22, Ukrainian National Women’s League of America Branch 75 sponsored the “Jacques Hnizdovsky Flora and Fauna Centennial Exhibit” featuring over 95 works of art at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey in Whippany. In addition to woodcuts, the exhibit included several pen-and-ink drawings, watercolors and tapestries, which were rarely previously seen.

On May 29, the National Art Museum in Kyiv opened a showing of over 100 of Mr. Hnizdovsky’s works. Smaller exhibits travelled to Poltava, Cherkasy and Dnipropetrovsk in the fall.

Born in 1929, Zenowij Onyshkewych is a prolific Ukrainian American artist whose works are found in prestigious international collections, including a life-size portrait of Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. On September 30, The Ukrainian Museum in New York launched a showing of his drawings, watercolors and oils titled “Sixty Years an Artist: A Retrospective Exhibition of Works by Zenowij Onyshkewych,” which included landscapes, portraits and...
Among the items on display in the exhibit “Diverse Yet United Part 2,” which opened in September at the Ukrainian Museum of Canada – Ontario Branch were these: A wedding costume from the Black and Azov sea regions, and a Crimean Tatar wedding costume.

caricatures. They illustrate his romantic approach to landscapes and capacity to express human emotions when confronted with the forces of nature.

An American immigrant who settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Mr. Onyshkewych found himself drawn to impressionism and Japanese influences. He served in the Korean War and the growing awareness in his works and fascination with earlier epochs in art are not uncommon for someone who survived two wars — once as a youth and the other as a soldier.


Music and dance

On May 14, Marko Topchii won the International Gerdon San Diego Classical Guitar Competition in Madrid. Hailing from Kyiv, Mr. Topchii performed on May 26 with the German Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and on April 30 appeared in New York at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. Hailing from Kyiv, Mr. Topchii performed on May 24 with San Diego Classical Guitar Competition in Madrid.

On October 4, TWG showcased violinist Solomiya Ivakhiv and pianist Angelina Gadeliya in a recital of Ivakhiv and pianist Angelina Gadeliya in a recital of Dignity: Images from Ukraine’s Maidan, 2013-2014” on October 6. And on November 1, soprano Vira Slywotzky and pianist Yegor Semenenko and pianist Yegor Semenenko performed as part of the Embassy Series on October 6. And on

... Shevstov performed Ukrainian, French and American music as part of the Embassy Series on October 6. And on

... Silvestrov and Myroslav Skoryk. Violinist Aleksey Bubnov performed as part of the Embassy Series on October 6. And on

... "Kazka" to Canada and the United States during the summer months. "Kazka" is an original folk ballet inspired by Ukrainian fairy tales and created by Melanie Moravcik Dechnycz. On July 9, New Yorkers, New Jerseyans and others filled the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts to watch young performers weave stories of supernatural spirits, moonlit woodland creatures and maidens tossing garlands into a river to foretell the future. The composer was Nicholas Buc and the set designer was Stephan Moravski. This dance company had previously appeared at the Pire Festival, Melbourne Fringe Festival and White Night Melbourne. Lehenda also performed during the summer in Toronto, Chicago and Wilmington, Del., and at the Ukrainian Cultural Festival at the Soyuzka Heritage Center.

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scheduled to replace Ms. Lisitsa regretted on his Facebook now..."her attitude and the mob-like behavior of her devotees, censured Rachmaninoff's second concerto."

Ms. Lisitsa had been exposed in a December 12, 2014, article in The Ukrainian Weekly: "When 'high culture' merges with terrorism" for her racist and hateful posts on her Facebook pages, engaging in sweeping vulgar attacks, stereotyping Ukrainians. TSO President and CEO Jeff Melanson told The Canadian Press: "This is not about speech... political perspective or persuasion, this is about very offensive, intolerant comments about people." On April 26, Paul Good, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress stated that the TSO was justified in the cancellation just as the NBA was justified in banning LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling for life over his racist remarks.

Poetry

Adrian Bryttan presented a premiere reading of his new rhyming translations of Taras Shevchenko's "Kobzar" at the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in New York on April 26. This was the first time English translations were composed that mirrored not only end-rhymes, but also all internal rhymic and musical elements in the original, and in many cases, even the same number of syllables. Mr. Bryttan incorporated a running slide show with his English-language presentation for the audience, which included many non-Ukrainians.

On May 12, the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago hosted an evening of poetry by Vasyly Makhno and Oleksandr Fraze-Frazenko. Now a resident of New York City, Mr. Makhno was born in Chortkiv, Ukraine. Mr. Fraze-Frazenko is also a screenwriter, singer and translator and represents the younger generation of poets from Ukraine.

In Tucson at the Arizona Student Union Gallery an evening celebrating the poetry and art of Taras Shevchenko took place on March 13. Organized by the Ukrainian American Society (UAS) of Tucson, this professionally prepared exhibit was provided by the Consulate General of Ukraine in San Francisco. Viewers could study Shevchenko's paintings on Ukrainian, Kazakh and architectural themes, and also read his poems in translations. Dr. Thor Kunas, president of the UAS, welcomed the audience with a short introduction about the poet and artist's life.

On August 22, the Ontario town of Timmins held a ribbon-cutting ceremony as it rededicated its Kobzar Park and unveiled a new statue of Taras Shevchenko. Named after Shevchenko's finished major collection of poems, Kobzar Park was officially established in 1981 to recognize the contributions of Ukrainian pioneer settlers to Canada and the Timmins-Fortänge Gold Camp. The ceremony was attended by Tyler Fauvelle, creator of the 8-foot bronze of a mature Shevchenko in historic foot-and-clothing.

Films and television

Opening on September 20, the 2015 Toronto Film Festival featured a film about Maidan – "Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom" by Evgeny Afineevsky. "Winter on Fire" became a feature offering on Netflix and was later nominated for an Oscar.

A scene from the documentary “Winter on Fire: Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom” by Evgeny Afineevsky, which was shown at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, was offered for viewing on Netflix and was later nominated for an Oscar.

The film "Generation Maidan: A Year of Revolution and war" was shot with the help of the Babylon '13 filmmakers who captured history in the making with amazing footage of Maidan. While other Maidan films may have presented a bewildering display of violence, "Generation Maidan" told a multi-layered story about the past and, in the light of recent events, is a prophetic film. It is now banned in Russia.

The "Kobzar" film was filmed with deaf actors and portrays a society that has regressed to a primitive and desperate state. Mr. Slaboshpitsky explained that he wanted people to understand this is "not about deafness; it is about human beings." He also spoke about the present-day outlook for the deaf and other handicapped groups throughout Ukraine.

Opening on July 7, the 2012 Ukrainian film "Haytarma" ("The Return") was screened at the National Democratic Institute in Washington. The showing was co-sponsored by the Embassy of Ukraine and the Crimean television station ATR, which had been forced to leave Crimea and now broadcasts from Kyiv. The screening tells the story of Anatol-Siman Sabian (1920-1971), a Crimean test pilot and decorated Hero of the Soviet Union, who returns to his home town of Alupka just before the brutal Soviet deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944. "Haytarma" contains striking aerial footage and also shows the tragedy of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars. It is available for viewing on YouTube. "Haytarma" portrays hard truths about the past and, in the light of recent events, is a prophetic film. It is now banned in Russia.

Another film director, Andrew Tkach, was also interviewed in the September 6 issue of The Ukrainian Weekly. His documentary "Generation Maidan: A Year of Revolution and War" was shot with the help of the Babylon 13 filmmakers who captured history in the making with amazing footage of Maidan. While other Maidan films may have presented a bewildering display of violence, "Generation Maidan" told a multi-layered story through the eyes of participants, including a detailed story about Pavel Yurov, abducted and imprisoned for 72 days by separatists in Sloviansk.

On May 11, Ukrainian Canadian actress Kathryn Winnick was nominated for Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series at the Critics' Choice Awards. She plays the role of Lagertha in the much-watched History channel series "Vikings" now in its third season. Ms. Winnick's Ukrainian roots run deep; her grandfa- ther was a member of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen. She is proud to say in numerous interviews how her long involvement in Past Ukrainian Scouting Organization was the foundation of her upbringing and she has spoken out clearly about the current struggles in Ukraine. Growing up in Toronto, Ms. Winnick immersed herself in martial arts, attaining a black belt in karate and taekwondo. On the set of "Vikings" she does all her own stunts. Ms. Winnick is planning her first visit to Ukraine. She stated she would very much like to visit Kiev and would also like to meet with Past Scouts in Ukraine.

Art and museums

On February 15, The Ukrainian Museum in New York presented the first exhibit showcasing avant-garde artists who shaped early 20th century Ukrainian theater and influenced the theatrical world stage. "Staging the Ukrainian Avant-Garde of the 1910s and 1920s" featured modernist artists, many of them exiled or executed during Stalin's purges of the 1930s. The exhibition included art works of costume, set and make-up design, as well as photographs and original posters, and principally the art of Vadym Melekh, who would become the principal designer at the Bereza Artistic Association, led by director Les Kurbas.

"Iconart: Visions of a World Unseen," an exhibit of contemporary sacred art from Ukraine, opened at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York on March 20. In cooperation with Iconart Gallery in Lviv, this exhibition illustrated the ties between medieval religious iconography and current interpretations of the sacred. The works centered on images of "the world unseen": a sinner in search of paradise, man in search of God, heroes and seducers, and saints and traitors.

The Ukrainian Institute of America on March 28 launched an exhibition called "Mystical Power of the Pysanka, Ukrainian Easter Eggs by Sofiia Zieylyk." Ms. Zieylyk was awarded a Fulbright grant for her research about the influence of folk art on the work of early 20th century Ukrainian artists of the early 20th century. On June 24, she also exhibited her works at the newly built America House, a component of the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

The unique pictorial style from the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossak settlements along the Dnipro river valley near Dnipropetrovsk was showcased by The Ukrainian Museum in New York starting May 10. This exhibit was titled "Petrykivka: The Soul of Ukraine." Named after a village, Petrykivka art originated as a colorful decorative tradition in central Ukraine, as painting of interior and exterior adobe white-washed walls, ceiling beams and hearths, as well as decorations on furniture, boxes and wooden kitchenware. Motifs include a great variety of stylized bird, flower and garden elements. In 2013 UNESCO added the Petrykivka art form to its list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

On March 27, the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago opened the exhibit "Australian Artists from
2015: The Year in Review

Ukraine," which showcased the work of six Ukrainian artists who settled in Australia following World War II. According to Australian art critic Paul Haefliger: "Of all the foreign aspirants who have visited these shores since the war, Michael Kmit [one of the six artists] is the only one who has made any impression on the present generation of painters." Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott sent a letter of appreciation for this exhibit.

The Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago unveiled the exhibit "Apotheosis of Peace" on July 17 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky's birth. The exposition included personal letters, photos, relics and other artifacts and was meant to honor the metropolitan's contributions to the Church, his philanthropy for youth and the arts in Ukraine, and his humanitarian deeds sheltering those sought by the Nazis. The Rev. Ivan Kuzmick, author of "Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky and the Establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States" spoke at the opening.

In celebration of Ukrainian Heritage Day in Toronto, the Ukrainian Museum of Canada – Ontario Branch opened its newest exhibit "Diverse Yet United Part 2" on September 10. In (2014, "Diverse Yet United Part 1" featured costumes from the ethnographic regions along Ukraine's western border.) Part 2 of this exhibit consisted of a great quantity of traditional costumes from the southern, eastern, central regions of Ukraine and part of western Ukraine; the Black and Azov sea regions, the Sloboda region, Central Dnipro region, Podilia and Polisia, as well as a striking Chynnytsya wedding dress. The display included information about notable Ukrainian public figures born in the regions presented in the exhibit.

The Ukrainian Diaspora: Women Artists, 1908-2015," which opened at The Ukrainian Museum in New York on October 18, was the first major exhibition to examine the relationship between Ukrainian identity and women artists beyond the borders of Ukraine. It featured over 100 works by 43 artists, primarily from North America. The works included icon painting and the traditional genres of still life, portraiture and landscape, in addition to figurative sculpture, abstract painting, tapestry and mixed-media works.

Meanwhile, in Hamtramck, Mich., the Ukrainian American Archives and Museum (UAAM) of Detroit purchased a much-needed larger building to reach a broader audience and to increase the visibility of the Ukrainian heritage. Throughout the years, the UAAM had become the repository of a great quantity of traditional cultural, historical documents, photos, archives and books of local prominent Americans of Ukrainian descent.

On May 9 an installation called "Home East" by Ukrainian artist Yaro Bihun covered the windows of the Ukraine Institute of America in New York with symbolic red and white jagged lines of tape. The intent was to adapt these universal colors for danger to let everyone know about the war raging in eastern Ukraine. The opening night of "Home East" included a performance by Yara Arts Group of poems by Serhiy Zhadan. Mr. Zhadan is a noted writer of the post-independence generation in Ukraine and had previously read his works at The Ukrainian Museum in New York on March 13, and in Philadelphia on March 15. His poems feature prominently in Yara's new production "Hitting Bedrock." This new work opened in New York on February 20, presenting an entire new cycle of poetry written by Mr. Zhadan. "Hitting Bedrock" refers to the present war-torn situation of residents of the former mining town of Donetsk.

University series on Ukraine

In 2015, five events hosted by Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., were intended to foster more informed dialogue and to draw attention to the situation in Ukraine. These events, co-produced by the Wesleyan's Center for the Arts and the Departments of Dance, Music and Film Studies, drew large and diverse audiences and included panels and discussions on Crimea, sections of the documentaries "Music of Survival" and "Winter of Fire." (see film section).

"Music of Survival: The Story of the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus" (UBC) was shown on March 5 and 9, and on April 4, 2016, and the opening night of the series featured a live performance of the Bandurist Chorus. "The Ukrainian Diaspora: Women Artists, 1908-2015," which opened at The Ukrainian Museum in New York on October 18, was the first major exhibition to examine the relationship between Ukrainian identity and women artists beyond the borders of Ukraine. It featured over 100 works by 43 artists, primarily from North America. The works included icon painting and the traditional genres of still life, portraiture and landscape, in addition to figurative sculpture, abstract painting, tapestry and mixed-media works.

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The noteworthy:

People and events

This section features the noteworthy events and people of 2015 that defy easy classification (or could fit under more than one of our Year in Review categories).

- Bishop Borys Gudziak, who is based in Paris and serves as bishop for Ukrainian Catholics in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and Switzerland, was awarded the National Order of the Legion of Honour. The order was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802 and is the highest decoration in France. It is awarded to those who "have served France or the ideals it upholds," and seldom presented to a non-French national. The president of the Ukrainian Catholic University, Bishop Gudziak is globally recognized for his scholarly achievements and pastoral inspiration and has helped make the university an exemplary educational institution. News of the award was released in February.

- Mustafa Nayyem – journalist, democracy activist and member of Ukraine's Parliament – on February 12 received the 2014 Ion Ratiu Democracy Award for his efforts to establish a true democracy in Ukraine. In April 2013, Mr. Nayyem, along with several journalist colleagues, established Hromadske TV, Ukraine's first Internet television platform. Via a post on Facebook near the end of 2013, Hromadske was instrumental in helping launch the mass protests on the Maidan. Elected to the Verkhovna Rada in the 2014 elections, Mr. Nayyem focused his attention on working to eliminate corruption – the topic of his keynote remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars’ 10th annual Ion Ratiu Democracy Award Workshop. The workshop topic this year was the opportunities and threats to the development of democracy in Ukraine since the Euro-Maidan.

"Pavel's Taste of Ukraine," a Denver-based food truck owned and operated by Ukrainian American Pavlo Makolodrka, was featured on March 9 on KDKR Fox 31’s "everyday Colorado" segment. Completing his culinary education in Minneapolis, Mr. Makolodrka returned to Denver in 2014 to start Pavel's Taste of Ukraine, basing his selections on guidance from his Ukrainian-born grandmother. Menu items include Ukrainian favorites such as vareniki, holubtsi, kolvacha and borscht.

- Ukraine Today, an Internet television news channel in English was formally introduced on March 27 at the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, DC. The channel was created to provide the world with objective information in English about what is happening in Ukraine. Dr. Lada Rodycky, the station's director of strategic communications, said that, in addition to providing truthful information about Russia's war against Ukraine, and the international response to it, Ukraine Today will also focus on economic reforms in Ukraine, its business and investment opportunities and risks, and on its society and culture.

- Prof. Berehulak, an Australian photographer and photojournalist, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize on April 20 for his feature photography work on the Ebola outbreak in West Africa for The New York Times. Mr. Berehulak spent 67 straight days capturing images of those on the frontlines of the disease – from doctors to grave diggers, taking extreme precautions to protect himself from infection. A native of Sydney born to post-World War II Ukrainian immigrant parents, Mr. Berehulak is based in Barcelona and New Delhi. He was a 2011 Pulitzer Prize finalist for his coverage of the 2010 floods in Pakistan, and has been awarded three World Press Photo awards, the John Faber award from the Overseas Press Club, and been named the Freelance/Agency Photographer of the Year by Pictures of the Year International.
Oksana Zakydalsky

received the 2015 Omelian and Tatiana Antonovych Foundation award for his work as a historian and author of history books that insightfully analyze Ukraine's past and present and shed light on what may be in store for its future. Ukraine's Ambassador Valeriy Chaly noted that Prof. Plokhy's work "has helped us to understand better our contemporary reality and predict further developments," while Dr. Marta Bohachevska-Chmiak said "he has been able to... present so that others may read and understand the critical role of Ukraine as a cultural, intellectual and political player."

- Nadja Savchenko on April 22 became the 2015 laureate of the Light of Justice Award – established by a Canadian of Ukrainian background, Anastasia Shklyuk, in honor of her father, Dr. Mykhaylo Shklyuk, and given in recognition of "moral, spiritual and ethical leadership." Because of Savchenko's remains illegally imprisoned by Russia, her sister Vira, who conveyed words of gratitude on Nadiya's behalf, accepted the award. Previous winners of the award have included human rights advocate and former Soviet political prisoner Yevhen Svestiansk and Crimean Tatar leader and rights activist Mustafa Dzhemilev.

- An Austrian court on April 30 denied a request by the U.S. to extradite Dmytro Firtash for trial on criminal charges including bribery and racketeering. Mr. Firtash, a Ukrainian natural gas trader, magnified his wealth with his tight connections to the Yanukovich administration. Mr. Firtash has told reporters that he plans to return to Ukraine, but President Petro Poroshenko has made it clear that he will not be subject to his campaign to reduce the influence of oligarchs.

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- Rear Adm. Boris D. Lushniak, deputy surgeon general of the United States, retired from the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps in a full-honors retirement ceremony on September 3 after 27 years of service as an officer. The son of post-World War II Ukrainian immigrants and a dermatologist, preventive medicine specialist and family physician by training, Rear Adm. Lushniak deployed for several national and international missions throughout his career, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Korea. His most recent deployment was to Liberia, where he was assigned as the commanding officer of the USPHS Commissioned Corps in a full-honors retirement ceremony on September 3 after 27 years of service as an officer. The son of post-World War II Ukrainian immigrants and a dermatologist, preventive medicine specialist and family physician by training, Rear Adm. Lushniak deployed for several national and international missions throughout his career, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Korea. His most recent deployment was to Liberia, where he was assigned as the commanding officer of the USPHS Commissioned Corps in a full-honors retirement ceremony on September 3 after 27 years of service as an officer.

- On the 24th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, President Petro Poroshenko awarded 14 foreign citizens for their "contribution to strengthening the international authority of Ukraine, popularization of its historical heritage, and intellectual and political player." Among the honorees were Tamara Olexy, president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, and Roma Hadzycowzky, editor-in-chief of The Ukrainian Weekly. Both women were awarded the Order of Princess Olha, third degree. Ms. Olexy received her award on September 26 in New York.

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2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Our community mourns their passing

During 2014 our community mourned the passing of many of its prominent members: musicians, scholars, artists, community activists, human rights activists, journalists and others. Among them were the following, listed in the order of their passing.

Andriy Kuzmenko ("Kuzma"), 47, hugely popular singer in Ukraine who was also politically active and had most recently played a benefit concert to raise funds for the Ukrainian military, lead singer of the group Skylynik, killed in a car crash – February 2.
John S. Reshetar, 90, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Washington in Seattle since 1969, after four decades as a faculty member at that university and others; author of the landmark book "The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920" and other works – February 7.
Robert Conquest, 85, a founder and stalwart supporter of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Byzantine-Catholic Parish in Omaha, Nebraska, editor of the Ukrainian dance group in that city – July 24.


Roman A. Sawycky, 89, musicologist, author, pianist, teacher, music researcher and longtime music columnist ("Sounds and Views") of The Ukrainian Weekly – June 20.

Laryssa kukrycka Lysniak (Laryssa Lauret), 75, actress of Ukrainian and American stage, film and television – July 5.

Lauret

That’s how you will find PDFs of all our issues published since 1933. The Archives (which do not include the current year’s issues) are open to all, subscribers and non-subscribers, although subscribers only can access premium content: issues: The Years in Review, Debutante Balls, A Ukrainian Summer. Most of the current content provided on the new website is "premium" and, therefore, available on a paid basis. Subscribers only can access premium content is on a metered basis; thus, readers who visit more than four times a month are asked to subscribe to gain further access.

The Ukrainian Weekly’s fascinating archives also moved to the new website. To peruse them, go to the "Archives" link that appears in the bar atop the webpage. That’s how you will find PDFs of all our issues published since 1933. The Archives (which do not include the current year’s issues) are open to all, subscribers and non-subscribers.

We were pleased to note a significant increase in the number of subscribers to our online edition after we unveiled the "new and improved" online edition of The Weekly.

The Ukrainian Weekly’s online presence is enhanced by its Facebook page, which has functioned since July 10, 2012. The number of "Likes" for our page has now surpassed 4,300 and continues to grow. What we do on Facebook differs greatly from what we offer on the pages of our newspaper. On Facebook, The Weekly gives regular updates to our editors, readers and our community, updates from our editorial offices, including previews of what to expect in upcoming issues; lets our friends know when a new issue becomes available online; allows visitors to take a look at our latest front page; and shares interesting stories and news from a variety of sources. What is new this year is that on our newspaper’s newly redesigned website, on the right-hand side of the page, visitors will also see a box labeled “Find Us on Facebook” where you can quickly take a look at the latest posts on The Weekly’s Facebook page.

So, we invite you to explore www.ukrweekly.com and visit us on Facebook. At the same time, if you haven’t done so yet, please "Like" us on Facebook!

During 2015, The Weekly continued to report on events in our ancestral homeland and the activities of our communities. In fact, there were countless stories and photos sent in by readers and community activists from across North America and beyond. It is their contributions to our news pages that make The Ukrainian Weekly a true community newspaper.

Of course, there were also the usual special issues in The Weekly: the annual Year in Review issue [published in four sections; January 11 through February 8, for a total of 32 pages]; the round-up of Ukrainian debutante balls (March 22); the 19th annual edition of “A Ukrainian Summer” (May 3, comprising 24 full-color pages); and the special Ukrainian Independence Day issue (August 23).

There were also unique feature articles. Among them
were these from Canada and the United States: “Documents reveal information on Ukrainian heroes of the French Resistance,” by Oksana Zakydalsky (January 11); “Atlantic Council report focuses on human rights abuses in Crimea,” by Matthew Dubas (March 29); “War in Ukraine, ‘red line’ in Syria and the Obama administration,” by Adrian Bryant (March 29); “Constitutional engagement on Ukraine intensifies since Euro-Maidan,” by Orest Dezhakovskyi (April 19); “New Ukrainian MPs bring message of determination to D.C.,” by Borys Potapenko (May 24); “Ukrainian Nationality Room at U. of Pittsburgh marks 25th anniversary,” by Rosalina Korczyńska (June 28/July 5); “Deportation ad by Verison 365 Ukrainian community,” by Matthew Dubas (July 12); “A blue-and-yellow flashmob in Times Square,” by Stefan Sliwski (September 6); “Toronto International Film Festival screens new Maidan film,” by Oksana Zakydalsky (September 27); “Schor spotlights Terry Sawchuk in doc-drama on NHL’s ‘Iron goalie’,” by Christopher Guly (October 11); “The situation in Ukraine and challenges for the Ukrainian community in the U.S.,” by Oleh Wolowyna (October 18); “Ukrainian Canadian women take lead role in Canadian politics,” by Christoph Guly (November 15); and “Book Review: A multi-dimensional account of Ukrainian nationalism,” by Bohdan Vitvitsky (December 20).

Plus, there were many stories from Ukraine that you could read only in The Weekly. Here’s just a sampling: “Survival on the Donbas frontlines,” by Yana Sedova (January 25); “Bukovel, the affordable jewel of the Carpathians,” by Zenon Zawada (February 15); “Refugees, now in Kramatorsk, recall their experiences in war-torn east,” by Ms. Sedova (March 15); “Victory Day commemoration geared to presenting a new Ukraine,” by Mr. Zawada [May 3]; “More evidence surfaces on Russian Internet trolls,” by Mr. Zawada (August 23).

“Over 5,000 witness dedication of Holodomor Memorial in Washington,” by Roma Hadzewycz was the lead story in The Weekly’s extensive coverage of this historic event, which was enhanced thanks to team coverage by Yaro Bihrn, Matthew Dubas and photographers Christine Syzonenko and Stefan Slutsky.

We gained a new columnist this year. Andrij Dobriansky, an executive board member and media spokesman for the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, said that in his column, called “Ukraine Matters,” he would share his thoughts on topics often glossed over in the media. His first column appeared in our April 19 issue. Other columnists featured in 2015 included: Andrew Fedynskyj, Oksana Bashuk Hepburn, Myron Kuropas, Andrew Sorokowski, Eugene Z. Stakhiv and Orysia Fasyczak Tracz. And then there were our regular contributors: Mr. Bihrn, Mr. Bryant, Ms. Zakydalsky, sportswriter Ihor Stelmach.

We would be remiss if we did not note that reader support for our newspaper continued to be strong as evidenced by donations to our press fund: a grand total of $22,708 for the year. A huge thank-you to all of our benefactors.

Going 2015 we tried to encourage readers to write to share their news with fellow readers. In our September 20 editorial – titled “So, you think you can’t write...” – we addressed readers: “We urge you to extend your reach and broaden your circle of contacts, friends and supporters by sending information to The Ukrainian Weekly, which we will gladly publish in our Community Chronicle. In order to benefit from each other’s experiences, we need to share them. Instead of islands of separate activity, we can have an interconnected network! Think you can’t write? Think again. You don’t need to write an extensive account of each and every one of your community events. Sometimes, a simple caption to a good photograph is all it takes to let others know what’s happening in your community. And, if you’re not sure about your writing skills, do the best you can in telling the story, but do get the facts right and the spellings of names correct. And give us “the 5 Ws,” as they used to teach in journalism school: the who, what, when, where and why of the event being reported. We’ll take it from there; we’re happy to serve as your ghostwriters and editors – all in keeping with our mission to keep us all in touch and informed. And you will get the byline, or tagline, or photo credit. (We’re sticklers about that and want to give credit where credit is due!)

We marked The Weekly’s 62nd birthday with an editorial that highlighted the changes through the years, including all-important technological improvements, and underscored: “...a lot has changed in 62 years, but not our commitment to our community and the Ukrainian nation. And our founding mission – to tell the world the truth about Ukraine and Ukrainians – endures.”

The first page of Part I of “2015: The Year in Review” as it appeared in our January 18 issue.

A page from our annual special section on “Ukrainian Debutante Balls,” published on March 22.

Miscellany
On the occasion of the 24th anniversary of Ukraine’s Independence, President Petro Poroshenko awarded 14 foreign citizens for their contribution to strengthening the international authority of Ukraine, popularization of its historical heritage and modern achievements. Among them were two Ukrainian American women who were awarded the Order of Prince Olha, third degree: Ukrainian Congress Committee of America President Tamara Olexy and The Ukrainian Weekly Editor-in-Chief Roma Hadzewycz. The awards were announced in a presidential decree dated August 21. Ms. Olexy received her medal on September 26, 2015; Ms. Hadzewycz is still awaiting a presentation of this great honor.

A film crew from Izolychna Prava, headed by Vakhtang Kipiani, visited our editorial offices on November 10, 2015, to see Svoboda’s and The Weekly’s historic issues from the years of the Holodomor as well as historic materials related to that genocide that we have at our editorial offices. They also interviewed the editor-in-chief about the newspapers’ coverage of the Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933; the history of The Ukrainian Weekly, which was founded to tell the world the truth about what was happening in Ukraine; and the case of Holodomor denier Walter Durany of The New York Times. The report aired on Ukrainian television on November 28 and was posted online at the time that Ukraine marked the annual Holodomor Remembrance Day. (The report is available on YouTube under the title “Волот виступлє з історією Голодомору 1932-33 років”)

In 2015 we noted that two of our long-time columnists had published books. Dr. Kuropas’ latest book, titled “Lesia and I: A Progress Report and a Ukrainian-American Love Story” is part memoir and part autobiography and was written to mark the 50th wedding anniversary of Myron and Lesia (Wasik) Kuropas. Ms. Tracz, on December 3 launched her new book, “First Star I See Tonight” (Mazepa Publications, Zharavi Ltd, 2015) at McNally Robinson Booksellers of Winnipeg. The beautifully designed book is a collection of articles originating in the origins of Ukrainian Christmas traditions, their symbolism and their continuation around the world, especially in Ukraine, Canada and the United States. Many of the articles previously appeared in The Weekly in Ms. Tracz’s column.

Our collaborators
The 2015 edition of “The Year in Review” was prepared by Roma Hadzewycz and Matthew Dubas of The Weekly’s editorial staff; our part-time staffer Christine Syzonenko; our colleagues Adrian Bryant, Beata Varchuk and Lesia Lebed; our correspondent Oksana Zakydalsky in Toronto; and Ihor Stelmach, our sports columnist. Credit for the layout goes to our layout artist Stefan Satisky.

The articles in this yearender were prepared based on stories about events of 2015 that were published in The Weekly – articles written by our staffers and regular correspondents, news sources like RFE/RL and Rusiya Daily Monitor, and submissions by community activists from near and far. Thank you to all!