

2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

As war in east continues, Ukraine moves Westward

Rocket 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 that hit a bus 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 28,000 casualties 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 Fesenko, 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 Lysenko, spokesman for the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO). The Ministry of Defense reported the most difficult situation was towards Debaltseve, where Kremlin-backed terrorists continued shelling Ukrainian positions. Towards Mariupol, militants repeatedly shelled Ukrainian positions. Several media outlets showed video footage of Kremlin-backed forces parading captured Ukrainian soldiers in Donetsk.

Also at the beginning of the year, on January 12, Interpol issued wanted person alerts for former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, former Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, and two of their associates on charges of embezzlement and misappropriation. The Ukrainian government had submitted an alert request as early as March



At the Minsk summit on February 12 (front row, from left) are: French President Francois Hollande, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, who hosted the meeting. Russian President Vladimir Putin is seen in the background.

2014 for Mr. Yanukovich for abuse of power and murder charges. Yet Interpol revealed that it didn't respond because the request wasn't compliant with its rules and regulations. Interpol's decision came criticism was mounting of the current government's failure to successfully criminally prosecute those who ordered and committed the shootings and killings in the winter of 2014 of Euro-Maidan activists. More than 100 were killed, and more than 1,000 were injured or missing. All the key Yanukovich administration officials fled abroad, mostly to the Russian Federation. As many as 5,000 people fled to Russia – that number included officials, their relatives, and support and service staff.

Meanwhile in Davos, 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 47 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, 78, told the Associated Press that Nadiya is a political prisoner and that Russian prosecutors have showed "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. Mrs. Savchenko launched her global campaign in Germany, where she pleaded for help from lawmakers and wrote to Chancellor Angela Merkel. New York was her second stop. She was traveling with her daughter's Russian lawyer, Mark Feygin.

On December 18, 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 Oleh 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 Symferopol, 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 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, Oleksander Kolchenko, received a sentence of 10 years. Earlier, two others arrested with Messrs. Sentsov and Kolchenko on the trumped-up charges, Oleksiy Chyorny and Hennadiy Afanasyev, were each sentenced to seven years in prison. When asked by the judge if the ruling was clear to them, Messrs. Sentsov and Kolchenko sang the Ukrainian national anthem and chanted "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!"

Amnesty International likened the proceedings in the Sentsov-Kolchenko case to the Soviet "trials" of the Stalin-



Aidar Battalion members carry the coffin of a fellow warrior on February 2 on Kyiv's Independence Square.

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Among the political prisoners being held in Russia during 2015 were Nadiya Savchenko and Oleh Sentsov.

era and called them “fatally flawed.” On November 24 the Russian Supreme Court upheld the verdicts in the Sentsov-Kolchenko trial. Among those speaking out in support of Mr. Sentsov, who is an internationally known film director, were prominent members of the European Film Academy.

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 people to its sanctions list. Some of those added had ties to Kremlin-linked insiders and companies who were previously sanctioned, including Gennady Timchenko, a wealthy oil trader believed to be close to President Putin. A total of 33 companies or other entities were cited, including subsidiaries of state-owned oil giant Rosneft and the company that manufactures Kalashnikov assault rifles. The European Union, meanwhile, said it would extend the freezing of assets and visa bans for 150 Russians and Ukrainian separatists, along with 37 companies and entities either located in Crimea or having ties to separatist units in eastern Ukraine.

At the end of 2015, the United States added another three dozen people and companies to its sanctions list. The European Union on December 18 agreed that it would extend economic sanctions against Russia for another six months over its role in the war in Ukraine.

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 after Western leaders warned it was the last chance to avoid an escalation in violence in the Donbas war, particularly with the U.S. leadership considering providing lethal arms. The Minsk II ceasefire agreement – signed by the 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, German Chancellor Merkel, Russian President Putin and Ukrainian President Poroshenko. Western and Ukrainians 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 can be a step that can remove us from the spiral of military escalation towards a political impulse 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.”

Analyst Vladimir Socor, writing for Eurasia Daily Monitor, pointed out that, “At no point does the agreement acknowledge Russia’s role as a party to the conflict, or the presence of Russian weaponry and military personnel on Ukraine’s territory.” Furthermore, he noted, “The 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.”

And still the fighting continued.

Ukraine’s armed forces suffered a major military defeat on February 18 when President Poroshenko announced their retreat from the key railroad hub of Debaltseve, about 47 miles northeast of Donetsk, after the fiercest battle of the Donbas war so far that raged since mid-January. Rather than adhering to the February 12 ceasefire, the Russian-backed forces threw all their resources at the battle and slaughtered Ukrainian soldiers as they retreated, news reports said, citing eyewitnesses.

On May 12, the long-awaited report by Boris Nemtsov on Russia’s involvement in the war in Ukraine – titled “Putin. War.” – was released in Moscow by colleagues of the murdered Russian opposition leader. The report documented the deaths of 220 Russian soldiers in the fighting in Ukraine’s east – a number that surely represents merely the tip of the iceberg. It was prepared by Mr. Nemtsov’s allies, who pieced together information he left behind, even though Russian authorities had seized his computer hard drives and documents, and despite the fact that many sources were not willing to speak with them after Mr. Nemtsov was killed – some say precisely because of his work on this topic. The report noted that Russia had spent at least \$1 billion on the war in Ukraine during its first 10 months, and it documented the use of Russian state funds to pay Russian citizens to fight in Ukraine.

The report showed how “the Russian government provided active political, economic, personnel and also direct military support to the separatists.” It noted the types of Russian military hardware used by the so-called separatists in eastern Ukraine and said Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was downed by these “separatists” with a Buk missile system. In addition, it detailed how the Russian government paid off families of Russian soldiers killed in the war to ensure their silence. Yet another interesting finding: Russian personnel were compelled to resign from the Russian military before being deployed to Ukraine, thus making possible the deniability of the presence of Russian forces.

Opposition activist Ilya Yashin said at the May 12 press conference at which the 64-page report was released: “We want to tell people the truth about what is happening in Russia, about what is happening in eastern Ukraine. We

want to catch Putin in his lies. We want to tell people that the president of Russia – a man who controls nuclear weapons and leads an enormous country – is lying to the Russian people and to the entire world.”

The war in Ukraine’s east continued throughout the year, despite the Minsk II ceasefire. Significant escalation was reported in mid-August when Russian-backed terrorists intensified attacks on towns in the Donetsk region where Ukrainian military forces were based. Intense battles were reported at the same time near the government-held city of Mariupol; they were focused on a strategic highway that connects Mariupol with Donetsk.

Speaking on September 27 at the United Nations summit on development, President Poroshenko said the conflict in Ukraine’s east was costing the country \$5 million a day – money that could better be spent on development. He added that the war with Russian-backed militants had made Ukraine lose about one-fifth of its economic potential and that the insurgency in the east had led to “the emergence of a new form of poverty, sudden or unexpected poverty” for tens of thousands of people.

Meeting at a summit in Paris on October 2, Russia and Ukraine reached verbal agreements towards resolving the war in the Donbas, including withdrawing armaments from the conflict line beginning on October 4 and canceling illegal elections planned that were to be held in the next few weeks. The meeting, which also involved the leaders of Germany and France, also set a basic 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 to run in elections next year under a special law to be drafted. Ongoing disagreements were apparent after the talks. President Poroshenko and his advisors vowed not to allow the elections to occur until Russian soldiers leave Ukraine and Ukrainian control of the border is restored. Yet French President Hollande said elections should occur before these conditions were met, with monitoring performed exclusively by the OSCE.

The downing of MH17

The Netherlands said on April 16 that, with nearly all of the victims of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) identified, efforts had shifted to finding those responsible for shooting the plane down over Ukraine on July 17, 2014, killing all 298 people on board. In March, Dutch media had reported that a metal fragment from the crash site matches a Russian-made rocket. On April 22 it was reported that more remains had been found at the crash site. The Dutch Justice Ministry said in a statement that along with human remains investigators also found passengers’ jewelry, passports and photographs.

On May 13, evidence emerged that a large Russian military convoy that traveled to eastern Ukraine in June 2014 had brought Buk anti-aircraft systems to Russia-backed separatists. That was a month before MH17 was downed. A group of pro-Ukrainian citizen activists published a report purportedly identifying a Russian soldier who was a driver in that convoy and showing photographs of Buk systems being escorted across Russia to Ukraine. Eliot Higgins, the founder of the citizen’s journalism website Bellingcat, said the information jibed well with Bellingcat’s own probes into the convoy that allegedly brought the Buk systems to eastern Ukraine, including the one he believes was used to shoot down MH17. “We’ve been looking at this same convoy, and there’s quite a lot of interesting information,” Mr. Higgins told RFE/RL. “We’ve found much, much more additional material. We’ve got the names of the people who were in the convoy. We’ve got a good idea of which vehicles they were driving. In fact, the guy who they feature in the article was actually almost certainly driving just one vehicle in front of the actual missile launcher that [we believe] shot down MH17.”

On July 2, Malaysia told the United Nations Security Council that it planned to push for a U.N.-backed tribunal to prosecute those suspected of shooting down MH17. The proposal was developed jointly by the five nations investigating the downing. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, whose country had the greatest number of nationals among the victims of the crash, said a U.N. tribunal is “the best option to prosecute those responsible for the MH17 disaster, as it is the best chance to get them before a court of law.”

On the first anniversary of MH17’s downing, Ukrainians, a deeply religious nation, mourned the citizens of 11 countries who had perished. Local residents in the towns where the plane’s remnants, and passengers’ bodies, rained from the sky, had erected memorials and

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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" sifting through the wreckage of MH17 soon after it was shot down by a Buk missile, realizing that this was a civilian aircraft, and then callously going through the belongings of the dead. Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said it was "sickening to watch." The country's prime minister, Tony Abbott, said the images show the downing was an atrocity – that the rebels were "deliberately shooting out of the sky what they knew was a large aircraft." Mr. Abbott stated that he had no doubt the aircraft was shot down with a Russian-supplied surface-to-air missile because "rebels don't get hold of this kind of weaponry by accident. I mean, this was obviously very sophisticated weaponry."

Then, on July 29, Russia vetoed a U.N. 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 backed the proposal by Malaysia, Australia, the Netherlands and Ukraine, while Angola, China and Venezuela abstained. The supporters of the resolution were three out of the five permanent members of the Security Council: France, the United Kingdom, 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 320-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 Joutstra 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: 61 airlines were flying over eastern Ukraine at the time, in the apparent belief that their aircraft were flying at high enough altitudes to avoid danger. Mr. Joutstra 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 investigation as "biased," with Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Ryabkov saying that, despite Moscow's efforts to organize an MH17 probe, "there are obvious attempts to carry out a political order."



Foreign leaders join with Ukraine's president on February 22 in the city center of Kyiv to remember the fallen on the first anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity.

Maidan anniversaries

In 2015, Ukraine marked the first anniversary of the massacre on the Maidan, when security forces of the Yanukovych regime killed over 100 people. President Poroshenko designated February 20, the day most of the victims lost their lives, as an official day of remembrance. RFE/RL reported: Church bells rang across the country and a minute of silence was held. Hundreds of people marched in Kyiv to honor their memory, and mourners laid flowers and candles at sites where protesters were shot dead. A religious service was held in Independence Square, where the protests took place. Another religious service took place at a church situated on a nearby street that saw some of the worst bloodshed. Mr. Poroshenko addressed the nation later in the day from Independence Square, promising to "do the maximum I can, so those huge losses our people suffered during the past year won't be wasted. We will stop the war and within the few years everyone will notice how Ukraine is changing."

In November, the country noted the second anniversary of the beginning of the Euro-Maidan movement. Unfortunately, the anniversary also brought to the fore 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. "Was it necessary to wait until the second anniversary of the Maidan to announce what we already knew on the Maidan?!" Oleh Rybachuk, a former head of the Presidential Secretariat, wrote on the gazeta.ua news site. "The law enforcement bodies aren't 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 prose-

cute 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 would soon begin to drop 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 event that EU sanctions are removed from the Yanukovych entourage through the fault of the procurator general, Vitaliy Yarema should be held politically responsible and resign," wrote National Deputy Serhiy Leshchenko 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 2004. 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 law enforcement system for more than a decade, including under 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 – 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 suicide. Just 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. Zawada 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 the Russian Federation, and 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 wasn't doing enough to address corruption.



Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko presents former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili as the new head of the Odessa Oblast State Administration to local residents on May 30.

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"Everything's in the hands of the new chair. He has time, society's support and healthy forces," said Mustafa Nayyem, a national deputy with the Poroshenko Bloc. "Mr. Sytnyk can go down in history as the first fighter against corruption, who was able to put behind bars top-tier officials, from ministers to judges, prosecutors, etc. Or he can become yet another inglorious official from the dark masses." Mr. Sytnyk was granted exceptional authority – with influence rivaling other top law enforcement officials – in accordance with legislation approved by Parliament in October 2014 that created the bureau and then amended in February of this year. His task is to uncover crimes at the highest levels of government and conduct pre-trial investigations, without any politician having the legal authority to interfere with the bureau's work.

Amidst rising criticism that reforms in Ukraine were proceeding too slowly, President Poroshenko in late May appointed former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili as head of the Odesa Oblast State Administration to lead the president's initiatives in the region, as well as oversee the spending of funds earmarked by the central Kyiv budget. Mr. Saakashvili is among the most popular post-Soviet politicians in Ukraine and the West after leading reforms that turned Georgia into a competitive economy. He has a long history in Ukraine, having studied alongside Mr. Poroshenko in Kyiv and learned the Ukrainian language. Mr. Saakashvili had spent recent months criticizing the Ukrainian government for failing to quickly carry out needed reforms.

Odesa is among the main sources of corruption in the Ukrainian economy, being the nation's biggest port and having a reputation for contraband for decades, dating back to the Soviet era. Odesa is also the nation's third-largest city, behind Kyiv and Kharkiv. In presenting Mr. 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 2015 drew to a close, 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 Yanukovich insider who eluded arrest was Serhii 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 Anton Gerashchenko, an advisor to the internal 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 Yanukovich officials infuriated critics, who believed that



Some of the first graduates of a new training program for Kyiv patrol police on July 2.

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 Yegor Sobolyev, 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. ... What 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 prosecutors he

had appointed to a commission to establish a Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office. These prosecutors were identified by Transparency International as Yanukovich 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 prosecutors 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 trained with the support of the project 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 greeted them by saying: "Millions of Ukrainians have 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, within the faction to expose and fight 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 their own corrupt business schemes, but even undermining their reform projects. "These were situations of the so-called 'deoligarchization' that began last



Participants at the rally of mourning held on May 18 on Kyiv's Independence Square to mark the 71st anniversary of Stalin's genocidal deportation of the Crimean Tatar people.

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year but was never completed and it's happening now, when each of us is being persecuted and being destroyed in the media. All of our attempts to bring this information to the country's leadership, to the procurator general, to law enforcement bodies merely ended with us being on our own. We decided to unite our efforts," said Mr. Nanyem.

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-governance on the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts occupied by Russian-backed terrorists. Although legislation creating specific procedures (previously referred to as "special status") 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 assured Parliament that it wouldn't lead to federalization, or creating an autonomous entity within Ukraine like Crimea.

Though insisting he was not being pressured, the president confirmed that the legal mechanism to establish the specific procedures was being demanded by the European Union and the United States. "We simply don't have the right to create with our own hands a situation that will leave Ukraine on its own against its aggressor," he said. "That's why now and in the future, when we will vote to approve the Constitution as a whole, we need to approach this vote with exceptional responsibility."

Later in the year, on August 31, constitutional amendments shifting certain state authority to local governments, including provisions related to the special procedures for parts of the Donbas, were approved by the Verkhovna Rada with support from the national deputies of the Poroshenko Bloc, the People's Front led by Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, the Russian-oriented Opposition Bloc and the deputies' groups will of the People and Rebirth, which consist of big businessmen and former members of the Party of Regions. Three of the five factions of the governing coalition – the Radical Party, Samopomich and Batkivshchyna – voted against the amendments. Part of the specific procedures called for granting full immunity to the Russian-backed terrorists from any prosecution, enabling them to run for political office in local elections, remain in office for the full length of their terms, appoint prosecutors and judges, form local police forces and establish "deep neighborly relations" with districts in the Russian Federation. "This is part of Putin's plan for splitting and federalizing Ukraine and is practically the legalization of the Russian occupation on the occupied territory of the Donbas," Radical Party

leader Oleh Lyashko said in an August 27 interview with the News One television network.

Outside the Parliament on August 31 were members of the Svoboda Party, the Radical Party, Pravyi Sektor and Ukrop (a party launched by Mr. Kolomoisky, a billionaire and rival of Mr. Poroshenko). They gathered to protest the lack of public discussion on the amendments, which had been approved by the Constitutional Court on July 31. Inside the Rada, Radical Party members blocked the podium and the work of the Parliament. Once the vote on the first reading of the constitutional amendments ultimately took place, violence broke out outside. Simple bombs and explosives were hurled toward the Parliament building and the attacks were capped off by a military grenade that killed three National Guardsmen and hospitalized over 90 people. It was Ukraine's most serious domestic political conflict since the Euro-Maidan.

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 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. RFE/RL reported that a special event, called "I Am a Crimean Tatar," was held in Kyiv on May 18 to remember the deportation 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 lost their lives during and after Crimea's annexation by Russia in March 2014.

A resolution passed by the Verkhovna 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 Verkhovna 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, Refat Chubarov, 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



Volodymyr Viatrovych speaks during a ceremony at the Mystetskyi Arsenal in Kyiv, where the "Remembrance Poppy," Ukraine's new symbol of victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, was unveiled on April 7.

get anything," said Mr. Dzhemilev. The Kyiv-based group Crimea Civil Blockade issued a series of demands: release political prisoners; stop interference in Crimean 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 Crimean Tatar leaders entering Crimea.

On November 22, Crimean Tatars launched their biggest countermeasure since the beginning of the Russian occupation of their homeland by ruining 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 were lacking access to not only electricity, but also water, heat, gasoline and cash, the news.allcrimea.net website reported. Mr. Dzhemilev, the president's ombudsman 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.

To stop the activists, the Ukrainian government dispatched National Guardsmen and fighters of the Kherson Battalion, a division of the Internal Affairs Ministry. At the same time, Mr. Poroshenko held a meeting in the Presidential Administration with Crimean Tatar leaders, who were accompanied by more than 100 demonstrators outside, on Bankova Street, who urged the president not to allow law enforcement officers to interfere with the activists. As a result of the meeting, Mr. Poroshenko agreed to order the Cabinet of Ministers to impose a trade embargo on Crimea. The Cabinet fulfilled the order with the State Border Service implementing it on November 24. Repairs of the electrical lines began as early as November 25. Activists allowed crews to conduct all the necessary repairs, Mr. Dzhemilev told the Deutsche Welle news agency, adding, however, that the Tatars' demands hadn't changed.

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, part of a shift away from the Soviet imagery 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. "The time has 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 Viatrovych, 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" and created a "cult of war." 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 basis in the form of a presidential decree that made May 8 the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation. Mr. Viatrovych also stated: "It is extremely important to honor the victims and heroes of this war in a Ukrainian manner, because Ukraine was one of the main arenas of the second world war. According to various estimates, about 10 million Ukrainians were victims of the war. Ukrainians made a decisive contribution to the victory over Nazism in the Red Army, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the armies of Poland, France, Great Britain and



A flag from the battle of Ilovaisk that was on display in the exhibit "Power of the Unbroken" on Kyiv's St. Michael Square, part of the first commemorations of the Day of the Defender of Ukraine, October 14.

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President Petro Poroshenko and First Lady Maryna Poroshenko place symbolic bouquets of wheat before the statue named "The Sad Memory of Childhood" on November 28 at the national museum complex dedicated to the memory of Holodomor victims.

other countries. Together, they made the victory over fascism possible."

In a related development, Ukraine's Parliament approved several historic bills on April 9 that took decisive steps to part with the country's Soviet legacy. One of the bills recognized on the state level all those who fought for Ukrainian independence in the 20th century, in armed, paramilitary, underground or political organizations, including the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, the Ukrainian National Republic, government bodies of Carpatho-Ukraine, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union and dozens of others. Another bill required the removal of all public Soviet symbols and monuments, and the renaming of all cities, towns and villages bearing Soviet names. The largest to be affected was Dnipropetrovsk, the city of 993,000 residents named after Grigory Petrovsky, a leader in the Red Terror of 1918-1923 and the Holodomor of 1932-1933.

"From now on, children won't ride on carousels in parks named after executioners, students won't study in institutes named after terrorists, and lovers won't arrange their dates on squares named after killers," National Deputy Yuriy Lutsenko, head of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc parliamentary faction, wrote on his Facebook page.

Never was it more apparent that Russia and Ukraine were going their separate ways than the 2015 commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany, noted Mr. Zawada. Not only will the main commemorations be held on different days, but the Ukrainian state events will be stripped of any symbolism of Soviet communism for the first time. The government also decided to do away with the May 9 military parade on Kyiv's central boulevard, the Khreshchatyk, once and for all. "This era has disappeared forever, at least in our country," said Yuriy Krykunov, a Kyiv City Council deputy who is among those responsible for organizing the 2015 commemorations. "I think these commemorations will be two absolute contrasts, revealing that we are moving towards civilization and they [in Russia] are moving towards a dead end."

Victory Day, marked on May 9, has been among the biggest holidays on the Ukrainian calendar ever since 1965, when it was established. Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) has been commemorated on May 8 in the Western world because that's when the German Nazi leadership declared its capitulation. Yet Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin declared Victory Day on May 9 because it was 0:43 a.m. Moscow time when the act was signed (22:43 in Berlin). In a symbolic move intended as a break from the past and as indication of Ukraine's European integration, the government held a larger ceremony for the May 8 commemoration, as compared to the limited events planned for May 9.

Another sign of the changing narrative in Ukraine came on October 14 as Ukraine for the first time marked a new national holiday – Day of the Defender of Ukraine – established to honor the courage and heroism of the defenders of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The date coincides with the religious feast day of St. Mary the Protectress (Pokrova). On the legendary Khortytsia Island in Zaporizhia, President Poroshenko took part in a special ceremony at which students of the Ivan Bohun Kyiv Lyceum and Zaporizhia Regional Lyceum took their oaths as part of their intensified military-technical training. In his speech to the cadets, he emphasized the importance of historic ties among all generations of

Ukrainians who struggled for the independence and freedom of the country and recalled the words of Bohdan Khmelnytsky: "We are a freedom-loving people, always willing to die for our freedom." Speaking of today's defenders of Ukraine, Mr. Poroshenko noted that over 93,000 Ukrainian soldiers were direct participants in the war, almost 108,000 took part in the ATO, and 210,000 came to the army in six waves of mobilization – one-sixth of them volunteers.

Poroshenko's self-assessment

Assessing his first year in office, President Poroshenko offered an uncharacteristically sober view in which he acknowledged disappointments with the government. He also stressed achievements, such as thwarting Russia's attempts to split Ukraine. The evaluations and political plans came in a June 4 address to the Verkhovna Rada and a June 5 press conference. "I am often asked whether I'm satisfied with the work of the government. No. Am I satisfied with the work of the Verkhovna Rada? Also no, obviously. I'll say more – I am dissatisfied with my own work," Mr. Poroshenko said. Mr. Poroshenko confirmed that his government wouldn't be able to return Crimea to Ukrainian control for at least a year, while insisting, "Crimea remains our top priority." At the same time, he acknowledged the government had yet to prepare a strategy for returning Crimea – a document that was being preparing by the National Security and Defense Council.

He underscored that Ukraine's armed forces must remain on guard for a possible full-scale Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory. A "colossal threat" also remains of wide-scale fighting conducted by Russian-backed forces, which currently include 14 battalion-tactical groups with more than 9,000 soldiers on Ukrainian territory, he said. As his biggest success, the president cited the government's success in undermining the Russian government's attempts to create a separatist Novorossiia state, encompassing the eight oblasts of southeastern Ukraine. "The Kremlin was counting on the bacilli planted by Russian intelligence services to provoke an epidemic of separatism in the eastern and southern oblasts, but that idea didn't find support anywhere, including the Donbas," he told the Verkhovna Rada. "Even in the temporarily occupied districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the separatists are being kept in power only thanks to Russian bayonets."

Celebrating, remembering

The Ukrainian government commemorated the start of its 25th year of independence from Moscow on August 24 by hosting a march of the nation's top soldiers along the Khreshchatyk and awarding Anti-Terrorist Operation commanders honorary battle flags. Though it dropped the display of armaments and hardware as was the case in the previous year's parade, the Ukrainian government emphasized the military theme, which remains relevant as Russian-backed terrorists continue to engage in daily attacks on Ukrainian military and civilian targets.

"It was you who made an attack deep into Ukraine impossible for the enemy, who – besides the Anschluss of Crimea and Sevastopol – tried, attempted and planned to annex at a minimum eight other Ukrainian regions in the framework of the so-called Novorossiia project," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said in a pre-Independence Day speech on August 22 to soldiers at the Chuhuyiv Airfield in the Kharkiv region. "It was you who freed from the occupants a large part of Ukrainian Donbas and contained the fighters in the southeastern districts of

these two regions [Donetsk and Luhansk]. It's you who, in tightly closing off the fighting lines, are holding the defense against the aggressor with an impenetrable fortress. Thanks to you, the price of a likely Russian attack became so high that even the most intoxicated Russian minds sobered up. But that doesn't insure us against a large-scale escalation of military activity in the east, the likelihood of which grows with Independence Day."

Speaking on August 24 during the March of Independence in central Kyiv, the president said: "Russian aggression has become a catalyst of our unity. We have been completely formed as a single Ukrainian political nation." He emphasized that "today, we are stronger than yesterday. ...We cannot be enslaved or broken. We were born free on our land. And we are ready to defend it until the end at any cost." He added these words of caution: "We have to walk through the 25th year of independence as if we are on a thin ice. We should understand: the slightest misstep can be fatal. The war for independence still continues. And one can win it by combining defensive efforts, diplomatic skills, political responsibility and iron self-control."

On November 28, Holodomor Remembrance Day, Mr. Poroshenko spoke of those he called "people of the truth," who "broke through the tight blockage of deception and disinformation in which Moscow held Ukraine and the whole world for decades." Among these people he cited Robert Conquest, James Mace, Lydia Kovalenko and Volodymyr Maniak. He continued: "The truth pierced its way to the people. See how Ukraine has changed over the last two, three, four years. According to today's sociological research, 80 percent of Ukrainians consider the Holodomor an act of genocide. Such an assessment prevails throughout Ukraine without any exception – in the east and in the west."

The president also pointed to a historic continuity: Russia's "hatred of Ukraine and the uncontrollable desire to destroy us, Ukrainians, as a separate nation." He added, "In this historical continuity, the Holodomor is nothing but a manifestation of a centuries-old hybrid war against Ukraine waged by Russia. Whether they take our grain or fire Grad rockets at our land, their goal remains the same and it is clear."

Moving Westward

As Ukraine tried to move Westward during 2015, the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga on May 21-22 revealed the European Union had lost the boldness it demonstrated in Vilnius in November 2013, when its participants ostracized President Yanukovich for declining to sign the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement. After the military aggression demonstrated by the Russian government since then, EU leaders had demonstrated heightened caution, refraining from any direct condemnations of Russia and mutedly encouraging the six post-Soviet member states on their Euro-integration efforts. In the summit's joint declaration, the EU refrained from making clearer Ukraine's prospects for membership, let alone offering visa-free travel regimes. For the first time, the declaration referred to "trilateral consultations" on the Ukraine-EU Free Trade Area, calling the January 1, 2016, launch date "provisional."

The declaration "reads like a successful sting operation by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB)," Anders Aslund, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, wrote on May 26, describing the summit as a "disaster" for Ukraine. The consensus among numerous political observers was that Ukraine remains on track for Euro-integration, but both the Russians and the Ukrainians themselves had succeeded in dampening the enthusiasm. "The EU is tired of Ukraine's desire to gain political results without real work," said Bohdan Yaremenko, a Ukrainian diplomat and head of the Maidan Foreign Affairs Fund.

However, the EU and Ukraine did sign a 1.8 billion-euro (\$2 billion) loan deal to help revive Ukraine's ailing economy. The Associated Press reported the agreement, part of the EU's Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) program, would require Ukraine to adopt a series of reforms, including anti-corruption measures, to remedy structural problems in its economy. The agreement brought the total amount of EU assistance to Ukraine in the past two years to about 6 billion euros. Ukraine's Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko told journalists that the EU support was "critical" to her country. "This third macro-financial assistance package is the largest to date... and a testament to the EU's belief that Ukraine can and will steer through this challenging period and progress along our path of reform and transformation," she said.

Poland continued to be a strong supporter of Ukraine during 2015. On April 9, President Bronislaw Komorowski addressed the Verkhovna Rada, stating that Poland has



President Bronislaw Komorowski of Poland addresses the Verkhovna Rada on April 9.

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“stretched out its hand to Ukraine and is doing everything – and will do everything – so that other states and peoples of the free Western world stretch their hands out to Ukraine as well.” According to RFE/RL, he also underscored that “Poland’s outstretched hand is not just an indication of the current political trend but our 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 clearly at Moscow and stressed that the West must understand the importance of Ukraine’s security. “One cannot tolerate that the aggressor’s soldiers, tanks, armored personnel 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 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 NATO summit, which will occur in Warsaw in early July 2016. In the context of their plans to relaunch a presidential consultation committee to discuss projects and initiatives, the two leaders agreed on settling remaining conflicts over culture in order to ensure regional cooperation on crucial issues of security and defense. “In giving 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 a 1 billion euro currency swap – exchanging that equivalent in Polish zloty and Ukrainian hryvni – in what 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. The Polish leadership also agreed to offer consultations 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 European market.

As for cultural issues, Mr. Poroshenko lauded the cooperation that had begun between Polish and Ukrainian Institutes of National Memory. 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 pages 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 argue, a third party benefits. I am sure we won’t allow that. And our approach will be very responsible.”

Ukraine at the United Nations

On September 17, Ukraine’s Ambassador to the U.N. Yuriy Sergeyev tweeted that thus far 70 countries of the U.N. 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. It said the veto has too often been used to “cover up the crime of aggression by a permanent member of the U.N. 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 – its usage 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 anytime and ‘pulled off from the sleeve’ in order to avoid fair punishment.” He noted that since the beginning of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, Russia had used its veto on the Security Council twice when that body was considering questions related to Ukraine.

It was highly significant that Ukraine on October 15 won a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council for the 2016-2017 term as the representative of Eastern Europe. Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin, who trav-

eled to New York to campaign for his country’s election, said Ukraine has a broader global agenda but that its tone with Russia will “definitely not be conciliatory.” He added, “For the first time, we have an absolutely unique, unimaginable situation... that a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council is an aggressor in Ukraine, waging a hybrid war against Ukraine.”

Local elections held nationwide

Our Kyiv correspondent wrote of the October 25 nationwide local elections that, “Exhausted by war, economic depression and ongoing government corruption, Ukrainians turned out less-than-expected to elect their local councils and council heads.” As expected, the Solidarity Petro Poroshenko Bloc performed well, finishing in the top two parties on most councils in western and central Ukraine. The youth-oriented Samopomich performed surprisingly well, earning seats in the nation’s six largest city councils. On the other hand, Euro-Maidan persecutors were re-elected mayors of numerous cities in southeastern Ukraine, including Kharkiv and Odesa.

Voter turnout was 46.6 percent, far lower than the 60 to 74 percent projected by various experts. “The low turnout at the elections means Ukrainians believe in neither the government nor the opposition. No one without exception,” Serhiy Rudenko, a veteran political observer at the Espresso television network, wrote on his Facebook page. “The absence of tangible reforms, the further decline in quality of life, the prolonged war in Donbas – all this has already fed up Ukrainians.”

Restructuring Ukraine’s debt

Kyiv reached a debt-restructuring deal with a group of international creditors under which part of its debt will be written off. RFE/RL reported that Prime Minister Yatsenyuk said on August 27 that investors who own Ukraine’s bonds will write off 20 percent of their holdings, shrinking \$18 billion in sovereign debt to \$15.5 billion. The deal will also extend the payment period on the government bonds by four years through 2027. Finance Minister Jaresko, who was widely lauded for the deal, said Kyiv will use the saved 20 percent to spend on social welfare and national defense. International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde said the agreement will “help restore debt sustainability and – together with the authorities’ policy reform efforts – will substantively meet the objectives” set by an IMF bailout program. She also appealed to other bondholders to endorse the deal.

Our correspondent Mr. Zawada explained that the main success of the debt restructuring was that it postponed the first debt payments to 2019. This enabled the government to avoid a possible default, as well as continue building its international reserves, which are critical for supporting the hryvnia, Ukraine’s currency. “The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is elated with this agreement because it means its Ukraine program will be fully financed, while Ukraine is elated because it won’t have to pay anything for the next four years. By then, the Ukrainian economy will be in an entirely different condition, I hope,” said Dr. Anders Aslund, a resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

However, the threat remained that Russia, which declined to participate in the debt-restructuring agree-



Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko at the early morning session of the Verkhovna Rada on December 25, 2015, when the 2016 budget was approved.



Yuriy Sergeyev/Twitter

U.N. Ambassador Yuriy Sergeyev tweeted on September 17 that thus far 70 countries of the U.N. General Assembly’s 193 members are in favor of stripping Russia of its veto power on the U.N. Security Council.

ment, would insist Ukraine pay its debt by the end of the year. It was then-President Yanukovich who in 2013 took on a loan of \$3 billion from Russia, which was offered as an incentive for Ukraine not to move toward the European Union. Now that loan was a danger, since Russia threatened to bloc future IMF funds to Ukraine if its loan was not fully paid back by the end of December 2015. Russia said on December 9 that it would take Ukraine to court if it defaulted on the payment. Kyiv responded by saying it was ready to fight Moscow in court.

And, at the end of the year...

As 2015 came to a close, Russia issued a new banknote dedicated to Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula annexed illegally by the Kremlin in 2014. RFE/RL reported that the new banknote, worth 100 rubles (\$1.41 U.S.), depicts a memorial to sunken ships in the port of Sevastopol, where Russia keeps its Black Sea Fleet, and the Swallow’s Nest, a cliff-top castle near Yalta. The yellow-colored note also features a watermark of Empress Catherine the Great, who extended the borders of the Russian Empire in the 18th century to absorb Crimea. Russia’s central bank said in a statement it would issue 20 million of the new notes.

There was news that highly destructive computer malware infected power authorities in Ukraine and caused a power failure that affected hundreds of thousands of homes on December 23, leaving about half of the homes in the Ivano-Frankivsk region without electricity. Researchers from the security firm iSIGHT Partners, who studied samples of the malicious code that infected at least three regional operators, confirmed the malware led to “destructive events” that in turn caused the blackout. “It’s a milestone,” John Hultquist of iSIGHT told Arstechnica.com. “It’s the major scenario we’ve all been concerned about for so long.” Trend Micro researcher Kyle Wilhoit told Reuters: “This is the first time we have proof and can tie malware to a particular outage. It is pretty scary.” Antivirus provider ESET said multiple Ukrainian power authorities were infected by “BlackEnergy,” a package discovered in 2007 that has been repeatedly updated to include new destructive functions. A Moscow-backed group, Sandworm, is suspected of using it for targeted attacks.

The leaders of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine renewed their support for a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. The office of the French presidency said in a statement on December 30 that the four leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to the “concerted withdrawal without delay of heavy weapons.” German Chancellor Merkel, French President Hollande, Russian President Putin and Ukrainian President Poroshenko reportedly spoke by phone for two hours. The four leaders emphasized the need to follow through on the Minsk peace accords over the coming year, including preparations for local elections at the start of 2016 in areas of eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russian rebels.

Finally, as January 1, 2016, approached – the date that the free trade agreement between Ukraine and the European Union was to go into effect – last-ditch negotiations aimed at addressing Russia’s concerns and its demands that its trade interests be taken into account, ended without result. The trade deal went ahead after the parliaments of all 28 member states of the European Union had ratified the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine, a milestone that had been attained on November 20.

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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 update on April 16, CIUS hosted a talk by Prof. John-Paul Himka and Natalia 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 “Providna Nedilia,” 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, Chernobyl, those who served in the armed forces of the U.S.A. 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 Mstyslav, the first patriarch of Kyiv and all Ukraine, at Holy Resurrection Mausoleum. The Ukrainian Cultural Center was busy

with vendors and exhibits, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Museum informed 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 openly supported the Russian side, 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” about 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 Onufrii 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 nuncio 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 Greco-Catholic Church in North America on May 8-10 at Holy Spirit Seminary in Ottawa. The event, sponsored by the Ukrainian Patriarchal Society and the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute (MASI) of Eastern Christian Studies, attracted clergy as well as scholars. Led by the Rev. Dr. Andriy Chirovsky, topics focused on current challenges facing the Ukrainian Catholic Church in North America, especially the opportunities presented by the Revolution of Dignity and the 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 mistranslation 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 National Women's League 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 jubilee report to mark 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 Andriyishyn, rector of Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Interparishal Seminary at St. Paul University in Ottawa.

Pope Francis signed a decree on July 16 that recognized Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in 1901-1944 as “venerable.” 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 the lives of Jews during the Holocaust. The year 2015 marked the 150th anniversary of the Catholic leader's birth. Bishop Borys Gudziak noted that, “The Soviets did not liquidate the Greek-Catholic Church while he was alive.” He was allowed a public funeral, but five months later, the Soviets arrested all the bishops and moved toward declaring the Ukrainian



At the Sanctuary Project's February 17 workshop (from left) are: Nadia Cyncar, Tom Ward, Frances Swyripa, Natalie Kononenko, John-Paul Himka, Heather Coleman, Meaghan Patterson, Father Alexy Surayev, Elaine Harasymow, Mike Luchanski, Karen Lemiski and Roman Shiyan.

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Catholic Church illegal.

On July 17, the Rev. Dr. Peter Galadza, the MASI 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 Andriy 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 Catholics 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 severe economic pressures 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.”



Religious Information Service of Ukraine

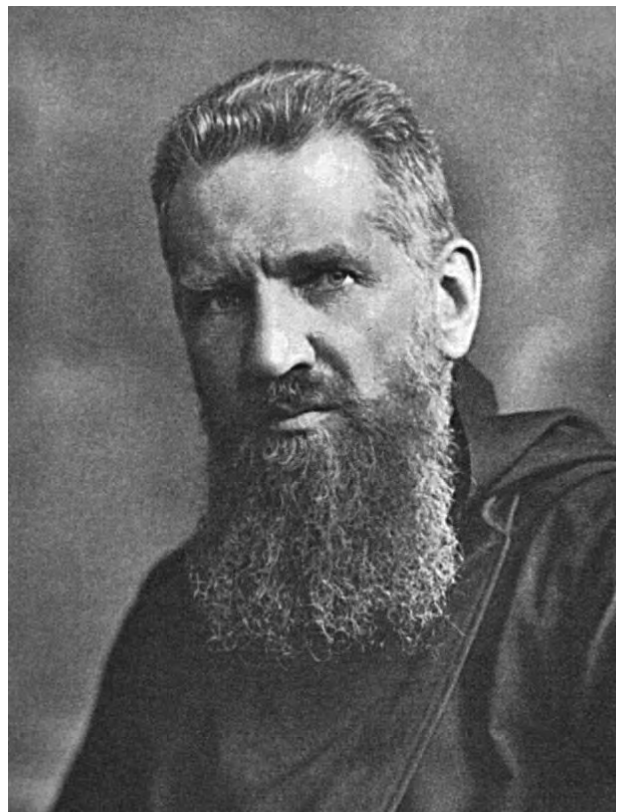
Patriarch Sviatoslav of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church presents Pope Francis with a medal commemorating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky. During the October 14 meeting, the patriarch informed the pontiff about the dire situation in Ukraine.

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 Ss. 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; Rosytlav 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 reli-



Metropolitan Andrey 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.)

gious leaders of Ukraine visited the Holdomor monument that was unveiled and blessed on November 7.

Patriarch Sviatoslav, joined by Metropolitan Stefan Soroka, Bishop John Bura and Bishop emeritus Basil Losten, Bishop John McIntyre 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 Hordashevska, who founded the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2001 during his visit to Ukraine. The patriarch blessed icons of Metropolitan Sheptytsky and Sister Josaphata that were written by iconographer Chrystyna Dochwat, 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 Holdomor 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.



U.S.-Ukraine Foundation

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.

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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; they thought the U.S. would indeed provide Ukraine with the 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-lethal aid to Ukraine despite the existential threat to this strategic ally 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 Kyiv that the U.S. stands with the people of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. Those who 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 unacceptability 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 Ukraine's democracy, and reassuring our NATO 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 boastful 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



U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden gets a standing ovation while addressing the Verkhovna Rada on December 8.

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-Ill.) 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-Ill.), 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 Kyiv, "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 capacity that has 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 "violation of international norms." He said Russia was disregarding Ukraine's sovereignty with its involvement in eastern Ukraine, and charged that pro-Russian separatist leaders and the core of 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 had spheres of influence and that every independent country had the "sovereign 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, whose 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 Ukraine crisis, Sens. McCain and



During a U.S. congressional delegation's meeting with Ukraine's president and ministers on March 11 (from left) are: U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, Rep. Steve Womack, Rep. Steve Israel, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Rep. Kay Granger, President Petro Poroshenko, Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, Rep. John Carter, Rep. Marcy Kaptur, Rep. Pete Visclosky, Rep. Ken Calvert, Minister of Finance Natalie Jaresko and Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin.

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Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) 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 hands-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 Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) on February 24 introduced a resolution that called for the United States to assist Ukraine with economic, social and governmental reform efforts; urged 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 Lviv to Luhansk, from Chernivtsi to Sevastopol, Ukrainians are coming together to define their own future."

On March 1, the U.S. said 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 to come into force." The ambassador added, "This conflict may be ended by one phone call – a call by 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, a bipartisan group of House leaders and committee chairs – eight Republicans and three Democrats – sent a letter to President Obama, writing: "In the wake of a ceasefire agreement that appears 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.); Foreign Affairs 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 Subcommittee Chairman Rodney P. Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.); and State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-Texas).

Also on March 4, during a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the topic "Ukraine Under Siege," Helsinki Commission Chair Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) took the Obama administration to task for its delay in providing defensive military assistance to Ukraine. "We have a de facto defensive weapons arms embargo on Ukraine ... Delay is denial. People are dying," Rep. Smith said. "Over 6,000 are dead. Many of these are children and women." He continued, "[The Ukrainians] need us ... they told me off-the-record how profoundly disappointed they are in President Obama, especially in light of people around him saying, 'Please, Mr. President, this is a time for American leadership.' When will the decision [to provide defensive military assistance] be made? ... They need defensive weapons and they need them now."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 10 called into session two panels to hear testimony on President Obama's policy toward Ukraine, sparked by the president's statement in diplomatic channels in February that his administration will not offer military assistance to Ukraine. In his opening remarks, the committee's chairman Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) emphasized that "the provision of lethal assistance aims to increase Ukraine's defense capabilities in a way that will give Kyiv the ability to produce conditions on the ground favorable to a genuine peace process. By equipping Ukraine with the means to impose a greater military cost on Russia, the United States will be contributing to a quicker, fairer and more stable settlement of the conflict." The hearing featured some heated questioning by the senators of administration officials, who were asked such questions as: Why has the administration not fully implemented the Ukraine Freedom Support Act? When will the administration realize that Minsk II has failed? Why has the U.S. not fulfilled its obligations to Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum? Why should there be any hope for peace knowing Mr. Putin's record?

The Atlantic Council on March 6 hosted a presentation and discussion on "Human Rights Abuses in Russian-Occupied Crimea" that featured an extensive report by Andrii Klymenko, chief editor of the Black Sea News and chairman of the supervisory board for Maidan Foreign Affairs. Mr. Klymenko detailed Russia's tactics in Crimea, including: imposing Russian citizenship and forcing residents to renounce Ukrainian citizenship; expelling people deemed to be disloyal; violating the rights of the Crimean Tatars; creating an information ghetto; and expropriating Ukrainian state property.

On March 16, Jen Psaki, spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State, delivered a press statement on the "one-year anniversary of the sham 'referendum' in Crimea, held in clear violation of Ukrainian law and the Ukrainian Constitution." She said the vote was "not voluntary, transparent or democratic," and underscored: "We do not, nor will we, recognize Russia's attempted annexation and call on President Putin to end his country's occupation of Crimea. ... This week, as Russia attempts to validate its cynical and calculated 'liberation' of Crimea, we reaffirm that sanctions related to Crimea will remain in place as long as the occupation continues. The United States continues to support Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and right to self-determination."

The House of Representatives on March 23 overwhelmingly passed House Resolution 162 "calling on the president to provide Ukraine with military assistance to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity." The vote was 348 for and 48 against. The measure resolved that "the House of Representatives strongly urges the president to fully and immediately exercise the authorities provided by Congress to provide Ukraine with lethal defensive weapon systems to enhance the ability of the people of Ukraine to defend their sovereign territory from the unprovoked and continuing aggression of the Russian Federation. The resolution was sponsored by Rep. Engel and had 12 cosponsors.

Keeping up the pressure on President Obama and his administration was a March 24 letter from the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense, in which Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Peter Visclosky (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



Yaro Bihun

With Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko standing beside him in front of the International Monetary Fund headquarters building, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk recounts the Ukrainian military and economic issues discussed during their three days of talks in Washington on June 8-10.

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Initiative Fund specifically to provide aid to Ukraine and the Baltic states. We request that a substantial amount of funding be reprogrammed to that fund thereby increasing the amount of funding available for assistance."

Reps. Frelinghuysen and Visclosky, along with six other members of the Defense Subcommittee, had recently 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 "alarming": "As you are aware, President Putin is using Ukraine as a test bed for a new type of warfare by using state-sponsored insurgents to carry out his campaign. The Russians are clearly managing the command and control of the insurgency and have invaded Ukraine using the façade of this insurgency for plausible deniability. Additionally, Russia is overwhelmingly winning 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 had 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," with the State Department using the expression three times in a single statement lambasting them for a series of ceasefire violations.

On May 27, the U.S. announced \$18 million in additional U.S. humanitarian assistance 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 persons 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," it drew on open source material and used social media posts to track the movement of Russian soldiers and equipment across the border into Ukraine. "There would be no conflict in Ukraine today but for Putin's strategy to provoke one," said Damon Wilson, the Atlantic Council's executive vice-president of programs and strategy, and one of the report's five co-authors. "We don't have a Ukraine problem, we have a Putin problem." The 36-page report 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 total U.S. humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the start of the crisis to nearly \$69 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 material and essential 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 October 16 the U.S. announced nearly \$15 million in additional humanitarian assistance through U.S. Agency for International Aid Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. The funds were for emergency shelter assistance to help more than 35,000 people get through 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.



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.

On November 14 the United States delivered two AN/TPQ-36 radar systems to Ukraine at a ceremony in Yavoriv, Lviv Oblast. President Poroshenko had the opportunity 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 and civilians against rocket and 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.

Toward the end of the year, on November 25, 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 militants, including \$50 million for defensive lethal assistance and counter-artillery radars. "We welcome this important decision that has demonstrated unity in the positions of the U.S. administration and Congress in support of Ukraine in countering Russian military aggression," Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in its statement.

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" on December 12, 2015. The discussion featured a panel of activists who are working to keep the world's attention focused on the troubling human rights dimensions of Crimea's illegal annexation by Russia. Orest Deychakiwsky, a policy advisor at the Helsinki Commission who chaired the briefing, in his opening remarks emphasized: "Russia's forcible and illegal occupation of Ukraine's sovereign territory of Crimea in March 2014 resulted in a deplorable human rights situation and other serious consequences that continue to this day. Changes in government and the legal framework in Crimea following the attempted annexation have had a toxic impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Violations of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights are widespread, especially against those who oppose the Russian occupation, including Crimean Tatars and other ethnic, political and religious groups." Mr. Deychakiwsky pointed out that Russia's takeover of Crimea was not internationally recognized and "both the [U.S.] administration and Congress have addressed the Russian occupation of Crimea in various ways, including through legislation and through concrete sanctions against Russia, including Crimea-specific sanctions."

In an effort to address the international legal obligations of Russia as an occupying power in Crimea, a group of experts, researchers and activists released a report titled "Human Rights on Occupied Territory: Case of Crimea." Published by the VOLYA Institute for

Contemporary Law and Society and the Ukrainian American organization Razom, the report emphasized that "according to the international law on occupation, the Russian Federation as an occupying power is obliged to ensure that everyone is treated humanely and without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or any other basis." Testimony at the Helsinki Commission was provided by Ivanna Bilych, a New York attorney and one of the co-authors of the report; Bohdan Yaremenko, a leader of the Ukrainian NGO Maidan of Foreign Affairs and a former diplomat; Andriy Klymenko, chief editor of Black Sea News and a prominent economist, originally from Crimea; and Yuriy Yatsenko, an activist of the Revolution of Dignity who was illegally imprisoned in Russia on political grounds in May 2014, suffering brutal torture and criminal prosecution.

Yaroslav Brisiuck, the deputy chief of mission of the Embassy of Ukraine in the U.S., thanked the Helsinki Commission for holding the briefing: "There's nothing more important to Ukraine, to the government, to civil society, the NGOs, to all citizens of Ukraine than stopping Russian aggression, the continued occupation of Crimea and egregious human rights abuses. We must not allow this topic to fall off the radar and be out-shadowed by other crises of today."

U.S. officials visit Ukraine

During the year, there were a number of visits by U.S. officials to Ukraine. Among them were the following.

House of Representatives Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Frelinghuysen led a bipartisan congressional delegation to Ukraine that met on March 11 with President Poroshenko. Delegation members were: Reps. Granger, Visclosky, Kaptur, John Carter (R-Texas), Ken Calvert (R-Calif.), Steve Womack (R-Ark.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.). The delegation met with President Poroshenko and members of his Cabinet. Discussions centered on the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. The delegation discussed further U.S. military and economic support for Ukraine as it fights Russia-backed separatists and Russian soldiers in eastern Ukraine. President Poroshenko told the members of Congress that the Ukrainian nation is paying a high price for freedom and independence, and that Ukrainian warriors are demonstrating heroism and courage while defending peace in Europe. "Every Ukrainian understands that we are struggling for freedom and democracy of the entire European continent and, probably, the entire world," he said.

Rep. Frelinghuysen later noted in a message to constituents: "The people and the government of Ukraine deserve praise for their courageous defense of their independence and sovereignty in the face of brutal attacks by Russian-armed separatists and Russian soldiers. This violence continues even after the Minsk 'ceasefire' went into effect. In anticipation of further Russian efforts to destabilize Ukraine and seize additional territory, I believe the United States should approve additional measures to help Ukraine defend its sovereign territory, including the transfer of lethal, defensive weapons systems to the Ukrainian military."

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Sen. McCain, speaking on June 20 at a joint press briefing in Kyiv with Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and Barrasso, said the U.S. must lead the free world in countering Russia's naked aggression against Ukraine and must urgently provide Ukraine with defensive weapons, intelligence and any necessary assistance. "We will urge President Barack Obama to implement the will of the Congress and that of the American people," he said, arguing that the current reluctant support of Ukraine by the United States and Europe is "shameful and disgraceful." The delegation of U.S. senators took part in a series of meetings with Ukrainian leaders, including the president and prime minister, and Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and members of a congressional delegation on August 5 visited the Maidan, where they placed flowers on a memorial for the Heavenly Brigade. During their visit to Ukraine's capital they also met with President Petro Poroshenko and other leaders. Members of the delegation, all Democrats, were Reps. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, Anna Eshoo of California, Chellie Pingree of Maine, David Cicilline of Rhode Island, Cedric Richmond of Louisiana and Marc Veasey of Texas. A release from the Democratic minority leader's office noted that the congressional delegation was focused on national, economic and energy security. "It is with great humility that our delegation comes to Maidan. We observed from afar the courage, the self-determination of the people of Ukraine to have a more democratic, open, transparent society. So, we come in solidarity with them. We come in sympathy for those who lost their lives speaking out for freedom. We come with great sadness, great sadness as to how this could possibly happen. We come with great respect for the Revolution of Dignity," Rep. Pelosi said.

In early December, Vice-President Biden visited Kyiv. "If Russian aggression persists, the cost imposed on Moscow will continue to rise," Mr. Biden said on December 8 in a rare appearance by a top Western official before the Verkhovna Rada. "The U.S. will maintain pressure until Moscow fulfills its [peace deal] commitments," he said, and "there can be no sanctions relief unless until Russia meets all of its commitments under the Minsk agreement." Russia "is occupying sovereign Ukrainian territory" in Crimea and has violated international law by illegally seizing the Ukrainian peninsula. "The United States will never recognize" Russia's annexation of Crimea, he underscored.

RFE/RL reported that the vice-president also told the national deputies they have "an obligation to their homeland to answer the call of history" and build a united democratic nation. "It is no exaggeration to say the hopes of freedom-loving people the world over are with you, because so much rides on your fragile experiment with democracy succeeding," Mr. Biden said. He noted that each national deputy will be judged by future generations upon whether they put the greater good of all Ukrainian people over local interests that have divided the country. He urged Ukraine to make painful but crucial reforms to make governance more transparent, noting that "corruption eats Ukraine like cancer." The U.S. vice-president also said elected officials must remove conflicts of interest with their private business interests – words possibly aimed at the Ukrainian president. After his meeting with



U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden in a tête-à-tête with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk of Ukraine on July 13 in Washington.



At the May 28 launch of the Atlantic Council's report "Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine" (from left) are: Susan Glasser, editor of *Politico* and moderator of the discussion; Ilya Yashin, a leader of the pro-democracy Republican Party of Russia-People's Freedom Party; Damon Wilson, executive vice-president at the Atlantic Council; Sergey Aleksashenko, a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution; and Ambassador John Herbst, director of the Atlantic Council's Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center.

Mr. Poroshenko, the vice-president commented: "Ukraine is on the cusp – 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 by streamlining regulations and transparently privatizing state-owned enterprises; promote economic growth through better trade capacity and access to capital for small- and medium-size enterprises; strengthen energy security by increasing efficiency, transparency and resilience in the energy sector; and build a long-term democratic foundation through constitutional and good-governance 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 Yanukovich 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 Prystayko 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, Europe and major international organizations. Speaking with journalists at the Embassy of Ukraine on January 30, at the conclusion of his visit, Mr. Prystayko said he had discussed the situation in Ukraine and the assistance it needs with U.S. officials at the White House and State Department, and at the Atlantic Council and other think tanks. As a result, he said, it was his understanding that the Obama administration will soon come to an agreement with Congress. Military aid is uppermost on Ukraine's needs list, he said, but an estimated \$15 billion financial aid package to help stabilize Ukraine's currency and balance its budget is also important, he said.

Mr. Prystayko presented Ukraine's position 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 providing \$1 billion in military assistance this year, followed by 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 U.S. government should approach other 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. Parubiy 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 back 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 needs and plans for recovery with senior officials of 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, mismanagement, corruption by previous regimes, she said, "has left the country in a complex and difficult economic situation." Ukraine's economy and 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 the assistance it has provided so far, Ms. Jaresko said, but it needs additional support, in the form of financial and humanitarian assistance, military equipment "to put an end to this conflict," and sanctions against Russia if the peace agreements are not fully implemented. "But what's most important, from my perspective, is that we win the war of creating a reformed market economy – strong and

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capable – that can lead Ukraine forward,” she said.

A follow-up to that visit came 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 leaders of the International Bank for Reconstruction 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 progress in reforming the economy and plans for additional reforms in the future. Economy Minister Aivaras Abromavicius noted at the conclusion of the visit that they were returning to Kyiv satisfied with the results. “Ukraine is high on everybody's agenda these days,” 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 in 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 Jaresko and the governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, Valeriya Hontaryeva.

Four Ukrainian national deputies from the civil society movement and 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 academic and research centers in the U.S. capital during the week of April 21. The delegation included National Deputies Victor Galasiuk, Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, Oleksiy Skrypnyk and Oleksandr Dubinin, who represented three new political parties in Parliament, the Poroshenko Bloc, Self-Reliance Party and Radical Party, 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 Gridin, advisor to the Minister of Defense; Maj. Yuriy Moshkavets (ret.), director of the Center for Military Reform; and Anatoli Pinchuk, president of Ukraine Strategy, a Kyiv-based think tank.

In May, President Obama criticized Russia's “increasingly aggressive” stance on Ukraine, as a result of which more than 6,100 people had been killed since April 2014. Speaking after meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg at the White House on May 26, Mr. Obama 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 Minsk ceasefire agreement signed in February.

Prime Minister Yatsenyuk came to the U.S. 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 leaders, the International Monetary Fund and influential American organizations. The prime minister's tight schedule included a surprise White House meeting with Vice-President Biden, who had just returned from his son's funeral in Delaware. 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 did not mince words in describing Ukraine's major problem: “We are facing a real war with Russia,” he said in his address at the AJC (American Jewish Council) Global Forum 2015. “Ukraine is the only country in the world that is fighting against the Russian regular army.” The prime minister pointed out that, in so doing, “Ukraine is defending not only Ukraine. We are defending Europe and we are defending international law and order.”

Mr. Yatsenyuk was back in Washington with his delegation on July 13, for a meeting at the White House with Vice-President Biden. President Obama dropped by the meeting, expressing the U.S. government's “unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Earlier that day Messrs. Biden and Yatsenyuk had both participated in the U.S.-Ukraine Business Forum, organized by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a large gathering of government officials and business leaders focused on improving Ukraine's economic situation and its relations with the U.S. and the West.

According to a White House statement released after the meeting, the president and vice-president also “under-

scored the U.S. commitment to maintaining sanctions on Russia until it fully implements its obligations under the Minsk agreements,” which are intended to resolve Ukraine's conflict with the Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern regions. President Obama and Vice-President Biden commended the Ukrainian government for the steps it has taken to implement its obligations under the agreements, including the submission to Ukraine's Parliament of “draft constitutional amendments on decentralization.”

Concern about Nadiya Savchenko

There was much concern about the fate of Ms. Savchenko.

Reps. Levin, Kaptur, Fitzpatrick, Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) and Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) – all members of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus – on January 26 introduced a bipartisan resolution calling for her release. “We continue to call on Russian authorities to immediately release Nadiya Savchenko from custody. We are gravely concerned by reports of her ill health since the commencement of a hunger strike on December 14, 2014, now into its seventh week. We are equally troubled by Ms. Savchenko's lack of access to her counsel and adequate medical attention. We demand that Russia abide by its international obligations and the rule of law, and we join the United States Department of State in calling for Nadiya Savchenko's immediate release,” said Rep. Levin, co-chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus.

On February 12, a Senate resolution calling for the release of Ms. Savchenko was passed by unanimous consent. S. Res. 52, introduced on January 28, was sponsored by Helsinki Commission Senate Ranking Member Cardin, with Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman Rodger Wicker (R-Miss.) as original co-sponsor. Other co-sponsors were Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) Observers noted that the resolution was passed within two weeks of its introduction, testifying to the concern over Lt. Savchenko's dire situation.

The resolution condemned the government of the Russian Federation for its illegal imprisonment of Lt. Savchenko; called on Russia to immediately release her; called on the United States, its European allies and the international community to aggressively support diplomatic efforts to release Lt. Savchenko; and expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people.” The resolution pointed out: “Nadiya Savchenko is the first-ever female fighter pilot in Ukraine's armed forces and is an Iraqi war veteran.”

State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki on February 25 said the U.S. was “deeply concerned by today's decision by a Russian court to continue the detention of Ukrainian Member of Parliament Nadiya Savchenko to May 13. ... The United States deplores her continued ill-treatment and is deeply concerned by reports of her deteriorating health.” The U.S. called Russia's detention and treatment of Lt. Savchenko “unacceptable” and called for her immediate release.

As Russian authorities repeatedly extended the pre-trial detention of the Ukrainian pilot, the Congressional

Ukrainian Caucus yet again raised the Savchenko case, this time urging the co-chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (formerly known as the Congressional Human Rights Caucus), to support her release. In their June 9 letter to the commission, Reps. Levin, Fitzpatrick, Kaptur and Pascrell wrote: “Since her capture and detention in July 2014, we have been concerned about her deteriorating condition. Savchenko has been subjected to psychiatric evaluations, solitary confinement and callous treatment by Russian authorities. She also did not receive adequate medical care, especially since her commencement of hunger strikes to protest the terms of her detention. We urge the commission to support Nadiya Savchenko's release and facilitate passage of H. Res. 50.”

The House resolution, which was similar to the Senate resolution on the Savchenko case, was finally passed by the House of Representatives on September 22.

Noted on the presidential campaign trail

During a campaign stop at a town hall in New Hampshire on August 12, Ohio Gov. 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 understand 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 relationship 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 ceasefire 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



Embassy of Ukraine in the United States
Ukraine's new ambassador to the United States, Valeriy Chaly, presents his letters of credence to U.S. President Barack Obama on August 3.

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U.S. Embassy Kyiv

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-Clinton foreign policy, Ukraine's future remains unclear. Last week, Russian-backed separatists shelled civilians 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 a 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 thinly 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 costs on Russia and in particular on Putin. I think we have not done enough," she said following a speech on September 9 at the Brookings Institution. "I am in the category of people who wanted us to do more in response to the annexation of Crimea and the continuing destabilization of Ukraine," she noted. "We can't dance around it anymore. We all wish it would go away."

In other news...

On April 14, President Poroshenko dismissed Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S., Oleksandr Motysyk, who had served in that post since June 2010, when he was appointed by then-President Viktor Yanukovich. Ukrainian news media speculated that his replacement in Washington would be Valeriy Chaly, deputy head of the Presidential Administration. Two days later, the U.S.-Ukraine Business Council hosted a farewell dinner for Ambassador Motysyk attended by more than 70 representatives of the U.S. government, prominent corporations, Washington think tanks and Ukrainian American organizations. Before the new envoy arrived, the Embassy of Ukraine was led by Chargé d'Affaires Yaroslav Brisiuck.

Finally, on August 3, Mr. Chaly presented his letters of credence as Ukraine's ambassador to the U.S. to President Obama. Ambassador Chaly confirmed the invitation extended to President Obama by President Poroshenko to visit Ukraine. Mr. Obama said that relations between the U.S. and Ukraine today are stronger than ever and reaffirmed that the U.S. remains committed to supporting Ukrainian people.

American Peace Corps volunteers returned to Ukraine on May 20 following a program suspension of more than

one year due to the conflict in the east. Seven volunteers were the first of what is expected to be a steady stream of new volunteers arriving in the coming months. The U.S. Embassy in Kyiv noted that enthusiastic government and NGO partners lobbied for the resumption of the program at this unique time in Ukraine's history when American know-how is especially welcomed. More than 2,500 Americans have volunteered in Ukraine since 1992, when the program opened.

The U.S. State Department on December 14 issued a warning on travel to Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of 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 Donetsk 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 Donetsk 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 Donetsk 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. ..."

Our Ukrainian diaspora: growing larger and stronger

Our Ukrainian diaspora gathered on many occasions during 2015 to show support and solidarity with brethren in Ukraine, to commemorate important events in Ukraine's history, and to discuss ways to help Ukraine through its current crisis.

The past year was a particularly productive one for the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC), the international coordination body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora. Representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians, the UWC currently has member organizations in 33 countries. And it continues to grow every year.

The UWC began 2015 with a worldwide appeal in the matter of Nadiya Savchenko's release from prison in Russia. The UWC urged Ukrainians around the world to publicly support Lt. Savchenko, a political prisoner in the Russian Federation. Lt. Savchenko is a former Ukrainian air force pilot, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament and a Ukrainian delegate to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

In a January 14 letter to Anne Brasseur, president of PACE, the UWC underscored: "The kidnapping, imprisonment, involuntary psychiatric evaluation and solitary confinement of Ukrainian Member of Parliament Nadiya Savchenko are all reprehensible acts that call for immediate and unequivocal action by the international community." The UWC called on PACE to avail itself of all necessary means to secure her release as well as that of all prisoners illegally detained by the Russian Federation.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO) also wrote public appeals on Lt. Savchenko's behalf in mid-January.

On March 9-20, at the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the WFUWO helped to ensure that Ukraine's representatives had ample opportunities to present at the conference and that Ukraine's women could speak openly about the violations of their rights to peace and security, as well as about their deteriorating situation under the strain of Ukraine's defensive military response.

During the CSW, the WFUWO focused its attention on a few key issues: revealing the effects of Vladimir Putin's aggression on Ukraine; providing a show of support for Ukraine's indigenous Crimean Tatar community displaced in large numbers after Russia's invasion of the Crimean peninsula; engaging in a discussion of the barbaric wartime violence against women in eastern Ukraine; and protecting those who find themselves in need of medical care while being isolated or displaced by the conflict. The WFUWO also expressed support for the well-being of all women in the world.



Piotr Hlebowicz

Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin delivers a message from Ukraine to the World Congress of Crimean Tatars, which met in Ankara on August 1-2.

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President Administration of Ukraine

Ukrainian women leaders at a roundtable discussion with Dr. Maryna Poroshenko on September 30 at Ukraine's Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

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 Shmigel 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 Zubkov, who died heroically defending the Donetsk airport. Additionally, Mr. Grod and the UWC delegation met

with Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Culture Viacheslav Kyrylenko, 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.

Andriy Dobriansky, executive board member of the UCCA 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 Russia." 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, Refat 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 WFUWO 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 truthful information about Ukraine.

On September 29, Ukrainian diaspora members in New York also met with Dalia Grybauskaitė, the president of the Republic of Lithuania, at an informal high-level discussion titled, "Future of Eastern Europe: Empowerment of Women." President Grybauskaitė 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 Olexy and Ukrainian National Women's League of America



WFUWO

Delegates and guests at the annual general meeting of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations held on September 3-5 in Stockholm.

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Anna Whittington

Members of the Ukrainian Heritage Consortium of North America in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress during their conference held September 18-20.



UCCLF

Patriarch Sviatoslav on October 28 blesses a plaque in Kyiv, at the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, that recalls Canada's national internment operations of 1914-1920. Standing on the left is Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine Roman Washchuk.

President Marianna Zajac. The delegation from Ukraine included Vira Savchenko, sister of Ukrainian POW Nadiya Savchenko; National Deputy Mariia Ionova, vice-chair of the Committee on European Integration; and National Deputy Svitlana Zalizhchuk, 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 first national internment operations were of that faith. The patriarch addressed the audience saying, "Today we bless a plaque that commemorates the thousands of Ukrainians interned in Canada at the beginning of the first world war. They were suddenly viewed as enemies of the state."

The patriarch thanked Canada's Ambassador to

Ukraine Roman Washchuk, as well as the Canadian government for its sensitivity and support not only for Ukrainians in Canada, but also for Ukraine itself. Patriarch Sviatoslav said that all countries should follow Canada's example in respecting the dignity of individuals and be responsive to the will of their citizens.

A day later, on October 29, following a raid in which Russian investigators said they seized scores of "extremist" books, Natalya Sharina, head of the Ukrainian Literature Library in Moscow was arrested on suspicion of "inciting ethnic hatred." Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said that Ms. Sharina had circulated banned publications authored by Dmytro Korchynsky, a radical Ukrainian nationalist. Ukraine's Ministry of Culture called for Ms. Sharina's immediate release, describing the arrest as "the latest brazen Kremlin act designed to frighten the Ukrainian ethnic minority in the Russian Federation."

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 the 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 Crimea, Zakarpattia and Luhansk. Let it demonstrate the unity of Ukraine and bring peace to all these homes."



President Administration of Ukraine

Plast scouts share the Bethlehem Peace Light with Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko on December 19.

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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 184-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 (by 26 votes).

While outgoing Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper was a huge supporter of the Ukrainian government and its fight against Russian-backed rebels, the Ukrainian Canadian 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 will remain a top foreign policy priority for a Liberal government under his leadership.

The Liberals have three Ukrainian Canadian newcomers from Ontario: Julie Dzerowicz reclaimed the long-time 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 (Taras) Duguid is now MP for Winnipeg South.

The UCC identified four Ukrainian Canadians who will return to Ottawa to serve in the Official Opposition: James Bezan in Manitoba, Rona Ambrose and Jim Eglinski in Alberta, and Mike Warawa 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 Donetsk and Luhansk," UCC National President Paul Grod 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 Ms. Mihychuk, a former provincial Cabinet minister from Manitoba, is the new minister of employment, workplace development and labor.

Minister Freeland's job will be to shepherd the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership and the trade deal with the 28-member European Union. Minister Mihychuk will be responsible for negotiating the collective bargaining process with the federal public service. She has significant experience overseeing civil servants, as she served as



Before the October 19 elections, Liberal Party candidates met with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. From left are: James Maloney, Arif Virani, Justin Trudeau, UCC President Paul Grod, Chrystia Freeland, UCC Vice-President Renata Roman and Borys Wrzesnewskyj.

industry, trade and mines 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. Ambrose, who became the interim Conservative leader, when Mr. Harper resigned. Ms. Ambrose 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 (Etobicoke Center, 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); Rona Ambrose, 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 UCC 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 Aivaras Abromavicius, Ukraine's minister of economic development and trade; Oleksiy Pavlenko, minister of agrarian policy and food; and Natalie Jaresko, 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 12,000 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 Ulana Suprun,

the UWC's director of humanitarian initiatives.

Ministers Fast and Abromavicius 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; \$18.8 million to Agriteam Canada transitional and long-term governance and economic reforms in a more inclusive and transparent way; and up to \$100,000 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 Russia 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 Olena Koszarny, 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 have 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 individuals affected included Aleksandr Dugin, a leader of the Eurasian Youth Union. The entities subject to economic sanctions were: Gazprom, Gazprom Neft, Surgutneftegas and Transneft Eurasian Youth Union. Canada also imposed a ban on Russian-occupied Crimea that prohibited the import and export and the transfer, provision or communication of technical data or services; provision or acquisition of financial and other services related to tourism; and the docking of cruise ships. Mr. Harper stated, "Until there is real peace, until occupying forces are withdrawn, and until Ukraine's territorial sovereignty is restored, there must be ongoing consequences for President Putin's regime."

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. Koszarny of the UCC's Ukraine Advisory Council, the visit once again demonstrated "that Canada stands firmly beside Ukraine." Ms. Koszarny 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.'"

Defense Minister Jason Kenney visited Canadian Armed Forces personnel in Yavoriv, Ukraine, on June 27, and he announced more than \$15 million in additional Canadian



Prime Minister Stephen Harper (center) on April 14 announces that the government of Canada will provide significant additional military resources to help train and build the capacity of Ukrainian forces personnel following a briefing on the current security situation in Ukraine with Minister of National Defense and Minister for Multiculturalism Jason Kenney (right) and Gen. Thomas Lawson, chief of the Defense Staff.

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Presidential Administration of Ukraine

On June 6 in Kyiv, President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada with their spouses, Dr. Maryna Poroshenko and Lauren Harper.

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 Guly, that "It's fair 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 Defense Staff, the Canadian government was providing additional military resources to help train and build the capacity of Ukrainian forces. Canada is deploying 200 Canadian Armed forces personnel to Ukraine until March 31, 2017. With the U.S., 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 8, Sen. Raynell Andreychuk, a Ukrainian Canadian, was elected co-chair of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council (UNIC) of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Sen. Andreychuk said she was honored to be elected and stated: "Amid growing public support for Euro-Atlantic integration within Ukrainian society, and as Ukraine continues in its development as an independent and sovereign democracy, the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council provides a critical forum for 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, 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. "Given 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 armed 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

Verkhovna 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 Council was held with 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 Kenney 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 Ukrainian 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 prodemocracy 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 Opatz; and several other MPs, among them Mr. Bezan.

Serhiy Kuzan, leader of the Free People (Vilni Liudy) 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 Russia's War in Eastern Ukraine." During his visit to Ottawa, Mr. Kuzan was hosted in Parliament by the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group and met with government officials. Mr. Kuzan 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 humanitarian support provided to Ukraine's military personnel and injured soldiers. His 24-day tour was organized by the League of Ukrainian Canadians and its Friends of Ukraine Defense Forces Fund.

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 U.N. 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 "Dopomoha 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 Embassy 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.



Andriy Shevchenko was tapped on September 24 as Ukraine's new ambassador to Canada.

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Ukrainian community endeavors

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 Narodivsya," 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, a "vinshuvannia." 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 Ukrainian Canadians. 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 Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The statement underlined that, while withdrawing from Debaltseve, Ukrainian forces were shelled by Russian artillery, resulting in over 100 wounded and over 89 Ukrainian soldiers missing in action. "The list of crimes committed by the Russian Federation and the terrorists it supports in Ukraine is long and growing daily... it shows the Putin regime's blatant disregard for international law, binding obligations and principles of the inviolability of state borders... In dealing with Putin, Western leaders would do well to remember the disastrous results of the appeasement of Adolf Hitler," the UCC stated.

"Ukraine's army must be given the means with which to defend their country, and the costs to Russia of continuing its aggression 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's defense, energy 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 Zissels, spoke to both Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking 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 has 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 armed aggression. Because Ukraine is 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. Zissels proposed that such an initiative come from Ukraine. He explained that the war launched against Ukraine is being waged on three fronts: propagandistic, economic and military. Fortunately, Ukraine has a well developed civil society. Mr. Zissels 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 on July 8-19, at the Ukrainian 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 much to be gained by viewing their historical experience together, in all its complexity." The exhibit consisted of 35 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. Where appropriate, two "sides" of the story were highlighted, for example, the city of Uman in Ukrainian, Polish and Jewish Memory. Under "Pogroms in the Russian Empire," the text clearly said: "During the turmoil of the first Russian revolution around 650 pogroms occurred, mostly officially orchestrated with the support of the police and the army, and carried out by the Black Hundreds (monarchists, Orthodox, Russian nationalists, anti-revolutionary militants). Pogroms are primarily associated with attacks on Jews in the Russian Empire in 1881-1921."



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.

Remembering internment operations

The Internment Interpretative Center at La Ferme, Quebec, marked the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Spirit Lake Internment camp, the second largest of the 24 internment camps established across Canada during World War I. Now in its fifth year of operation, Spirit Lake Internment Interpretative Center (SLIIC) was established on the original grounds of the internment site. With 20,000 visitors to date, a feature of the Spirit Lake Center is its outstanding outreach educational program, which has now developed partnerships with Quebec school boards. On March 29, Spirit Lake volunteer board members, with James Slobodian as board chairperson, were presented with an award from the English Association of Quebec, Neighbors, in recognition of the center's work in furthering awareness of Quebec's heritage and ensuring 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 operations. Peter Melnycky (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 Kominowski (University of Manitoba) provided a bibliographical survey of publications, while Andrea Malysh (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 Boxtel. The statue depicts an internee 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 immeasurable 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 12 commercial televisions; it provides a 21st century 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. Bohdan Onyschuk, past chair of CUF, the lead 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 tour, 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 UCRDC and the Holodomor Research and Educational Consortium (HREC). Valentina Kuryliw is overseeing the development of the high school teaching content. In its first year, the HMC 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 Yvan Baker cut the ribbon to launch the mobile classroom.

As noted by Minister Sandals, "The province of Ontario committed \$750,000 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 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

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Holodomor National Awareness Tour

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

Remembrance, Condemnation 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. HREC 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 embarked on a new oral history project, funded by the Temerty Family Foundation – interviews with children of the survivors of the Ukrainian Holodomor. The project coordinator – archivist Iroida Wynnyckyj, stated that "The UCRDC has the experience and infrastructure needed to undertake an oral interview project of this kind, and indeed, it will be the first such project about the second generation of survivors of the Holodomor to be embarked on." A sense of longing, mourning, burden or distrust, degrees of communicativeness and coping and the strength and resilience of survivorship all have an impact on the successive generation's identity and feelings of cohesiveness with their communities, the UCRDC noted.

The purpose of this oral history project is not to record the history of the Holodomor's genocidal trauma but rather, to find out what became of the children of the survivors of the Holodomor and what do they see as the Holodomor's legacy for Ukrainians," stated the project's interviewer, Sophia Isajiw. "The fact that the project is being done in North America is equally valuable because it will enable a discussion of how the Holodomor has become a diaspora marker of Ukrainian identity." Each interview is video recorded in English and transcribed and will be accessible for further study in the UCRDC archives.

As part of the Holodomor commemorations, a monument "Bitter Memories of Childhood" was unveiled at the Saskatchewan Provincial Legislature in Regina on May 12. The memorial is a bronze statue of a little girl with a sheaf

of wheat and is made from the same cast as the one in Kyiv on the grounds of the National Holodomor Museum. It is the work of sculptor Petro Drozdowsky.

"This addition to the Saskatchewan Legislative Building precinct will foster greater awareness of the Holodomor and provide a permanent place in our province for everyone to reflect upon the terrible tragedy," said Deputy Premier Ken Krawetz. Saskatchewan was the first province in Canada to recognize the Holodomor as genocide in May 2008. Some 130,000 Canadians living in the province identify themselves as having Ukrainian ancestry.

Ukrainian Canadian Congress meets

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 conclave 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" website 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 invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian World Congress President Eugene Czolij took the opportunity to present the UWC 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 Canada-Ukraine Foundation organized a second medical mission to Ukraine to deal with reconstructive surgical procedures on victims of the Euro-Maidan movement. A medical team of 22 professionals, assembled entirely from volunteers across Canada, included surgeons, anaesthetists 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 CUF in September 2014, and attended by Prime Minister Harper, Wayne Gretzky and by almost 1,200 people who raised more than \$200,000.

Eugene Melnyk and Bohdan Onyschuk co-chaired the

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 virtually all 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 by its Ukrainian acronym as SUSK). The new board members included Cassian Solytykevych (president), Anastasia Hnatyuk (vice president, finance), Borys Bilaniuk (vice president, East), Alex Prokopchuk (vice-president, Central) and Andrea Dacko (vice-president, West). Congress sessions included "Current Ukraine: Historical, Economic and Social Sides of the Story"; "Current Ukraine: Helping Ukraine and Getting Involved"; reports by SUSK executive members; and a workshop on social media tools. The keynote address was delivered by former SUSK President Artem Luhovy.

Also in 2015, two Ukrainian community institutions in Edmonton were the beneficiaries of a Canadian government program that supports projects which rehabilitate existing community facilities. The funds were allocated to the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex (UYUC) and St. Josephat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral 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. Josephat Cathedral.

For nearly 50 years, the UYUC has been a mainstay of Ukrainian community life in Edmonton. The "Domivka" opened its doors in 1973 as a multi-use complex. It is home to numerous organizations. St. Josephat Ukrainian Catholic Parish began to serve the spiritual needs of Ukrainian settlers in 1904. The parish rejoiced at the visits by Metropolitan Andrey 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 this historic site, although many generous 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 Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival served up a long week-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 crowds of 700,000. The three-day program included 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; an exhibit by the Ukrainian Association of Visual 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 Volya Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of Detroit, Winnipeg's Zrada band and the Zubrivka folk band of Toronto. The evening's headliner band – Ot Vinta – got the audience rocking with its "Ukrabilly" music. Festival Chairman Jurij Klufas closed the event on Sunday with thank-yous to all involved. The traditional festival finale, the double-tier Hopak performed by the Barvinok Ukrainian School of Dance 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 Lesiuk, a native of Lviv.

The artist explained that the logo consists of three parts: the bottom part symbolizes four waves of the immigration 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 transformed into three flying cranes. These powerful birds – "zhuravli" in Ukrainian – appear often in Ukrainian music and folklore. They are a symbol of migration. The trident, superimposed on a blue crane, symbolizes Ukraine, while the wings of the cranes are ultimately transformed into a maple leaf – the national symbol of Canada.

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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 23-26 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 Ss. Volodymyr and Olha Ukrainian Cultural Center, as part of Unity Day celebrations. Joining the celebration were Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Reps. Danny Davis (D-Ill.) and Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) who have also been instrumental in supporting U.S. aid for Ukraine. Other award recipients included Andrew Fedynsky 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 Rusiecki, 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 Ss. 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 Brigade'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-organized by Sublimitas, Razom and New Ukrainian Wave. There was a screening of the documentary film "Bomzhi" ("The Homeless," 2012). Keynote speaker, Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Nations Yuriy Sergeyev, noted the challenges facing Ukraine's orphans and street children, and expressed his strong support of the Sublimitas mission and programs. Alla Korzh, director of Sublimitas, explained in greater detail how as many as 150,000 street children and more than 94,000 orphans live in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Americans converged on Washington on March 4 as part of the Ukrainian Days advocacy events that were organized by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, with its Washington bureau, the Ukrainian National Information Service. During the meet-



Dr. Alex Strilchuk, president of the UCCA Illinois Division, presents an award to Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) on January 25.



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

ings, constituents met with their respective representatives in the House and Senate to thank them for the support of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act that was signed by President Obama on December 18, 2014, and to explain the current situation in Ukraine, with regard to military and humanitarian needs, as well as the plight of prisoners of war held by Russia, including Ms. Savchenko. Nearly 50 community activists were able to attend a hearing of the House Foreign Relations Committee, titled "Ukraine Under Siege," with testimony by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), a ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was presented the Friend of UNIS award by UNIS Director Michael Sawkiw Jr. and Andrew Horbachewsky, chairman of the SUM-A Yonkers Federal Credit Union. An evening reception was hosted by the Embassy of Lithuania, where Mr. Sawkiw presented Ambassador Zygimantas Pavlionis the Friend of UNIS award. The Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) also was recognized with the Friend of UNIS award.

Hundreds gathered on March 9 at the Ukrainian National Home in Hartford, Conn., to hear an address by Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and share their concerns about the situation in Ukraine. "Putin is attempting not just to break Ukraine," Sen. Murphy said. "He is trying to break Europe, to break the trans-Atlantic alliance, and if he is not stopped there, then we have no idea what the end point will be. We believe that this is one of the greatest threats that the world order has ever faced..." A lively question-and-answer session was held, during which the senators broke from the podium and greeted the two young Ukrainian veterans, Roman Lutsiuk and Roman Dzivinskyi, who were receiving medical treatments at Yale-New Haven Medical Center and in Philadelphia. During the close of the program, Sen. McCain was awarded the UNIS Friend of Ukraine award.

On March 26, nearly 300 people – Ukrainians, Latvians, Georgians, Armenians, Estonians, Belarusians, Poles and Circassians – gathered in front of the White House to rally for military aid for Ukraine. Noted speakers at the event included Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), Ambassador John Herbst of the Atlantic Council's Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center, and Diana Vidutis, president of the District of Columbia Lithuanian American Community. Appeals were made for military aid for Ukraine's soldiers by Ivan Rodichenko of the Kyiv-Rus' 25th Volunteer Battalion, and Roman Volytsky, who had worked to gather donations for the soldiers.

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.

Kyiv 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-\$400,000, left for Ukraine from the Fairfax, Va., county regional office of the Brother's Brother 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, Tetyana 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 Kozhen Mozhe, 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. unveiled and dedicated a plaque to the UAHF and its predecessor, the Ukrainian American Educational Citizens' Club of Mattapan, for its many years of service to 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-N.J.) 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 and the Friend of UNIS Award from the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. In introducing the senator's work for Ukraine, Yuriy Symczyk, 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 of 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."

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Christine Melnyk

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.

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. Chernyk 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.), Brendan Boyle (D-Pa.), and Robin Kelly (D-Ill.). Also present were past UCCA presidents, Mr. Sawkiw and Askold Lozynskyj. Eugene Czolij, president of the Ukrainian World Congress, and Ambassador Zygimantis Pavilionis of Lithuania praised UCCA's work and its importance today. Also represented were Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio),

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 Ihor Zhdanov met with Ukrainian American youth development organizations at the UCCA office in New York on June 2. Organizations represented at the event included Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization U.S.A., 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 (USCAK) 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 U.S. 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

Baltimore Federal Credit Union and a commemorative plaque was presented to its representative, Stephan Kerda.

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 classrooms 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. Kyshakevych, 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 gulag, 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 generational 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 swelled 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. Mr. Zissels underscored the inclusiveness of the Maidan and the presence of Jews and people of other backgrounds.

The 15th annual Lemko "Vatra" held on June 27-28 at the UAYA camp in Ellenville, N.Y., was sponsored by the Organization for the Defense of Lemko Western Ukraine (OOL). Performers included the Vatra rock group from Lviv, the Karpaty dance ensemble and Ukrainian Lemko singer Sofiya Fedyna, as well as the Korniya folk band from New Paltz, N.Y. There was a children's song competition, the Vatra Cup soccer tournament and a zabava-dance to the music of Anna Maria. A display with video and poster boards informed visitors about the previous 15 years of the Lemko Vatra. Ms. Fedyna also gave a presentation as president of the World Federation of Ukrainian Lemko Unions.

Verizon irked the Ukrainian community with its June-July FIOS advertisement that featured a couple flipping channels and, when Ukrainian dancers appeared, saying "Anything but this." Community activist Irene Jarosewich stated, "...Choosing any ethnic or cultural element as the object of derision is, first and foremost, unethical and, in terms of Marketing 101, is in the Top 10 of Things Not to Do unless you want to anger your customers." The Embassy of Ukraine also released a statement, noting "...The issue is particularly sensitive at the time when Russian aggression threatens Ukraine's sovereignty and statehood. ...It is our sincere hope that the company [Verizon] will



Yaro Bihun

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.

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take this fact into consideration." The Ukrainian Weekly's editor-in-chief, Roma Hadzewycz called for an apology, and offered to run it in this newspaper. Verizon's public relations director, Diedre Hart, offered an apology, of sorts, via an e-mail message to The Weekly, "...We sincerely apologize if the commercial offended you. That was not our intent. To that end, that reference is no longer in the commercials. We appreciate the opportunity to respond." But she declined to offer any further comment.

On June 29, the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York hosted an event to mark the 19th anniversary of Ukraine's Constitution Day that was organized by the UCCA, Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.N. Sergeyev as well as Ukrainian American community activists. The event was attended by more than 50 ambassadors and permanent deputy representatives to the U.S., as well as leaders of Ukrainian community organizations. UCCA President Olexy recalled the opening words of Ukraine's first Constitution, written in 1710 by Pylyp Orlyk, which states, "Ukraine on both sides of the Dnipro River must remain free from foreign domination for all time to come." Ukraine's democratic roots and European tradition can be traced to this first Constitution. The Constitution that was being celebrated that day was passed by the Verkhovna Rada in 1996.

The UAYA's Nadiya Ye Festival marked its five-year anniversary on July 3-5 at the UAYA camp in Ellenville, N.Y. The headlining act was Lama from Kyiv, with lead vocalist Natalia Dzenkiv. Other performers on the main stage included the Iskra Ukrainian Dance Ensemble of New Jersey and DJ Stas. A dance with music by Svitanok in the outdoor pavilion kept the evening's entertainment going into the wee hours of the morning. The weekend also had a solemn aspect. On Sunday, after liturgy led by Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Paul Chomnycky of Stamford, Conn., a memorial ceremony was held for all of the fallen Ukrainian soldiers of the past and present. The event was sponsored by the UAYA and the Organization for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine.

The Ukrainian-American Civic Committee of Metropolitan Detroit sent off the first of three 40-foot shipping containers to the Ukraine Survival Campaign on July 13 to Kyiv. The organizers expected that only one container would be filled, but the generosity of donations from the Ukrainian and American communities filled three. The mayor of Warren, Mich., Mayor James Fouts, encouraged the entire city to join the effort and solicited donations on residents' water bills to be sent to his office. The effort took off in communities throughout the United States and Canada. A total of 17 40-foot containers were scheduled to be filled and shipped to Ukraine as part of the Save Ukraine Now (founded in 2014), as the nationwide effort continued.

The UCCA commemorated the first anniversary of the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17), which resulted in the deaths of all 298 on board on July 17, 2014. In a statement released by UCCA on July 15, the UCCA said that evidence pointed to the pro-Russian forces in the region as responsible, "terrorists" who were also hindering the investigation, and were accused of stealing personal items from the crime scene. The statement continued: "This horrific act of terrorism is a reminder of the serious threat to global peace and security posed by Russia-backed terrorists in eastern Ukraine... The illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, which has led to the tragic downing of MH17, must be stopped before more lives are lost."

The 150th anniversary of the birth of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky (July 29) was commemorated with a statement from the UCCA on July 27. The statement noted: "Metropolitan Andrey lived his life as a sterling example for others of virtue, kindness and sacrifice. He served as an active pastor to his flock, used his personal wealth to help fund the numerous philanthropic programs, wrote prolifically and was a gifted preacher. ...Most notably, Metropolitan Andrey led his people and his Church through two world wars." Metropolitan Andrey was arrested by the Russian tsarist forces and he was placed under house arrest by the Nazis. During the second world war, he risked his own life by providing shelter for many Jews.

A major step toward the dedication of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington was made on August 4 with its installation at Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street, one block from Union Station. The 6-foot-high-by-35-foot-long bronze casting of the art work titled "Field of Wheat" was created by architect/sculptor Larysa Kurylas. The monument was cast by the Laran Bronze Foundry in Chester, Pa. The installation was witnessed by approximately 50 people, including Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. Valeriy Chaly, Ms. Kurylas and Mr. Sawkiw.

Ukrainian Americans, representatives of several waves of immigration from Ukraine and their progeny, filled New



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.

York's Times Square with the blue and yellow colors of Ukraine's national flag in a flashmob on August 23, singing Ukrainian songs and waving Ukrainian flags. Among the crowd was Ambassador Yuriy Sergeyev, in an unofficial capacity.

On September 19-20, the first monument to the "Nebesna Sotnia" (Heavenly Brigade) was dedicated and unveiled at St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Bloomingdale, Ill. The parish also marked the 45th anniversary of its founding with a patriarchal divine liturgy celebrated by Patriarch Filaret. The double occasion was marked with a concert by the Canadian Bandurist Capella and a banquet at the Hilton Indian Lakes resort.

Designer Yevhen Prokopov described the monument: "The symbol of both the suffering and the hopes of the victims, a high polished stainless steel cross, is a mirror of sorts that will endlessly reflect the unity of heaven and earth, being and non-being. Like an endless river flowing into the diamond-like reflections, an overlay of an ancient Ukrainian pattern (mini-crosses) furthers the symbolism of transcendence. Blue is the color symbolizing the souls of the departed heroes and the dignity of future generations. The spiritual content filling the monument is faith in the power of the eternal soul, and the unbreakable unity of Ukrainian patriots. This monument calls to us... remember, be united and you will be undefeated."

The U.S.-Ukraine Foundation hosted its annual forum in Washington, this year titled "Ukraine's Ongoing Battle for Freedom: The Risk of Western Failure in Political, Economic and Humanitarian Assistance" on September 25. Among the speakers were: President Petro Poroshenko via video message, Reps. Kaptur, Ed Royce (R-Calif.) and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas), Ukraine's Chief Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich via video, Metropolitan Archbishop Stefan Soroka via

video, Mufti Sheikh Ahmed Tamim and Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate. Other officials of Ukraine included Ambassador Chaly, Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak and Finance Minister Jaresko. Among the panelists were: Orest Deychakiwsky (U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), Edward Chow (Center for Strategic and International Studies), Katrina Lantos-Swett (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom), Dawn Calabia (Refugee International), as well as retired Gen. Wesley Clark. The event was co-sponsored by the House Ukraine Caucus and the Senate Ukraine Caucus, in cooperation with the Embassy of Ukraine and Save Ukraine Now.

On October 17, the UNWLA marked its 90th anniversary with a banquet held at the Ukrainian National Home in New York City. UNWLA President Marianna Zajac recalled the 90 years of the organization's success and looked ahead to its future. During the banquet, Ambassador Sergeyev was honored with the Princess Olha Award by the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations for his work in securing Ukraine's temporary seat on the U.N. Security Council for 2016-2017. A donation of \$50,000 by the Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union was presented by President Bohdan Kurczak to mark the 90th anniversary of the UNWLA.

On September 26, President Poroshenko and his wife, Dr. Maryna Poroshenko, while on a visit to the United States for the 70th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, were welcomed at an evening reception at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York. The UCCA organized the event. Prayers were offered by Bishop Daniel of the UOC of the U.S.A., and Ms. Olexy offered words of solidarity with the people of Ukraine and wished Mr. Poroshenko a happy 50th birthday, with the audience sing-



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

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ing "Mnohaya Lita." Andriy Futey presented an icon of the Virgin Mary written by Ukrainian American iconographer Daria Hulak-Kulchytsky. Mr. Poroshenko thanked the audience and the community for its contributions to the development of the Ukrainian army, and called for a meeting with the diaspora on every foreign visit. Following his remarks, Mr. Poroshenko bestowed the Order of Princess Olga (third degree) on Ms. Olexy. The Order of Danylo Halytsky was presented to the family of Ukrainian American Markian Paslawsky, who was killed in the fighting in the Donbas of Ukraine.

On October 3, the Ukrainian American Veterans dedicated a national monument at St. Andrew Memorial Church and Cemetery in South Bound Brook, N.J., during their 68th annual national convention that was held on October 2-3. Designed by Canadian artist John Jaciw, the monument honors all American veterans of Ukrainian heritage who have honorably served in the U.S. Armed Forces, including those currently serving in the ongoing global war on terrorism. Metropolitan Antony and Bishop Daniel of the UOC-U.S.A. and Ukrainian Catholic Archbishop Metropolitan Soroka prayed and blessed the monument. The U.S. Air Force Color Guard from McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey executed the presentation of colors and the UAYA choir from Chicago sang the Ukrainian and U.S. national anthems. A banquet at the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Somerset, N.J., followed the dedication.

More than 5,000 people witnessed the dedication of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington on November 7. The weekend's events included commemorative concerts, informative displays, as well as liturgies. People came from New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Georgia, Virginia, Maryland and Canada. The monument was blessed by Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate, and Metropolitan Antony of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. Thousands watched on a large projection screen from Columbus Circle in front of Union Station as the monument was blessed. Mr. Sawkiw led the program of events addressed by, among others, Reps. Levin and Kaptur, as well as Ukraine's first lady, Dr. Poroshenko. Video greetings were delivered by President Poroshenko, and Sens. Rob Portman and Charles Schumer. The three-hour ceremony concluded with the singing of the "Prayer for Ukraine" led by the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of Detroit.

The Holodomor was commemorated once again at the annual service at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York on November 21 that attracted hundreds of participants. Co-organized by the UCCA, the requiem service was led by hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. (Metropolitan Antony and Bishop Daniel) and the Ukrainian Catholic Church (Bishop Chomnycky and Bishop emeritus Basil Losten). The Dumka Chorus of New York sang the responses. Keynote speaker Larysa Kurylas, who designed the Holodomor Memorial in Washington, recalled her personal journey of genocide awareness in Ukraine history. Other speakers included William Pope, senior advisor to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations; Ambassador Chaly; and Ambassador Sergeyev.

The United Nations hosted an invitation-only event on December 9 that was sponsored by the Ukrainian American organization Razom and the VOLYA Institute for Contemporary Law and Society, which presented its report on human rights violations in Crimea, "Human Rights in Occupied Territory: Case of Crimea." Ambassador Sergeyev noted the ongoing violations, including the abduction of Crimean Tatars. Ivanna Bilych, president of VOLYA Institute, highlighted the key findings of the report. The discussion was moderated by Mary Holland, director of the New York University Graduate Legal Skills Program, who supported the work of the report. The group also produced a downloadable manual, a "Human Rights Protection Guide" that can aid in identifying human rights violations.

Georgia's Permanent Representative to the U.N. Kaha Imnadze said that the inadequate response to Russian aggression in Georgia in 2008 paved the way to Crimea. The panelists echoed the view that Russia considers Crimea a war trophy and treats everyone and everything there with contempt.

A similar event was held at the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York on December 8. A roundtable discussion on the topic was hosted at Columbia University and moderated by Huseyin Oylupinar from Turkey, who is the Mihaychuk Fellow at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. In Washington, an official public hearing at the U.S. Helsinki Commission was held on December 11 to present the report on human rights abuses in Crimea.

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 benefits and programs geared toward helping Ukrainians here and in Ukraine.

The best news came in early December, when it was reported that the UNA would soon reach a financial milestone: net admitted assets would exceed \$200 million by December 31.

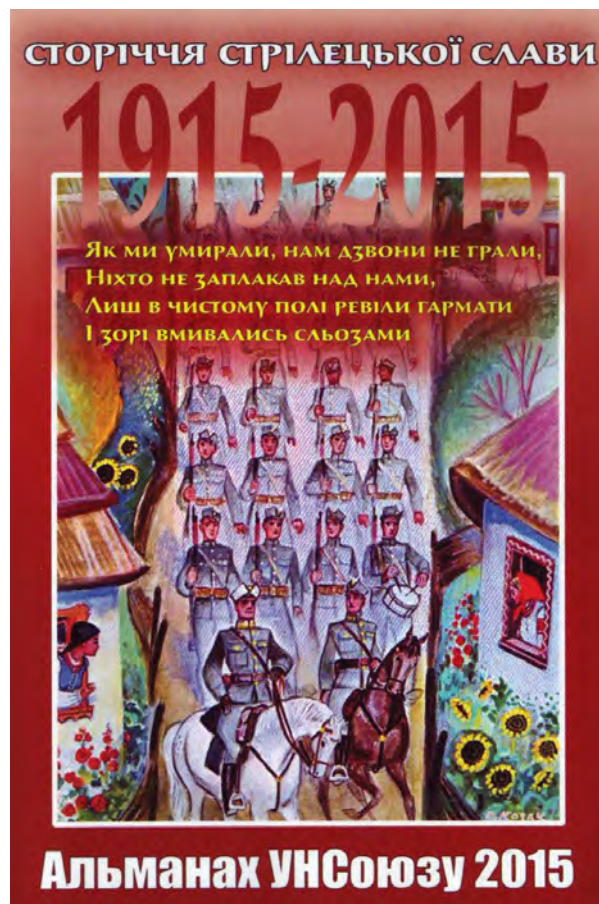
On December 11-13, the UNA General Assembly met at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center for its first regular annual meeting since the UNA convention of 2014. The highest decision-making body of the UNA between its quadrennial conventions, the General Assembly reviewed the UNA's activity for the past year and adopted a plan of action for 2016. The weekend's sessions were marked by good news about the UNA's progress during 2015.

President Stefan Kaczaraj reported that, as of the end of the third quarter of 2015, the UNA's assets totaled over \$192.5 million, and net income for the first nine months of the year was more than \$1.3 million. In addition, the UNA's surplus as of September 30, 2015, was up to nearly \$8.3 million.

Treasurer Roma Lisovich followed up Mr. Kaczaraj's report by pointing out 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 are four large credit unions). She also noted that net income was projected to grow to \$1.7 million by the end of 2015, adding that this would be the third consecutive year of net profits for the UNA.

National Secretary Christine E. Kozak reported that more and more UNA Home Office employees, as well as General Assembly members, are now licensed insurance professionals. That means they are better able to approach potential members and better equipped to serve the UNA's members. Ms. Kozak underscored, "UNA employees go above and beyond the call of duty in order to satisfy UNA members." Indeed, the UNA's customer service is its strength, and "the UNA can differentiate itself from the competition by providing the best customer service to our members," she added.

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, resigned as auditor in order to accept a position on the board of directors of the Ukrainian National Foundation (more on that later in this article). With a position vacated on the Auditing Committee, the UNA Executive Committee unanimously appointed Andriy Gavdanovich as the third member of the UNA Auditing Committee. Mr. Gavdanovich is president of UNA Branch 234 of Eatontown, N.J., and was elected as an advisor on the General Assembly at the 2014 Convention. Olya Czerkas of UNA Branch 381 of St.



The 2015 Almanac of the Ukrainian National Association, whose cover design by Ihor Pylypchuk features artwork by the renowned Edward Kozak.

Petersburg, Fla., and a former UNA advisor (2006-2014), accepted the position vacated by Mr. Gavdanovich.

In other UNA news, the 2015 Almanac of the Ukrainian National Association commemorated the centennial of the founding of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Ukrayinski Sichovi Striltsi), 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 Euro-Maidan movement. This was the 102nd annual almanac published by the Svoboda Press for the UNA. The editor of the 2015 almanac is Petro Chasto, a longtime member of the Svoboda editorial staff. A perennial favorite of readers worldwide, UNA Almanacs have been published since 1903. Each one is a veritable treasure trove of information.

The UNA's 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. Kotlar, a well-know chiropractor and alternative health care pro-



Members of the UNA General Assembly – executive officers, auditors and advisors – at the start of their 2015 annual meeting held at Soyuzivka on December 11-13.

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vider in practice for over 31 years. Her topic, “Wellness and Nutrition as a Means to Healthy Longevity,” was presented at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey on November 21. The UNA Home Office said Dr. Kotlar’s presentation was the first of a series of fraternal events to be hosted and funded by the UNA in an effort to educate local communities and promote UNA insurance and annuity products.

The UNA also had quite a presence on the Ukrainian festival circuit during 2015. As UNA Fraternal Coordinator Yuriy Symczyk wrote on “The Ukrainian National Association Forum” page in this newspaper, “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 Ukrainian festivals, the UNA had a booth and gave visitors UNA goodies, ranging from colorful tote bags filled with an assortment of UNA giveaways, including the UNA magazine, its newspapers Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly, and a UNA pen and note pad, to gifts for children. Among the festivals at which the UNA was represented were those in Clifton, Jersey City, Carteret and Whippany, N.J.; Horsham, Pa., and Stamford, Conn.

Three representatives of the National University of Ostroh Academy in Rivne, Ukraine, visited the Ukrainian National Association’s Home Office on October 12. Rector Ihor Pasichnyk, Dr. Eduard Balashov, head of the school’s foreign relations department, and Dr. Leonid Yakobchuk, honorary professor at the university, met with the UNA president and then showed a film about the university to UNA officers and employees, including the staffs of Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly. Dr. Pasichnyk also presented a certificate of recognition for the UNA’s continuing support of the university and its students.

At the beginning of the year, the UNA announced that, after 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, it should be noted, is an affiliated company that performs charitable activities on behalf of the UNA. UNA Treasurer Lisovich 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 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 new board of directors of UNF was announced as follows: Mr. Kaczaraj, president; Ms. Lisovich, treasurer; Ms. Kozak, secretary; Roman Hawryluk, Mark Olexy, Dr. Szeremeta and Taras Sochan.

On May 3, Ms. Lisovich reported on Soyuzivka sprucing up for spring and beginning anew. Among the changes:

UNA congratulates 56 scholarship recipients for the 2015-2016 school year

by Maria Drich

PARISPPANY, NJ – Fifty-six student members of the Ukrainian National Association were awarded scholarships by the UNA for the 2015-2016 school year. The scholarship awards totaled \$12,475, of which \$4,250 were designated for special scholarships in higher dollar amounts. The UNA Scholarship Committee reviews applications in light of financial needs of the students, academic achievement, field of study, as well as each applicant's activity level within the Ukrainian community.

The Joseph and Dora Galanduk Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000 was awarded to Alexander Zelez, a member of UNA Branch 277, and an honors student at Wagner College studying to be a physician's assistant.

Alexander is active in his student life at college as a member of the Physician Assistant Association, where he spends many hours volunteering his time. He is the president of the newly formed Catholic Club at the college, where he organizes various programs for students in the Ukrainian community. Alexander is a graduate of the St. Michael School of Ukrainian Studies in Hartford, Conn., and since the age of 7, he has performed with the local Ukrainian dance ensemble. An active member of the Ukrainian American Youth Association, Alexander worked as a counselor at the UNA sports camp and recreational camp.

The Drs. Maria, Dmytro and Olga Jarosiewicz Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 was awarded to Katarina Solot of UNA Branch 414, and an honors student majoring in biology at Rutgers University. As with many children in Ukrainian families, Katarina was raised with Ukrainian traditions. She is a graduate of the local Ukrainian school, where she studied the Ukrainian language, literature and history. Katarina also took lessons on how to play the bandura – the national instrument of Ukraine – and performed with the Zoloty Promin Ukrainian Dance Ensemble.

The Joseph Webb Scholarship in the amount of \$750 was awarded to Natalie Ginn, a member of UNA Branch 247, who is an honors student majoring in neuroscience at the University of Delaware. Natalie grew up in a family with a deep respect for Ukrainian traditions – Ukrainian language, embroidery, Ukrainian folk music and dances, as well as the Ukrainian holiday traditions and foods. Having grown up with so many traditions, Natalie is deeply proud to be Ukrainian.

The Blackstone Scholarship, founded by the Ukrainian National Home Corp. in Blackstone, Mass., in the amount of \$500 was awarded to Andrea Zelez, a member of UNA Branch 277, who is an honors student studying finance and analytics at Bryant University. Since her youth, Andrea has been active in the Ukrainian community. From the age of 16, she was a member of the local Ukrainian dance group. She also has been an active competitor at the Ukrainian American Youth Association's (UAYA) annual competition known as Zet, where she won numerous medals and trophies. Andrea also worked as a camp counselor at the UNA sports camp for two years and has been a member of the UNA since the age of 16.

The remaining 52 student members of the UNA were awarded regular scholarships. The amounts are based on year of study as well as academic achievement. The distributed as follows: 20 freshman-year applicants received \$125 each; seven sophomore students received \$150 each; 13 junior-year students received \$175 each; and 12 senior-year students received \$200 each.

The Ukrainian National Association congratulates all of this year's scholarship winners. We wish them all great success in the future!

The UNA calls on students to remain active members of the UNA, subscribe to our newspapers, Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly, and to visit the fantastic Soyuzivka Heritage Center. Also, student members are encouraged to increase the UNA membership with family members, acquaintances, friends and others to strengthen our growing Ukrainian family. As the future of the UNA, you can take advantage of all of the fraternal benefits that are made possible by the UNA and to contribute to the preservation of Ukrainian culture and heritage.

For more information about the Ukrainian National Association, readers may visit our website, www.ukrainian-national-association.org or telephone, 800-253-9862, ext. 3011.

Translated by Matthew Dubois

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| Alexander Zelez (UNA Branch 277) Wagner College | Katarina Solot (UNA Branch 414) Rutgers University |
| Natalie Ginn (UNA Branch 247) University of Delaware | Andrea Zelez (UNA Branch 277) Bryant University |
| Nicholas Demczar (UNA Branch 13) Rutgers University | Larisa Druchak (UNA Branch 201) Burgess University |
| Andrew Drend (UNA Branch 240) The Ohio State University | Kristina Hayda (UNA Branch 59) Boston University |
| Zoryana Kaspruk (UNA Branch 238) Berkeley College | Alexandra Nagurny (UNA Branch 777) Lafayette College |

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.

newly paved roads, a new privacy fence at the entrance to the grounds, and new plantings and landscaping. Also before the start of the summer season: buildings were painted, carpets were professionally cleaned, the second-floor patio at the Main House was replaced, the Veselka deck was renovated, and furniture in many rooms was updated. Ms. Lisovich added that other projects, structural in nature and perhaps not as visible to guests, were ongoing.

Some things at Soyuzivka remained the same. The UNA Seniors held their annual week at the heritage center on June 14-19. The Miss Soyuzivka contest took place on August 15, with Ariana Babchenko of Naperville, Ill., a junior at New York University, chosen as Miss Soyuzivka 2016. The runner-up was Viktoriya Mazur of Kerhonkson, N.Y., who was born in the Lviv region and today is a student at Ulster Community College. The Soyuzivka Heritage Center hosted its usual array of camps for children of all ages, and students from Ukraine once again filled the ranks of its summer employees. This year there were 26 students from Ukraine who arrived here under the Work and Travel program offered by the U.S. State Department.

The annual Ukrainian Cultural Festival at Soyuzivka continued its success. The 2015 festival was organized by the Ukrainian National Foundation under the patronage of the Embassy of Ukraine in the United States; it was sponsored by Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union, the Ukrainian National Association and the SUMA Federal Credit Union (Yonkers, N.Y.). Approximately 6,000 people attended the ninth annual festival, which was held under the theme “Solidarity with Ukraine” on July 10-12.



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.

Headliners were Dzidzio, Serhiy Fomenko (Foma), Oksana Bilozir and Pavlo Tabakov, but the three days of entertainment showcased many other performers – musicians, dancers and singers – including the fiery virtuoso violinist Vasyl Popadiuk and two top-notch dance troupes, the Roma Pryma Bohachevsky Ukrainian Dance Workshop and the Lehenda Ukrainian Dance Company from Australia. And there was much more to be seen and experienced at the festival, from performances to dances, vendors and food.

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 (IAFA) – 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 Paslawsky (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 IAFA, Viktoriia Voronovych, told The Weekly, “Current rehabilitation practices in Ukraine are outdated and inadequate. Our wounded Ukrainian heroes deserve proper longer-term rehabilitation and care for an opportunity to return to a full and active life. This project will help make that happen.” The IAFA 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.



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 Puzyk, 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.

2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The year in sports: Ukraine and the diaspora

Although Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk's Europa League final on May 26 was a 3-2 loss to Spain's Seville 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 voiced 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 as the medium. Quite a contrast to Russia using the Sochi Olympics to high-five the “normalcy” of Russian expansionism, only 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 Sports Awards:

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

Below, in alphabetical order by sports, is a listing of the top sports achievements of the year.

Ukraine's women's team won gold at the **ARCHERY** World Outdoor Championships in Denmark on August 1, their first ever outdoor victory.

Olesya Povkh won gold in the women's 60-m race at the Russian Winter IAAF (International Association of **ATHLETICS** Federations) Indoor Meeting on February 1. Nataliya Pyhyda won gold in the women's 400-m race on March 5-8 at the European Athletics Indoor Championships in Prague. Alina Fyodorova won first place in the women's shotput. Anna Mischenko won gold in the women's 1,500-m race with a time of 4:0709 seconds. Olha Zemlyak won gold in the women's 400-m race (52.13 seconds) at the AADrink FBK-Games in Hengelo, Netherlands, on May 24. Mischenko won gold in the women's 1500-m race at the 2015 IAAF World Challenge in Beijing on May 20. Bohdan Bondarenko won gold in high jump (2:24 m) on May 26 at the 54th Ostrava Golden Spike event in the Czech Republic as part of the IAAF World Challenge



WBO Intercontinental Cruiserweight champion Oleksander Usyk sports a title belt after winning against Andrey Knyazev of Russia at the Sports Palace in Kyiv on April 18.



Ukraine's Alpine skiers (from left) Dmytro Mytsak, Olha Knysh, Rostyslav Feshchuk, Tetyana Tikun, Ivan Kovbasnyuk and Bogdana Matsotska, competed at the World Alpine Ski Championships on February 2-16, in Beaver Creek, Colo., with some financial assistance from the Tryzub Ukrainian American Sport Center.

Meetings. Oleksiy Kasyanov won first place in the men's long jump and discus throw at the TNTExpress Meeting in men's decathlon on June 12-13 in Kladno, Czech Republic. Ukraine won 46 medals – eight of them gold – at the Baku 2015 European Games on June 12-28. Ukraine was represented by 241 athletes among 6,000 competitors from 50 nations. Ukraine won 31 medals (eight gold) at the 2015 Gwanju student youth games on July 3-14 in South Korea. Artistic gymnast Oleg Verniaiev won six medals (three gold) – the best total for any individual competitor. First place Ukrainian winners at the IAAF World Challenge Meeting in Italy on September 13 included Anastasia Tkachuk (800 m), Yulia Chumachenko (high jump) and Krystyna Hruskutyna (long jump).

Tampa Bay's third baseman, Evan Longoria, Ukrainian on his mother Ellie's side, is a true franchise player – the face of the **BASEBALL** Rays.

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 pick in his second pro season.

Ukraine's women's relay **BIATHLON** team Juliya Dzhyima, Natalya Burgyda, Valj Semerenko and Iryna Varvynets won first place in the 4x6-km relay at the IBU Open European championships on January 27-February 3. Anna Kryvonos, 17, won gold in the 10-km individual event at the Junior World Biathlon Championship in Belarus on February 18. Valentyna Semerenko won gold in the women's 12.5-km mass start, finishing in 34:32.9 seconds at the World Championships in Finland on March

5-15. Varvynets won gold in the women's 25-km sprint at the IBM Cup in Italy on December 10-13.

In **BOXING**, cruiserweight Alexander Usyk defeated Andrey Kayazev on April 18 in Kyiv when the challenger showed no more fight in him after seven punishing rounds. The win earned Usyk the WBO Intercontinental title. Wladimir Klitschko outpointed Bryant Jennings in the champion's first U.S. fight in seven years, successfully defending his five heavyweight titles with a unanimous decision on April 25. The heavyweight title fight held in New York's Madison Square Garden was almost as much about the Ukrainian fight against separatists/Russia as it was about boxing. Ukrainian flags, posters, chants and songs garnered much exposure in print, local and cable television, as well as social media. Featherweight WBO champion Vasyl Lomachenko won by ninth-round KO against Gamaliaer Rodriguez on May 2 in Las Vegas, a bout more exciting than the hyped Mayweather-Pacquiao headliner fight. Usyk bested Johnny Muller in a 3-round TKO on August 29 in Kyiv to retain his WBO Intercontinental title. Viktor Postol won by KO against Lucas Martin Mtshysse on October 3 in Carson, Calif., winning the WBC super lightweight title. Welterweight Taras Shelestyuk won by unanimous decision against Aslanbek Kozaev on November 6 in Las Vegas. Shelestyuk holds the WBA, WBO and NABO welterweight titles. Lomachenko retained his featherweight title against Romulo Koasicha on November 7 in Las Vegas. In a shocking result, heavyweight champ Wladimir Klitschko was outpointed by Tyson Fury in Dusseldorf, Germany on November 28, losing his WBA, IBF, IBO and WBO titles. It was his first loss since April 2004. Usyk retained his cruiserweight title by 7th round TKO of Pedro Rodriguez in Cuba on December 12.

Dmytro Ianchuk and Taras Mishchuk won gold in the men's 1,000-m **CANOE** sprint at the European Canoe Association Championships in the Czech Republic on May 1-3. A four-member Ukrainian team won first place in the men's U-23 C-4 Canoe Sprint (500 m) at the International Canoe Federation's Canoe Sprint Championships in Portugal on July 23-26. Ukraine's junior competitors won seven medals (one gold) and the under-23 team won three medals (two gold). Liudmyla Luzan won first place in the junior women's 500-m C-1 race.

Maria Muzychuk won the **CHESS** world championship in Sochi, Russia on April 5, earning the title of Grandmaster with a FIDE score of 2528. Nataliya Buksa, 19, won the World Junior U-20 Championships in Russia on September 1-16, finishing with 10 points in the final. Veronika Veremyuk, 8, won the European Chess Junior Championship in Croatia on September 20-October 1.

In **CYCLING**, Andrei Grivko raced in the 2015 Tour de France and continues to be outspoken in his support for his homeland's ongoing conflict with the separatists and Russia.

Ukraine's women's saber team (Olga Kharlan, Alina Komashchuk, Olena Kravatska and Olga Zhovnir) won first place at the World Cup in Athens on February 2. Kharlan won first place at the Moscow Saber Grand Prix on May 29-31 in Moscow. Kharlan won first place in the women's



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

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saber event at the **FENCING** Grand Prix in South Korea on March 28. Ukraine's women's saber team (Kharlan, Olena Voronina, Kravatska and Halyna Pundyk) won the World Cup of Fencing in Orleans, France, on November 1. Ukraine's junior men's epee team won gold at the World Cup team challenge in Slovakia on November 28.

GYMNASTICS saw Oleh Verniaiev win first place in the AT&T American Cup on March 7 with a score of 90.597 pts., including first place in parallel bars. Verniaiev won gold at the 2015 World Challenge Cup final in Slovenia on April 3-5. Rhythmic gymnast Anna Rizatdinova won gold in Padua, Italy, on December 5. Angelina Kysla and Verniaiev won first place in the combined team event at the Swiss Cup in Zurich on November 8. Verniaiev won first place in the men's all-around (four events) at the 32nd Arthur Gander Memorial tournament in Switzerland on November 4.

Look for Jayce Hawryluk on the Florida Panthers' roster in the National **HOCKEY** League in 2016-17 after he completes his goal-filled juniors career. Two-time Stanley Cup champion Ruslan Fedotenko fled the KHL to sign with Minnesota's AHL affiliate, Iowa Wild, in hopes of returning to the NHL. Curtis Lazar (Ottawa), Hunter Shinkaruk (Vancouver) and Morgan Klimchuk (Calgary) were three young Ukrainians selected in the first round of the 2013 NHL draft. Arguably the best goaltender ever to play in the NHL, Terry Sawchuk, is having his story told in the form of a movie being produced by Winnipeg-native Danny Schur. Goalie Devan Dubnyk's resurgence led to a new, six-year \$25 million contract with Minnesota. The Islanders rewarded Johnny Boychuk with a seven-year, \$42 million deal in mid-March.

In **JUDO**, Svitlana Iaromka won first place in the over-78 kg. division at the European Open in Bulgaria on February 7-8. Iaromka won gold at the Judo Grand Slam in Baku, Azerbaijan, on May 8-10. Maryna Cherniak (48 kg) won gold at the Judo Grand Prix in Georgia on March 20-22. Iakiv Khammo (+100 kg) and Georgii Zantaraia (66 kg) won gold medals in their weight divisions at the International Judo Federation Grand Prix in Zagreb, Croatia, on May 1-3. Daria Bilodid (44 kg) won a gold medal at the Cadet European Judo Championship in Bulgaria on July 3-5. Ukraine's junior judo won seven medals (two gold) at the Junior European Judo Cup in Poland on July 18-19. Asim Mameidov (60 kg) and Sergei Zvieriev (100 kg) won the gold medals. At the Junior European Judo Cup in Prague on July 25-26, Artem Khomula (73 kg), Rezo Mesabishvili (81 kg) and Sergei Zvieriev won gold medals. Daria Bilodid (44 kg) won gold at the World Cadet Championships in Sarajevo on August 5-9. Oleksandr Kosinov, Nataliya Nikolaychuk, Inna Cherniak and Iryna Husiova won gold at the International Blind Sports Association Judo Euro Championships on November 27-28 in Portugal.

Oleksandr Yermenko won a fifth title in the 90 kg division at the 29th Kyokushin **KARATE** European Championship on May 9 in Berlin.

Olena Shurkhuo and Vitaly Skatar won the Macao Galaxy International **MARATHON** in China on December 6. Eldar Ismailov (-90 kg) won his third title at the competition. Three athletes from Ukraine (Ruslan Kramariuk, Sergii Vaskurin and Ivan Heshko) won gold medals at a Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, marathon event on May 31.

Victor Mihalchan won three gold medals and one silver medal at the Chinese **MARTIAL ARTS** Tournament 2015 in San Francisco. Two of his students also won gold and silver medals. Mihalchan won the top spot in the overall competition.

Olena Kostevyck won gold in the women's 10-m air pistol event at the European **SHOOTING** Championship on



Chicago's FC Connection, winner of the Great Lakes Cup soccer tournament held on June 27-28 at Dibrova Park in Brighton, Mich.

March 2-8. Ihor Kizyma, Volodymyr Strutskyi and Dmytro Melnyk won gold in the 10-m running target men's junior team shooting event.

Oleksandr Abramenko won the Freestyle **SKIING** World Cup in Minsk on March 3, scoring 117.70 + 122.62 points.

Andriy Pavelko was selected the new president of Ukraine's Football Federation on March 6, getting 122 out of 137 votes. Two Ukrainian **SOCCER** clubs, Dynamo Kyiv and Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk advanced to the quarterfinals of the UEFA Europa League in March after winning in the round of 16. Dnipro defeated Napoli 1-0 in a semifinal on May 14 to advance to the final against Seville, only to come up short, 3-2, on May 26 in Warsaw. Dynamo Kyiv topped the Ukrainian Premier League standings joining Shakhtar Donetsk in the 2015-2016 UEFA Champions League. Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk and Zorya Luhansk earned entry into the Europa League. Dynamo Kyiv defeated Shakhtar Donetsk, 5-4, in penalty kicks in the Ukraine Cup final on June 5 in Kyiv. Mariupol's soccer club was seeking a new name due to Ukraine's ban on Soviet symbols. Illichivets Mariupol got its name from Illich, a steelworks sponsor named after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Serhiy Rebrov's personal coaching style worked miracles as Dynamo Kyiv's new coach led his club to its 14th Ukrainian title, ending the five-year dominance of Shakhtar Donetsk. Ukraine's national team advanced to the Euro 2016 soccer championship upon eliminating Slovenia 3-1 on aggregate goals. Ukraine defeated Slovenia 2-0 on November 14 and tied 1-1 on November 17. Ukraine drew Group C with Germany, Northern Ireland and Poland. Ukraine's Under-17 team qualified for the U-17 Euro 2016, finishing in first place (Group 13) with two wins, one draw, no losses, with six goals for and one against.

Countless organizations called on the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to revoke its award of the 2018 World Cup tournament to the Russian Federation. Reasons cited include invasion and occupation of Crimea, sponsoring terrorist organizations in eastern Ukraine and criminal mismanagement/money laundering in connection with the allocation of the 2018 Football World Cup. Soccer clubs from Donetsk, Luhansk and Mariupol have been dislodged and relocated because of the fighting in eastern Ukraine. Shakhtar's players are living and practicing in Kyiv, while playing home matches in Lviv. Crimea's soccer clubs' status with UEFA has been in limbo since Russia's forced annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula in 2014. The Russian Football Union was banned from incorporating Crimean clubs into its competitions by UEFA. Crimea was designated a "special zone for football purposes."

Ukraine, a boys' under-12 team from Ukraine, won the

Chicago KICS Cup International Youth Soccer Tournament held on July 19-26.

At the 2015 FINA Masters in Kazan, Russia on August 5-16, Georgiy Chizhevskiy took first place in the 200-m breaststroke. Mykhailo Romanchuk won first in the men's 1,550-m freestyle race at the 2015 World **SWIMMING** Championships in Qatar on November 2-3.

Elina Svitolina, a rising star in women's **TENNIS**, was only the second-ever teenager to win multiple WTA titles with her repeat victory in Baku. Lesia Tsurenko defeated Urszula Radwanska 7-5, 6-1 to win the Paribas Istanbul Cup on July 19-26 claiming the first WTA Tour title of her career.

Yulia Yelistratova won first place in the elite women's division at the 2015 Alanya ITU **TRIATHLON** World Cup on October 17 in Turkey.

Ukraine won the most medals (8G, 3S, 1B) at the European **WEIGHTLIFTING** Championship in Tbilisi, Georgia on April 10-18. Yulia Paratova and Yulia Kalyna each won three gold medals, while Oleg Proshak won two gold and a bronze. Alina Shevkopyas (63 kg) and Dmytro Sukhotskyi (50 kg) won gold in the U-17 division at the European Weightlifting Championships in Sweden on August 1-8.

Diaspora sports

In diaspora sports news Chornomorska Sitch Ukrainian Athletic Educational Association had celebrated its 90th anniversary with a gala banquet on November 15, 2014, in Whippany, 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 of two skiers and the ground transport for Ukraine's six-member Alpine Ski team, allowing them to compete at the World Championships in Colorado on February 2-16.

The 61st annual ski races of the Carpathian Ski Club were held in Hunter, N.Y., on March 7 with 81 racers from pre-schoolers to seniors running the NASTAR course.

May 16 saw the Ukrainian Nationals (Tryzub) Rangers 11-13 boys soccer squad capture the NCS Eastern Pennsylvania State Cup. The team allowed one lone goal in four matches. On May 22-24, Tryzub hosted its 14th annual Ukrainian Nationals Soccer Tournament with youth teams from six states and Canada entering the competition.

Chornomorska Sitch won first place at the 2015 Steven Howansky Memorial Soccer Tournament held in Yonkers on June 20-21. Chicago soccer club FC Connection won the 2015 Great Lakes Cup tournament held on June 27-28 in Brighton, Mich. – its fourth overall tourney victory.

The Special Olympics Ukraine delegation to the 2015 World Games was limited to eight athletes and five coaches/administrators. The Los Angeles Ukrainian American community welcomed them upon arrival for the July 25-August 2 competition.

Ukrainian American water polo player Raisa Ihnat, 13 ½, participated in the USA Water Polo Junior Olympics held in California on July 30-August 2.

The fourth annual Ukrainian Sports Federation of U.S.A. and Canada (USCAK) National Beach Volleyball Tournament was held on a sunny Friday, August 28, during "Ukrainian Week" in Wildwood, N.J. The final was between two very competitive and talented teams, "Old Style Lite" and "Sitch – Moutai," with "Old Style Lite" prevailing.

Swimmers from Chornomorska Sitch and the Ukrainian American Youth Association competed at USCAK's annual swimming championships over Labor Day weekend at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center.

Mykola Stroynick defeated Marko Krasij in the men's finals at Soyuzivka in the highlight match of the 60th USCAK National Tennis Tournament during Labor Day weekend.

The Ukrainian American Youth Association's team from Passaic, N.J., won the six-team USCAK Indoor Invitational Volleyball Tournament held on November 21 in Whippany, N.J.



Christine Syzonenko

2015 USCAK Beach Volleyball finalists "Sitch-Moutai" (second to fifth from left) and champions "Old Style Lite" (second to fifth from right) with organizers of the tournament held on August 28 in Wildwood, N.J.

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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 (NaUKMA). In view of the fact that Pylyp Orlyk – the author of the first Constitution of Ukraine – graduated from Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 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 NaUKMA for a scientific conference. Finally, the celebrations culminated with an outdoor concert on October 15 with thousands in attendance, where Dr. Vyacheslav Bryukhovetsky, 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) on January 27 participated in two sessions devoted to the current war in Ukraine and the Euro-Maidan revolution preceding it. The first session recounted the course of events from the beginning of the Euro-Maidan demonstrations in November 2013 to the present day, followed by an emphasis on the cultural differences between Russia and Ukraine, and an examination of the collaboration among Christian clergy of all denominations during the Euro-Maidan. The second session featured the film "Heaven's Hundred," produced by the Babylon '13 Studio.

On March 9-11 the Center for Political and Regional Studies (CPRS) at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, held a symposium on the first anniversary of the Euro-Maidan revolution. At the symposium, scholars and experts from Canada and Ukraine spoke about the significance and consequences of this historic event and its influence on current international developments.

On June 13, the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York, in cooperation with the Wounded Warrior Ukraine project, held a forum on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. With the war in full swing for months, the spot-

light of public debates in Ukraine and in the West has been on the military conflict and its direct casualties – the dead and the wounded. This forum shifted attention from the immediate physical damage of the war to the long-standing psychological trauma that will shape Ukrainian society for years to come. The forum was the first of this kind held at the Shevchenko Scientific Society, weaving discussion of a rehabilitation project into academic debates on Ukraine, and showcasing the society's new direction toward wider cooperation with other organizations. The event brought together leading experts in Ukrainian affairs including the journalist and author Andrea Chalupa, political analyst Anders Corr, Democratic staff member at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Philip Bednarczyk, as well as the head and CEO of Wounded Warrior Ukraine, Roman Torgovitsky.

Dr. José Casanova, professor of sociology and senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University and head of the university's Program on Religion, Globalization and the Secular, delivered a lecture on "The Religious Communities of Ukraine and Their Role at the Maidan Mobilization" at a session of the Montreal chapter of the Shevchenko Scientific Society of Canada held on October 15 at the Patriarch Josyf Slipyi Museum. In Ukraine, he said, the religious leaders who belong to the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO) are committed to the development and legal protection of a strong democratic civil society. All religious groups in Ukraine took part in the Maidan mobilization. Their participation in the Revolution of Dignity shows that pluralism is not a cause for fear, but rather a basis for a strong democracy, Dr. Casanova observed.

Holodomor

On February 4, at Winnipeg's Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR), 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, punish or eliminate national, ethnic, racial or religious groups. The October 22 symposium was the second major academic event examining 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 Center, 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 filmscripts. 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-cosponsored 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.

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ics, has served in the Verkhovna Rada and leads the most popular rock band in Ukraine, Okean Elzy, 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. Vakarchuk 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.

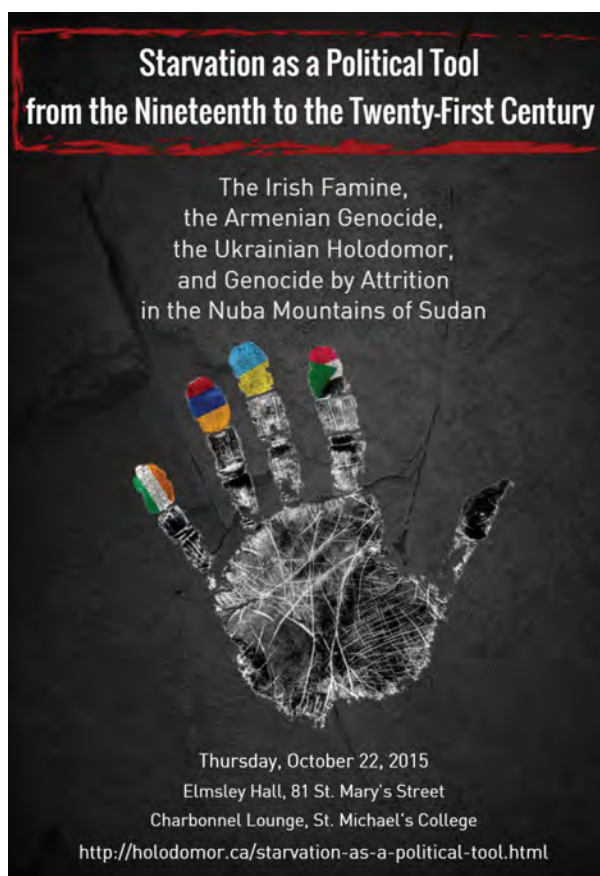
At Fordham University on November 20, Mr. Vakarchuk delivered a lecture titled "Ordinary Citizens in Extraordinary Times: Civil Society in Ukraine," primarily focusing on the role that civil society plays in the development of a country. He proposed that Ukraine can be transformed when young talented Ukrainians can get a Western education so that they can come back with new ideas and bring about change 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 D.C. chapter and the Embassy of Ukraine, the June 12 tribute to Prof. Larissa M.L. Zaleska Onyshkevych was held at the Embassy in Georgetown. During the tribute Dr. Bohdana Urbanovych, president of the Washington chapter of the Shevchenko Society, congratulated Prof. Onyshkevych 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 Makhno outlined her scholarly achievements. Not to be outdone by the other presenters, Prof. Onyshkevych herself delivered an eye-opening lecture about the contemporary Ukrainian poet and playwright from Poland Tadei Karabovych (Tadeusz Karabowicz).

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



A poster for the international symposium on "Starvation as a Political Tool from the 19th to the 21st Century" held on October 22.

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 civilizational problems that continue to motivate the Russian actions that are fomenting both regional and global instability.

New publications

Prof. Lubomyr Luciuk, editor of The Holodomor Occasional Papers Series, on May 9 announced publication of "Tell Them We Are Starving: The 1933 Soviet Diaries of Gareth Jones," (No. 2 in the series). The new book provides facsimiles from the three pocket notebooks, as well as a transcription of their contents, that Welsh 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 settlements 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 past 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 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 Stephania Bukachevska-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 Shevelov and painter Zenowij Onyshkevych. Ukrainian artists, musicians and performing groups grew in number and travelled 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 loot 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 \$5.4 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 Geerdink 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.

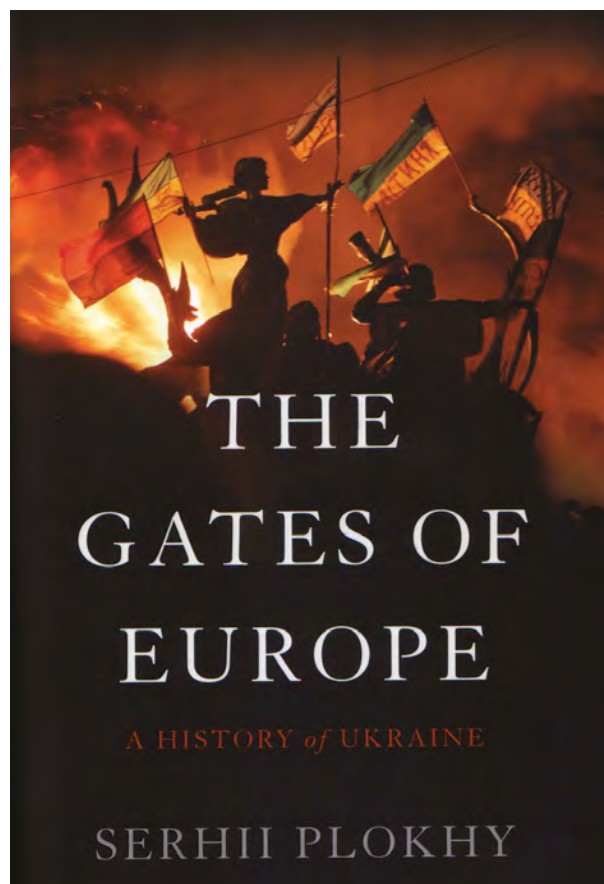
Photography on exhibit

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



Walter Korobaylo

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



Cover of Serhii Plokhy's latest book, "The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine."

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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. In the foreground is a photo by Alexey Furman that won first prize in the portrait category in the Picture of the Year International 2015 contest.



Ukraine's First Lady Maryna Poroshenko accepts a gift from Zenowij Onyshkewych of one of his paintings at the September 30 opening of his retrospective exhibit at The Ukrainian Museum. In the center is Renata Holod, president of the museum's board of trustees.

An exceptional photo exhibit opened, called "Viktor Gurniak: Road from the Maidan," on January 16. The photographs of Mr. Gurniak, a photojournalist and volunteer fighter of the Aidar Battalion offered a striking glimpse into the realities of war in Ukraine. Mr. Gurniak 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. Gurniak 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 showing came from Jerry Kykisz, 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 place in the portrait category of 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" showcased 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 Photographer 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: "Kharkiv – City of Ukrainian Culture: An International Conference in Honor of Yuri Shevelov." Prof. Shevelov (1908-2002) was not only one of Kharkiv'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 Kharkiv, 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 Kharkiv 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 colossal 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



Ukrainians protest the Morristown, N.J., concert of Valery Gergiev conducting the Mariinsky Orchestra at the Mayo Performing Arts Center on January 30.

Lev Khmelkovsky

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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 region (left) 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 inwardness in his works and fascination with earlier epochs in art are not uncommon for someone who survived two wars – one as a youth and the other as a soldier.

His caricatures, paintings and editorial illustrations have appeared in The New York Times, The National Observer, Readers Digest and books published by St. Martin's Press, McGraw Hill and Random House.

Music and dance

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

Aleksei Semenenko, a violinist from Ukraine, was second-prize winner at the Queen Elizabeth Competitions in Brussels held on May 4-30. Vladyslava Luchenko was a semi-finalist.

A newly formed chorus made its successful debut in Oakville, Ontario, at a concert in St. Joseph's Church on November 17. Conducted by Uwe Lieflander, the Sheptytsky Institute Choir consists of mostly non-Ukrainian singers. Seven selections sung by the choir were by Toronto-born composer Roman Hurko.

Earlier in the year, on May 31, Mr. Hurko conducted the premiere of his new composition, the English-language

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom No. 3 at Washington's Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine of the Holy Family.

And on October 18, director Halyna Kvitka Kondracki conducted the premiere of Mr. Hurko's Liturgy No. 4 for female voices commissioned by the Vesnivka Choir in Toronto. This was part of an inaugural concert to commence the 50th anniversary season of the Toronto-based Vesnivka Choir.

Over one weekend, March 13-15, the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus performed its program "Brothers! We Shall Live" in the cities of Rochester, N.Y., Passaic, N.J., and Stamford, Conn. These concerts were devoted to music set to the words of Taras Shevchenko and raised over \$50,000 for humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

On June 13-14 The Ukrainian Museum in New York presented programs by bandurist Julian Kytasty and multi-instrumentalist Michael Alpert titled "Jewish Musical Traditions in Ukraine" and "Ballads from the Ukrainian and Yiddish Heartland."

The Lehenda Ukrainian Dance Company from Melbourne, Australia, brought its colorful production of "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 Moravski-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 Piers 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 Soyuzivka Heritage Center.

The Commonwealth Lyric Theater (CLT) under the direction of artistic director Alexander Prokhorov staged Semen Hulak-Artemovsky's opera "Zaporozhets za Dunayem" (Kozak Beyond the Danube), joining forces with local Ukrainian choirs and dance companies in the New England area. Bass Dmytro Pavluk sang the central role of Ivan Karas. The CLT has developed a reputation in the Boston area for its bold revivals of lesser-known operas and considers its mission to nurture and promote young talent. The first performances took place in Newton, Mass., on May 14-15 and drew praise from the Boston Globe and the Boston Musical Intelligencer. CLT's executive director, Kyiv-born soprano Olha Lisovska, sang the role of Oksana and was the inspiration behind this production, staged in the hope that more opera companies in North America and Europe would be persuaded to include "Zaporozhets" in their repertoire. Additional performances took place on May 17 in Hartford, Conn., and on May 22 in SUNY Albany's Main Theater.

As in past years, The Washington Group Cultural Fund continued to present Ukrainian concerts, art and photo exhibits. This included concerts by violinist Marc Bouchkov (February 1), pianist Mykola Suk (February 8) and the Gerdan folk ensemble (February 15). This last event also included an art and photo exhibit: "Revolution of Dignity: Images from Ukraine's Maidan, 2013-2014" on February 18.

On October 4, TWG showcased violinist Solomiya Ivakhiv and pianist Angelina Gadeliya in a recital of Ukrainian music, titled "Ukraine: Journey to Freedom," which included music from their new album with music



Petro Humenyuk's "St. Nicholas" (2014) was among the works in the exhibit in "Iconart: Visions of a World Unseen" that opened on March 20 at the Ukrainian Institute of America.

by Viktor Kosenko, Borys Liatoshynsky, Valentin Silvestrov and Myroslav Skoryk. Violinist Aleksey Semenenko and pianist Inna Firsova appeared in concert as part of the Embassy Series on October 6. And on November 1, soprano Vira Slywotzky and pianist Yegor Shevtsov performed Ukrainian, French and American vocal music.

Protests against pro-Putin musicians

Protests and demonstrations by Ukrainians continued to follow conductor Valery Gergiev at many of his U.S. appearances. Mr. Gergiev was one of the prominent Russian artists who signed an open letter in support of Mr. Putin's wars. Moreover, protesters emphasized that two Russian banks that were the principal partners of the Mariinsky Foundation of America (sponsors of Mr. Gergiev's 2015 U.S. tour) were outlawed under U.S. sanctions.

On January 30, 150 people braved the bitter cold, gathering across from the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown, N.J., to protest the appearance of Mr. Gergiev, conducting the Mariinsky Orchestra at a gala concert celebrating the 20th anniversary of the arts center. Local print and online media covered the protest with reports and interviews.

One week later, on February 6, demonstrators showed up at the Adrienne Arsht Center of the Performing Arts in Miami to demonstrate at Mr. Gergiev's next appearance. This group was joined by representatives from Amnesty International and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance.

Back north in Philadelphia on February 12-13, nearly 50 people came to the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts to protest Mr. Gergiev's appearance with the Philadelphia Orchestra. As a result, Allison Vulgamore, the orchestra's president and CEO, came outside both nights to talk with the protesters. The local ABC television station and the Philadelphia Inquirer covered the protests.

In an April 12 editorial "Hate speech is not free speech," The Ukrainian Weekly reported the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's (TSO) decision to cancel pianist Valentina Lisitsa's guest appearances at concerts scheduled for Roy Thomson Hall. This action was widely reported and discussed in news media and launched a firestorm of cries of "censorship," while Ms. Lisitsa called on all her fans to write to the TSO. Unfortunately, the vitriol had another victim. Stewart Goodyear, the pianist



Three works from the exhibit "The Ukrainian Diaspora: Women Artists, 1908-2015," which opened at The Ukrainian Museum on October 18: Irma Osadsa's "Talisman No. 26" (2011), Christina Debarry's "SoHo" (2001) and Yaroslava Surmach Mills' "Easter Visit to Grandparents" (not dated).

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scheduled to replace Ms. Lisitsa regretted on his Facebook how "...her attitude and the mob-like behavior of her devotees, censored 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 free speech... political perspective or persuasion, this is about very offensive, intolerant comments about people." On April 26, Paul Grod, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, wrote 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 rhythmic 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 Vasyl Makhno and Oleksandr Frazee-Frazenko. Now a resident of New York City, Mr. Makhno was born in Chortkiv, Ukraine. Mr. Frazee-Frazenko is also a screenwriter, singer and translator, and represents the younger generation of poets from Ukraine.

In Tucson at the University of 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. Ihor Kunasz, 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 first published major collection of poems, Kobzar Park was officially established in 1981 to recognize the contributions of Ukrainian pioneer settlers to Canada and the Timmons-Porcupine Gold Camp. The committee chose local sculptor Tyler Fauvelle to create a four-foot bronze of a mature Shevchenko in historic footwear 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 screened at the Venice Film Festival, where it was greeted, according to reviews, with a standing ovation. "Winter on Fire" is one of five films nominated for best documentary feature for the 2016 Academy Awards.

On March 11, The Ukrainian Museum in New York hosted a presentation of three videos by New York filmmaker Damian Kolodiy. The centerpiece of the afternoon was "A Ukrainian Soldier's Account from the Front Lines," a documentary about one soldier who was part of the ATO forces surrounded by Russian troops in the Debaltseve cauldron. Mr. Kolodiy's film showed Oleksander Zozuliak in a Kyiv hospital bed recovering from massive injuries as he recounted his terrifying story of being crushed and trapped under a Russian tank.

The subsequent panel discussion organized by Andrea Chalupa included Michael Weiss, author of "ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror" and Mouaz Moustafa, the central figure in "Red Lines", an award-winning documentary about Syrian activists. Lessons were drawn from the struggles of both Syrian and Ukrainian oppositions, in their home fronts and in political efforts to harness international support.

Director Olga Morkova's documentary "Crimea Unveiled" was screened on March 25 at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York. Ms. Morkova's film highlighted Rustem Skibin, a Crimean Tatar artist forced to



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.

relocate to Kyiv upon the Russian invasion of the Ukrainian peninsula – a symbol of the tragic decline of a culture and a whole nation, starting with the 1944 forced exile of nearly the entire Crimean population by the Soviets. Ayla Bakkalli, U.S. representative of the Indigenous Crimean Tatar Mejlis, expanded on the history and present situation of Crimean Tatars.

Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's film "The Tribe" about a boarding school for deaf children near Kyiv met with unprecedented acclaim and collected the most awards in the history of Ukrainian cinema. On June 17, "The Tribe" opened at the Film Forum in New York City for a two-week run. Director Slaboshpytskiy and lead actress Yana Novikova came to New York on a publicity tour and answered questions in an exclusive interview for *The Ukrainian Weekly*.

"The Tribe" was filmed with deaf actors and portrays a society that has regressed to a primitive and desperate state. Mr. Slaboshpytskiy 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.

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 screenplay tells the story of Amet-khan Sultan (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 31, Ukrainian Canadian actress Kathryn Winnick was nominated for Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series at the Critic's 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 grandfather was a member of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen. She is

proud to say in numerous interviews how her long involvement in Plast 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 Kyiv and would also like to meet with Plast 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 exposition included art works of costume, set and make-up design, as well as photographs and original posters, and principally the art of Vadym Meller, who would become the principal designer for the Berezil 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 exposition 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 exposition called "Mystical Power of the Pysanka, Ukrainian Easter Eggs by Sofika Zielyk." Ms. Zielyk was awarded a Fulbright grant for her research about the influence of folk art on the work of eastern 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 Kozak 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

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Ukraine," which showcased the work of six Ukrainian artists who settled in Australia following World War II. According to Australian art critic Paul Haeffiger: "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 "Apostle 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 Kaszczak, 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 exquisitely embroidered shirts and complex full 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, Podillia and Pokuttia, as well as a striking Crimean Tatar 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 crafts, historical documents, photos, archives and books of local prominent Americans of Ukrainian descent.

On May 9 an installation called "Home East" by Waldemar Klyuzko covered the windows of the Ukrainian 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 present war and crisis 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, screenings 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 29. And on April 10, Stephen Zaets, a high school-aged junior member of the UBC coordinated and presented "Night of Bandura." Finally, on December 2, the audience experienced an audio-visual presentation of a Ukrainian "Koliada" with the participation of the Yara Arts Group from New York.



Mustafa Nayyem, the recipient of the Ion Ratiu Democracy Award (left), answers questions after his February 12 presentation about "Ukrainian Democracy after the Maidan: Threats and Opportunities." Seated next to him is Christian Osterman, director of the Wilson Center's Global Europe Program.

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 Honor. 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 reported 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



Daniel Berehulak, a freelance Australian photographer and photojournalist, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize on April 20.

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.

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

- Ukraine Today, an Internet television news channel in English was formally introduced on March 27 at the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington. The channel was created to provide the world with objective information in English about what is happening in Ukraine. Dr. Lada Roslycky, 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.

- Daniel Berehulak, an Australian photographer and photojournalist, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize on April 20 for his feature photography work on the Ebola breakout 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 gravediggers, 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.

- Serhii Plokyh, the Mykhailo Hrushevsky Professor of Ukrainian History and director of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University, on April 21 was presented the 2015 Lionel Gelber Prize for his book "The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union." The literary award is given to "the world's best non-fiction book in English on foreign affairs that seeks to deepen public debate on significant international issues." Anne Applebaum called the book "an indispensable guide to the tensions and rivalries of the present," while the Wall Street Journal said it had "uncanny parallels to the present day." Prof. Plokyh had previously been a finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize in 2011 with his book "Yalta: The Price of Peace." Later in the year, on November 14, Prof. Plokyh

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Serhii Plokhii (center) receives the Lionel Gelber Prize on April 21 from Patricia Rubin, chair of the prize board, and Stephen J. Toope, director of the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto.

received the 2015 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. Ukraine's Ambassador Valeriy Chaly noted that Prof. Plokhii's work "has helped us to understand better our contemporary reality and predict further developments," while Dr. Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak 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."

- Nadiya Savchenko on April 22 became the 2015 laureate of the Light of Justice Award – established by a Canadian of Ukrainian background, Anastasia Shkilnyk, in honor of her father, Dr. Mykhaylo Shkilnyk, and given in recognition of "moral, spiritual and ethical leadership." Because Ms. Savchenko 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 Sverstiuk and Crimean Tatar leader and rights activist Mustafa Dzhezev.

- 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 Yanukovych administration. Mr. Firtash has told reporters that he plans to return to Ukraine, but President Petro Poroshenko has made it clear that Mr. Firtash would be subject to his campaign to reduce the influence of oligarchs.

- Razom for Ukraine's Kobzar Project incorporated two definitions of "kobzar": the bard who traveled from village to village, and Taras Shevchenko's collection of poems. The project began with Ruslana bringing Shevchenko's "Kobzar" to the ATO zone in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian soldiers, volunteers and average people passed the book from town to town, many writing a note in the book to future readers. Andrii Gorobets, originally from Donetsk and now a post-doc fellow at Michigan State University, traveled the U.S. in late spring/early summer as part of the Kobzar Project, bringing the book to Ukrainian American communities.

- Marta Iwanek of Toronto was the 2015 winner of the Tom Hanson Photojournalism Award, presented by the Canadian Journalism Foundation (CJF) and The Canadian Press at the CJF gala on June 3. The award offers a six-week paid internship at the Canadian Press head office in Toronto. Although Ms. Iwanek went to Kyiv in November 2013 to make a film with Nove Pokolinnia (the organization known in Canada as Help Us Help the Children), she stayed for three months covering the events on the Maidan as a freelance photographer. Her photos were published by Maclean's magazine as "The Maidan Story."

- Roman Borys received an honorary Doctor of Music degree on June 12 from Carleton University in Ottawa in recognition of his outstanding achievements as a musician of international renown, an educator and a leader in bringing together some of Canada's most talented artists to per-

form on the international stage. Mr. Borys is a founding member of the two-time Juno Award-winning Gryphon trio, and the artistic director of the Ottawa Chamber Music Society, overseeing all aspects of programming its summer Chamberfest and its fall-winter concert series.

- Prof. Lubomyr Luciuk of the Department of Political Science at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario, was honored on June 25 with a Royal Ontario Volunteer Service Award for 50 years of community activism, at a ceremony sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. Dr. Luciuk's most recent book, co-edited with Declan Curran and Andrew G. Newby, is "Famines in European Economic History: The Last Great European Famines Reconsidered." He also recently oversaw publication of "Tell Them We Are Starving" – The 1933 Diaries of Gareth Jones."

- In a decree dated July 11, President Petro Poroshenko granted Ukrainian citizenship to Dr. Ulana Suprun and Marko Suprun. Dr. Suprun and Mr. Suprun were instrumental in providing international-level individual first aid kits (IFAKs) to Ukrainian military officers and training the officers in tactical medicine. The Suprunds also participated in the training program for the new Ukrainian Police Patrol Service. The Suprunds moved to Ukraine a week after the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity, having visited many times since the early 1990s on various missions. Dr. Suprun volunteered with the medical service and was at the Maidan. As part of the Patriot Defense volunteer project, which the Suprunds founded, over 19,000 soldiers and over 2,999 cadets have completed the tactical

medicine training program, and the army has been provided with over 16,500 IFAKs.

- Andrew Fedynsky of Cleveland, received the 2015 Freedom Award presented by the American Nationalities Movement at the annual Captive Nations Dinner on July 16. The award was given in recognition of Mr. Fedynsky's "magnificent lifetime achievements: ...talent as a scribe publishing outstanding articles supporting human rights for freedom loving people" and "exceptional sensitivity and efforts supporting his rich Ukrainian heritage as director of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives and for support of the goals of the Nationalities Movement."

- A memorial gravestone and plaque for Ukrainian American Markian Paslawsky ("Franko") was unveiled at Askold's Grave in Kyiv on August 19, on the one-year anniversary of Mr. Paslawsky's death. Hundreds of people, including many members of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization, came to honor the late Mr. Paslawsky, who was killed in action while serving in a Ukrainian Donbas volunteer battalion near the town of Ilovaysk. Plast Ukraine chief Yaroslav Yurchyshyn and Plast U.S.A. Board of Directors Chair Dr. Christine Kochan posthumously presented Mr. Paslawsky the Iron Plast Cross awarded by the worldwide Conference of Ukrainian Plast Organizations – Plast's highest honor bestowed on individuals active in the defense of Ukraine. Mr. Paslawsky's mother, Orysia, received the award.

- 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 modern achievements." Among the honorees were Tamara Olexy, president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, and Roma Hadzewycz, 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.

- 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, St. Croix, Russia, Kosovo and New York. His most recent deployment was to Liberia, where he was assigned as the commanding officer of the USPHS Commissioned Corps Ebola response, commanding a team of specialized officers who managed and staffed a 25-bed field hospital dedicated to providing care to health care workers infected with Ebola. He was appointed deputy surgeon general in 2010 and acting surgeon general in 2013, serving in that capacity for 18 months, during which time he released the "50th Anniversary of the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health" and launched the first "Call to Action to Prevent Skin Cancer." He served as deputy surgeon general from December 2014 until his retirement.



President Petro Poroshenko presents passports of Ukraine to Dr. Ulana Suprun and Marko Suprun after he issued a decree on July 11 granting them Ukrainian citizenship in recognition of their great contributions in providing Ukrainian military officers with international-level individual first aid kits and a tactical medicine training program.

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Bohdan Tytla



Leonid Plyushch



Roman Sawycky

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 Skryabin, killed in a car crash – February 2.

John S. Reshetar, 90, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Washington in Seattle since 1989, 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.

Bohdan Tytla, 87, well-known and highly respected artist – February 17.

Valentina Kuzmynch, 96, longtime president, and later honorary president, of the United Ukrainian Orthodox Sisterhoods, administration of the magazine Vira, co-founder of the Holy Trinity Parish in New York – February 27.

Olga Fylypovych, 97, secret member of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization when it was outlawed by the Polish government; participated in the 1938 march to restore the graves of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen on Makivka; in 1941, together with her late sister Osypa, sheltered a Jewish co-worker, Ruzia Lekhman, saving her from the Holocaust – February 28.

Nicolas (Mykola) Andreadis, 86, owner of construction and real estate development companies, member of the board of directors of the Ukrainian Opera Company – March 12.

Ihor Bohdan Chyzowych, 81, athlete, longtime president of the Ukrainian American Sports Center Tryzub, president/CEO of the Ukrainian Self Reliance Federal Credit Union, U.S. Army veteran – March 15.

Pavlo Dorozynsky, 88, Plast activist, head of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the U.S. in 1971-1975 – March 18.

Oleg Bryjak, 54, bass-baritone opera singer of Ukrainian descent who was born in Kazakhstan, member of the German Opera on the Rhine in Dusseldorf, proto-deacon of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Krefeld; he was among the 144 passengers and six crew members who died when Germanwings Flight 4U 9525 from Barcelona to Dusseldorf was deliberately crashed in the south of France by a co-pilot – March 24.

Yurij Petlura, 28, gifted bandurist and pianist, teacher of music and physics, assistant conductor of the Canadian

Bandurist Capella and the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of the U.S.A., music instructor at bandura camps in North America – April 21.

Stephen Peter Smotrycz Jr., 89, longtime activist and member of the board of directors of the Ukrainian National Home and Community Center of Jersey City, N.J., U.S. Army veteran of World War II, photographer and co-owner of Hudson Camera – April 24.

Leonid Plyushch, 76, of France, mathematician/cyberneticist, active member of the Soviet and Ukrainian human rights movements and a victim of punitive psychiatry (1973-1976), Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR, author of "History's Carnival: A Dissident's Autobiography" (1979), member of the External Representation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group – June 4.

Roman A. Sawycky, 77, 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.

Jaroslawa Prodywus, 85, a founder and stalwart supporter of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Byzantine-Catholic Parish in Omaha, Nebraska, initiator of the Ukrainian dance group in that city – July 24.

Robert Conquest, 98, Sovietologist, renowned author of 21 books on Soviet history and politics, who, according to The Times of London, "did perhaps more than any other historian in the West to bring those unimaginable crimes [of Stalin] to public attention"; author of "The Great Terror" (1968) and "The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine" (1986); historian whose meticulous and expressive account of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 told the world the truth about Stalin's premeditated murder of millions of their kinsmen and gave voice to those millions – August 3.

George Truchly, M.D., 93, former president of the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America and member of the Journal of UMANA editorial board, September 9.

Paul Dzul, M.D., 94, former president of the World Federation of Ukrainian Medical Associations, editor-in-chief of the Journal of the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America, November 2.

Lev Dobrjansky, Ph.D., 90, past president of the national board of the Ukrainian Engineers' Society of America – November 26.

Maria Polanskyj, 76, activist of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, member of the UNWLA National Board since 2002, longtime chair of the UNWLA Scholarship Program – December 4.

Rostyslav (Ross) L. Chomiak, 79, editor of The Ukrainian Weekly (1960-1961), associate editor of Prolog Research and Publishing Association, journalist with Voice of America and U.S. Information Agency, writer of commentaries for Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly – December 7.

Meanwhile, here at The Ukrainian Weekly...

What can we say about the year 2015 at The Weekly? We at The Weekly soldiered on and tried our best to keep up with all the news and, in turn, keep our dear subscribers informed. As well, we strove to keep our readers, and therefore our communities, in touch with each other.

The biggest news for The Weekly itself was our newly redesigned website – same address (www.ukrweekly.com), new look and functionality – that was unveiled in June. This was accomplished thanks to the truly Herculean efforts of our webmaster and tech guru, Ihor Pylypchuk. He noted these advantages of the new design: it is mobile-ready for handheld devices (smartphones, tablets, iPhones, iPads); all the articles are presented as separate full-text stories that can be easily printed, with high-quality photos included; navigation is intuitive, and related articles are categorized by topics.

For those online subscribers accustomed to reading each week's issue in PDF – which retains the original layout of the newspaper – that option remains available. Just click on the image of the latest front page of The Weekly that appears on the top right of our webpage and, voila, you will be taken to the section of our website labeled "Latest issues in PDF." There you will find all the issues published in the current year. A little hint: you can also download the issue you'd like to read and then read it at your leisure whether or not you have an Internet connection.

The new online Weekly has sections, as befits a newspaper: Ukraine, Community, Opinion, U.S., Canada, Culture/Arts, Sports, Community Events, as well as subsections, for example: Columnists and Editorials under Opinion, and Community Chronicle and Generation Uke under Community. In addition, highlighted are special 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 regular basis to subscribers only. Online access to 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 the to "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 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 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 they 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. And, 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 18 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



Laryssa Kukrycka Lysniak (Laryssa Lauret)



Robert Conquest



Rostyslav L. Chomiak

