In Ukraine: economic hardship and Russian hybrid warfare

Ukraine endured another year of economic hardship and unprecedented hybrid warfare on all fronts while a third post-Maidan government was installed amid political turmoil in another attempt to deliver on the promises of democratic transformation espoused by the revolution of 2014.

2016 was also the year Ukraine marked the 25th anniversary of the re-establishment of its independence on August 24, 1991, and Ukraine saw many reasons to celebrate. A grand military parade was held on Kyiv's main thoroughfare, the Khreschatyk, as an expression of defiance toward ceaseless Russian aggression. President Petro Poroshenko had ordered a military parade for a third consecutive year intended to underscore the nation's military capability. But it was the first year that highlighted hard-earned national pride, as factories and newly designed uniforms, marking Ukraine's efforts to shed its outdated Soviet past.

After more than 4,000 armed forces units marched past, some equipped with Ukraine-made Tavor automatic rifles, and 200 armored vehicles rumbling by, Mr. Poroshenko said: “Our main guarantor is the Ukrainian armed forces.” Approaching a company of camouflaged soldiers standing at attention, the president said: “Thanks for your patriotism, thanks for your protection. Ukraine’s independence was supposed to end at the 23rd anniversary (when Russia invaded Ukraine), but thanks to your sacrifice, it didn’t and that’s why we’re celebrating the 25th anniversary year.”

Noting that Ukraine currently spends about 5 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defense, the president said: “From this parade, our international partners will get the message that Ukraine is able to protect itself but needs further support.”

As a whole, Ukraine's economy stabilized, with inflation slowing substantially to 12.4 percent—from 43.3 percent in 2015—and gross domestic product (GDP) grew for the first time in four years by 1 percent, reaching the $90 billion mark. The banking system, riddled with so-called pocket banks that engaged largely in third-party lending, saw more than 80 financial institutions lose their licenses. Among them was Ukraine’s largest bank by assets, PrivatBank, owned by billionaire oligarch Igor Kolomoisky.

Still, Ukrainians haven’t felt the benefits of macro stability despite the fact that the government has moved forward to enact crucial legislation and set up institutions that would enable the full implementation of reforms bent toward enacting crucial legislation and setting up institutions that would enable the full implementation of reforms. Progress in other areas in the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement has also been systematically applied since November 2014, has also been made, for example regarding the adoption of constitutional amendments to the judiciary, the adoption of an ambitious human rights strategy and action plan, and the undertaking of decentralization reforms.

The report also notes that “Ukraine successfully met all benchmarks under the Visa Liberalization Action Plan, which led to the European Commission’s proposal to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament in April to lift visa obligations for Ukrainian citizens. In this context, the agreement reached on December 7 between the EU Council and the European Parliament on the suspension mechanism, paves the way for the conclusion of visa liberalization for Ukraine.”

Kyiv further solidified EU integration when the Netherlands on December 15 reached a compromise with the EU to ratify the Association Agreement with Ukraine. The Netherlands is the last country not to ratify the deal in the 28-nation political union of countries. The Dutch held a non-binding referendum on April 6 that rejected the Association Agreement. After the compromise, which stipulates that ratification doesn’t give Ukraine a path toward EU membership, Holland’s Parliament will vote on the measure in January 2017.

Kyiv also expects to receive visa-free travel to the EU for its citizens before the April 2017 French presidential election after passing nearly 300 required laws and other legislative measures.

No trickle down

Still, the public has grown disenfranchised with successive post-Maidan governments and with President Petro Poroshenko. Ukraine’s first wartime commander-in-chief, Victor Yanukovich, has been convicted of high-profile corruption cases and is currently serving a 13-year prison sentence for embezzlement.

Populist sentiment has grown, public opinion surveys have found.

Authorities have failed to recover significant amounts of money and other assets that the previous regime, led by ousted ex-President Viktor Yanukovich, had stolen. No high-profile corruption cases were prosecuted and the killing of some 100 protesters during the Maidan uprising have largely gone unprosecuted.

Ukrainians were reminded of that fact when the disgraced former president gave testimony from Russia on November 28 via video link related to the trial of five riot police officers who were allegedly involved in the mass killings. Like Mt Yanukovich, many of the law enforcement officers who allegedly gunned down some 100 protesters during the uprising either fled to the Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory of Crimea or to Russia.

During a break in the former president’s six-hour testimony, Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko read a notice of suspension, charging him with committing “high treason,” aiding and abetting Russia to encroach on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and for causing more than 1 trillion hryvnia ($40 billion) in Ukrainian damage to the state.

The IMF, with whom Kyiv has a $17.5 billion lending program to prop up its economy, has voiced frustration with “stop-and-go” reforms and lax crime-fighting.

“Turning the current stagnation into strong and sustainable growth – so that Ukraine can catch up with its peers – will not be an easy task. This has been a challenge in the past when stop-and-go reforms resulted in the repeated build-up of large imbalances and economic crises,” the IMF said on November 18. “Decision steps particularly need to be taken to fight corruption... tangible

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The scene at Independence Square, the Maidan, in Kyiv for celebrations on August 24 of the 25th anniversary of the re-establishment of Ukraine’s independence.
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results in prosecuting and convicting corrupt high-level officials and recovering proceeds from corruption have yet to be achieved.”

Thus, Mr Poroshenko’s rating has dipped below 15 percent, according to a December poll conducted by the SOES Centre for Economy and Marketing Research, a leading rating sociological service. Another poll, commissioned by Kyiv-based think tank Democratic Initiatives in December, found that 73 percent of the public thinks that the situation in the country has gotten worse, with 55 percent of respondents saying they aren’t willing to undergo hardships for the sake of successful reforms.”

The most popular government measure, according to public opinion poll, was the implementation of electronic income declarations for government officials. With more than 50,000 officials filing in 2014, the public witnessed their extraordinary wealth amid the paltry official salaries they receive. The Reuters news agency calculated that the 24 members of the current Cabinet of Ministers declared hoarding $7 million—and that’s just in cash.

Ukraine can expect to receive the next IMF installment in the first half of 2017 due to the reforms it has made, although belatedly, according to S&P; a leading credit-worthiness rating agency. Since 2015, Ukraine has received $7.6 billion of the $17.5 billion available under the IMF lending program. The bulk of the funds went to the central bank to enhance foreign exchange reserves. Ukraine expects to receive $1.3 billion in the next installment.

Third post-Maidan government
Arseniy Yatsenyuk headed the first two post-Maidan gov-
ernments since February 2014. A third administration start-
ed forming on April 14 when the Verkhovna Rada approved Volodymyr Groysman as prime minister. He is the youngest head of government on record and the first Jew to hold the position. Most of his Cabinet subsequently turned out to be loyalists of Mr Poroshenko, including Mr Groysman himself and current Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko.

Absent are the foreign technocrats who had resigned in disgust with corruption and resistance to change from entrenched interests. Mr Groysman’s appointment ended political turmoil that started on February 3 when Luhansk-born Ainars Abromavicius resigned as econ-
omic development minister. The former asset manager and other foreign technocrats said they were being used as window dressing for Western lenders and donors, and as a cover for corruption.

Mr Abromavicius singled out Ihor Kononenko, a senior lawmaker close to Mr Poroshenko, saying Mr Kononenko had lobbied to get his people appointed to head state companies and at top government positions. Mr Kononenko rejected the allegations as “completely absurd” and accused Mr Abromavicius of trying to shift the blame for his own failures at the Economy Ministry.

Chicago-born ex-Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko didn’t join the new government, while others resigned before Mr Groysman was appointed. They include Georgia-born Health Minister Alexander Khotsaishvili (July 2) and former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili (November 7), who was governor of Odessa Oblast. Also resigning during the year were National Police Chief Khutia Dekanoidze (November 14) of Georgia.

Members of the Ukrainian diaspora and other special-
ists filled key positions in Mr Groysman’s government. Detroit physician Ulana Suprun became the acting health minister on July 27. Former U.S. federal prosecutor and assistant U.S. attorney Bohdan Vitalyovytsky on August 8 joined a selection commission that will choose members of a newly created General Inspectorate at the Prosecutor General’s Office. Canadian attorney Daniel Bilak became the prime minister’s chief investment adviser on November 1 and American Petro Matarek was appointed deputy director of Ukraine Invest – the nation’s investment promotion office – on the day of its creation, October 19.

Diplomacy keeps Russian sanctions intact
Another constant besides political infighting was that Kyiv’s diplomatic corps managed to keep Western par-
tners on board with their restrictive measures that punish Russia for its military aggression towards Ukraine. EU leaders in December extended economic sanctions against Russia by another six months, until July 31, 2017, for its illegal annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea and for stoking war in eastern Ukraine. The U.S. has followed suit with its own set of sanctions through the Treasury Department, some of which include the prohibition of doing business with Russian enterprises.

“We welcome the unanimous decision by the EU to extend economic and sectoral sanctions against Russia,” Mr Poroshenko said in a statement on December 15 when the EU sanctions were extended. “I am sincerely grateful for the unwavering unity and solidarity of the European leaders in restoring Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Crimea.”

Mr Poroshenko, Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin and Deputy Prime Minister for EU and Euro-Atlantic Integration Ivanu Klymush-Tsintsadze were instrumen-
tal in convincing the nation’s partners of Russia’s inces-
sant belligerence.

A testament to the combined work of the diplomatic corps came when the United Nations General Assembly on December 19 passed a resolution that recognizes Crimea as “temporarily occupied” by Russia and condemns the “abuses” and “discrimination” against Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and other groups on the peninsula, RFRL reported. “The resolution calls on Russia, as an ‘occupying power,’ to end all abuses against people living in Crimea, including arbitrary detentions, torture and other ‘cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment’,” the report said.

Also not helping Moscow were two reports that point-
ed the finger at Russia for the Downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Russia-occupied eastern Ukraine in 2014, which resulted in all 298 people on board being killed. A Dutch-led investigation concluded on September 28 that the surface-to-air missile that shot down the pas-
enger aircraft “came from Russia.” The missile system came from and returned to Russia after blowing up the aircr,

er and was part of a military convoy of Russia’s 53rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade based in Kursk, concluded Bellingcat, a group of citizen journalists who use open-source informa-

tion, including satellite imagery, to analyze data.

Combined, their findings, coupled with dozens of news reports by The Ukrainian Weekly, Reuters, Kyiv Post, The Telegraph, as well as other news outlets, raise questions about the involvement of Russian armed forces, the Kremlin and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the disaster.

One hundred people were identified for their involve-
ment in the disaster; Dutch prosecutors said, but they didn’t provide the names of the suspects.

As a signatory of the Minsk peace accord, Russia – not its proxies – was supposed to ensure that fighting stops in occupied Donbas, heavy weapons be withdrawn, captives be released based on the principle of “all for all” and Ukraine regains control over the eastern border with its belligerent neighbor. In addition, Kyiv was to conduct local elections in the occupied territories.

Russia “has not implemented a single point of the Minsk agreements,” Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in February. The MFA further reported, “Illegal armed groups controlled by the Russian Federation continue to systematically shell and fire on positions of the Ukrainian armed forces. During the previous month, the illegally armed groups fired on Ukrainian positions over 2100 times. The Russian side continues to send wea-
pons, military equipment and mercenaries across the border into Donetske and Luhanske oblasts.”

As The Ukrainian Weekly wrote in an editorial on February 14: “The Washington Post had it right in its February 5 editorial titled Why Putin serious about mak-
ing peace in Ukraine? ” The Post noted: “The necessary first step is an end to the shelling and other measures to ensure security, such as the deployment of international
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monitors to all parts of the Russian-controlled territories. Rather than pressure Ukraine, the Kremlin administration should enlist the European Union in insisting that Moscow demonstrate with acts that it is ready to end the war. If it does, the climate for a political deal could be set.

Peace monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe charged with observing the implementation of the truce have consistently voiced frustration. They never have had unfettered access to the war zone to carry out their mandate. Nearly 700 monitors from 46 OSCE participating states, of whom 39 are from Russia, work in the war zone to provide objective data on compliance of the ceasefire that never took hold. The OSCE’s $98.8 million monitoring mission is set to expire on March 31, 2017, if it isn’t extended.

Three U.S. senators visited the frontline area near Shyrokyne last on New Year’s Eve. Sen. John McCain, Amy Klobuchar and Lindsey Graham visited with Ukrainian soldiers at a forward command post together with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch and President Petro Poroshenko. “We urge our colleagues to take more meaningful and severe sanctions against Russia for its hacker attacks on the United States,” Sen. McCain said, adding that there is “clear evidence” of Russian intervention in the American presidential election. Sen. McC also stated: “In 2017, we will defeat the invaders and send them back where they came from. To Vladimir Putin – you will never defeat the Ukrainian people and deprive them of their independence and freedom.”

President Poroshenko underscored that Ukraine is fighting for more than its independence amid Russia’s uncompromised war. “We are fighting for freedom, for values, for democracy protecting them in the center of Europe in the 21st century.”

Upon the senators’ return to Washington, where a new session of Congress was soon to convene, a group of bipartisan lawmakers said they would prepare a bill that would offer sanctions against Russia, CNN reported.

Russia’s multi-faceted war

Another constant in 2016 was Russia’s war Ukraine lost 211 soldiers in combat last year and an additional 256 servicemen in non-combat incidents, the armed forces are in occupied Donbas, Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak said. Moscow also has 600 tanks, 1300 combat vehicles, 760 artillery weapons and 300 multiple-rocket launch systems in eastern Ukraine, he added. A December 21 Bellingcat report concluded that Ukraine faced at least 279 separate attacks likely fired inside Russia, targeting 408 Ukrainian military sites in the “entire border area of the conflict zone.”

The Monohar memorial in Babyn Yar, the site in 1943 of the mass killings of over 100,000 people, two-thirds of them Jews, by occupying Nazi forces. 2016 was marked as the solemn 75th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre, when more than 30,000 Jews were killed on September 29-30, 1941.

Nadiya Savchenko is mobbed by the news media upon her arrival at Boryspil International Airport in Kyiv on May 25 after she was freed from imprisonment in Russia, where she was held captive for nearly two years.

Calling the cross-border attacks an “act of war,” Bellingcat said they involved in the “the warplanes and were the first and strongest evidence of a direct Russian participation in the fighting.” Although they were already proven to have occurred by Ukrainian officials and the U.S. government, they were not used in the summer of 2014, when they largely contributed to stemming a Ukrainian counterattack to retake the border areas near Russia, and cut off and surround the occupied Donbas capitals of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Moscow consistently used cyberattacks to target Ukrainian government institutions and energy infrastructure, Mr. Poroshenko announced at an end-of-year National Security and Defense Council meeting.

Some 6,500 Russian cyberattacks were launched only in the last two months of 2016. They included an energy grid in northern Kyiv that led to a brief power outage; the Finance Ministry, Treasury Service and state-owned railway monopoly Ukrzaliznytsia; Nuclear power stations and the nation’s biggest air hub, Boryspil Airport, were also targets.

Moscow has also weaponized information and propaganda on a sophisticated and massive scale, publishing fake or skewed news stories whose ultimate aim is to discredit Ukraine and its pro-European and NATO ambitions. Ukrainian citizens are also constantly harassed in occupied Crimea and inside Russia, where the largest Ukrainian diaspora resides. Ukraine’s Foreign Affairs Ministry warned its citizens to avoid traveling to Russia because of the high risk of arbitrary harassment and detentions by Russian security services, according to an October 5 statement. It expressed its “resolute protest to the Russian Federation in connection with the ongoing repression, illegal detentions, searches, arrests, tortures and ill-treatment towards the citizens of Ukraine,” in a separate statement published on December 29. “The aggressor state continues to ignore its obligations under the Minsk agreements on the exchange of hostages and illegally detained persons by the principle ‘all for all.’ Though six prisoners have returned to Ukraine, their total number has not decreased but increased: now we have information on at least 17 Ukrainians who are being kept under politically motivated reasons on the territory of the occupier. Even more of our compatriots are arbitrarily arrested and detained on the occupied Crimea peninsula. More than 100 Ukrainians are being kept in appalling conditions by the Russian terrorist forces in the occupied Donets and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.”

Crimen Tatars have faced persecution ever since Russia illegally occupied the peninsula in March 2014. Its highest ranking body, the Mejlis, was suspended and brand¬ed “extremist” by Russia’s Justice Ministry on April 18. Before the annexation, Tatars made up around 12 percent of Crimea’s population of 2.5 million. Human rights watch¬dog Amnesty International said Russia’s decision signaled a new wave of repression against Crimean Tatars.

“Anyone associated with the Mejlis could now face serious charges of extremism as a result of this ban, which is aimed at muffling out the few remaining voices of dissent in Crimea,” Denis Krivosheyev, Amnesty’s deputy director for Europe and Central Asia, said in an April 13 statement.

Toward the end of World War II, about 80 percent of the Crimean Tatar population, or 180,000 people, were deported on the orders of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin and carried out by his henchmen. They were only allowed to return to their ancestral homeland in the late 1980s during what was called “deportation,” though they were being forced to leave their homes once more.

Ukrainian hostages released

Perhaps the foremost symbol of Ukrainian resistance on the global stage toward Russian aggression was Nadiya Savchenko, whom Mr. Putin put on May 25 in exchange for two Russian military intelligence operatives. Ukraine’s first female military aviator had defied Russia’s kangaroo court system with patriotic attire and spells of hunger strikes throughout her extrajudicial prosecution. While incarcerated, she was elected in absentia to the Verkhovna Rada and was appointed as part of Ukraine’s delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – the EU’s statutory body. Ms. Savchenko was abducted in Ukraine while serving in the volunteer Askar Battalion and on June 17, 2014, taken across the border to Russia. She was subsequently sentenced to 22 years in prison on trumped-up charges and cynically fined $463 for violating the border. Upon her release, Ms. Savchenko was Ukraine’s most popular politician, according to numerous polls. But her allegiance to Kyiv came into question when she met with Kremlin-backed priests in Minsk on December 11 to discuss prisoner swaps. She justified the meeting in Belarus as a step toward releasing prisoners of war and “strength¬ening” ongoing peace talks between Ukraine, Russia and its Donbas puppets. Her colleagues in Parliament, includ¬ing from the Batkivshchyna party on whose ticket she was elected, criticized her for the move.

Her detractors say that, by meeting with the Kremlin-backed separatists, Ms. Savchenko creates the illusion that the key to peace in war-torn Donbas lies with them, and that such overtures lend legitimacy and undermine Kyiv’s efforts to hold Russia responsible for the war and keep Western sanctions in force as punishment.

Three weeks after Ms. Savchenko’s release, two more Ukrainians were freed on June 14: Hendadzha Alasnyey and Yuriy Solodnichy. Mr. Alasnyey is a Crimean photographer who was arrested months after Russia annexed the peninsula and sentenced to seven years in jail after being convicted of plotting terrorist acts against the Russian imposed authori¬ties. Mr. Solodnichenko, 73, is a former electronics-plant chief who was arrested by the Russian authorities in Moscow in August 2014 and accused of trying to buy restricted com¬ponents for the S-300 air-defense missile system. He was sentenced in October to six years in prison.

“I think that while Putin’s regime is running Russia, it will remain our enemy and therefore we will have to do everything [we can] to release all our friends from Russian jails...They are waiting for our help and I believe they will join us," Mr. Solodnichenko said, as quoted by RFE/RL’s Ukrainian service.

At least 17 Ukrainians are being held for politically moti¬vated reasons in Russia, says Ukraine’s Foreign Affairs
Before retreating in 1943.

Roma, homosexuals and other so-called "undesirables" many weren't aware of the Nazis' racist policies towards the morning. Due to Soviet propaganda and misinformation, rounding area had been ordered to march to the site the first required no digging. Jews residing in the city and the sur-rounding area was to be killed to the site the final morning. Due to Soviet propaganda and misinformation, many weren't aware of the Nazis' racist policies towards the Jews. And because of the nearby freight train station, some many Jews didn't hear the distant shots of the Nazi death trains. The Nazis would continue using the site to kill more Jews, Ukrainian patriots, Communist Party members, Roma, homosexuals and other so-called "undesirables" before retreating in 1943.

"We wanted to do something that has lasting value for Ukraine as a state, and for Jews and ethnic Ukrainians liv-ing within the boundaries of Ukraine, and outside the boundaries of Ukraine," said Prof. Magocsi of the two-year commemoration planning period. As a board director at the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, the New Jersey native said it means that "Crimea is ours, period." Crimea and were prosecuted on trumped charges of "terrorism." Kyiv and four museums in Crimea have been wrangling over the fate of the archeological treasures – which range from gold artifacts to a Scythian helmet dating back more than 2,000 years – ever since Russia seized control of the Ukrainian peninsula in March 2014. The Ukrainian govern-ment claimed that, as state property, they could not be returned to territory outside its control, while the Crimean museums argued the objects must be returned by the Netherlands to the institutions from which they were on loan. The treasures, popularly known as Scythian gold, are in the Netherlands because they were borrowed from the four museums in Crimea and one in Kyiv for an exhibition in early 2016 at Amsterdam's Allard Pierson Museum.

Popular Crimean Tatar pop singer Jamala won the 2016 Eurovision song contest on May 14 in Sweden. Known for her style of R&B and soul, the talented star performed "1944," a song that ties the current persecution by the Russian occupation to the genocide in which Soviet Josef Stalin deported more than 200,000 Crimea Tatars to Uzbekistan. The Verkhovna Rada declared the 1944 forced deportation of Crimean Tatars a genocide on November 12, 2015, and designated May 18 as the Day of Remembrance of Crimean Tatar Genocide Victims. In the final round, Jamala – whose birth name is Susanna Jamaladina – won enough votes to surpass runner-up Damir Ili of Australia and Sergey Lazarev of Russia.

Looking ahead to 2017

Ukraine could expect to see more signs of economic recov-ery this year. The state budget has a deficit target of 3 percent of GDP that is in line with IMF program requirements, according to Kyiv-based investment capital Dragon Capital.

"That said, Ukraine can realistically receive $1.3 billion from the IMF, the fourth tranche of its Extended Fund Facility program, in early 2017," Dragon Capital wrote in a note to investors.

"Ukraine is unlikely to face serious economic hardships next year. We expect recovery to continue, with real GDP accelerating to 2.5 percent year-on-year from 1.0-1.5 per-cent this year," the investment bank said.

However, Ukraine faces a new international political arena after the ascension of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency and key national elections taking place in Europe – notably France and Germany against the backdrop of the United Kingdom having voted to leave the EU in 2016.

"Domestically, the government will mark its first year in office in April, becoming subject to a potential no-confi-dence vote, but the risk of early parliamentary elections remains low in our view," Dragon Capital noted. "Investors will stay focused on [the] general reform progress, espe-cially in IMF-related areas such as pension reform, privati-zation, corruption fight and land reform. Global commodi-ties prices [steel, iron ore, oil, grain] and the military con-flict in the east will also remain on the watch list."
In U.S.-Ukraine relations: concerns about war, corruption

Questionable words uttered by President Barack Obama put Ukraine in the news in the United States at the beginning of the year. In his State of the Union address on January 12, speaking about threats faced by the U.S. and the world, Mr. Obama said: “Even as their economy severely contracts, Russia is pouring resources in to prop up Ukraine and Syria – client states they saw slipping away from their orbit.” According to various news media reports, apparently the word “client” was a departure from the president’s prepared text, which referred to “states,” not “client states.”

The United States, President Obama once again demonstrated that in both countries Russian President Vladimir Putin acted “in response to a client state that was about to slip out of his grasp” and “improvised” a way to maintain control – but that in Syria, this came at enormous cost to the well-being of his own country.” The president rejected the idea that “talking tough or engaging in some military action” could be useful in resolving the situation in Ukraine and Syria, saying that in both countries Russian President Vladimir Putin acted “in response to a client state that was about to slip out of his grasp” and “improvised” a way to maintain control – but that in Syria, this came at enormous cost to the well-being of his own country.”

The new U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, presents her letters of credence to President Petro Poroshenko on August 30. “In the last two years, Ukraine has achieved significant progress. And now we have great opportunities to continue these changes. The U.S. is a reliable friend and supports Ukraine and its reforms,” Ambassador Yovanovitch stated.

The United States does not recognize Russia’s ‘referendum’ of March 16, 2014, or its attempted annexation of Crimea, which violates international law. We will not accept the redrawing of borders by force in the 21st century. Sanctions related to Crimea will remain in place as long as the occupation continues. We again call on Russia to end that occupation and return Crimea to Ukraine.”

On April 20, the Stability and Democracy (STAND) for Ukraine Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. Eliot Engel (D-NY) and Adam Kinzinger (R-IL). The bill would require that the U.S. president, prior to lifting a raft of Ukraine-related sanctions, submit “certification” to Congress that Ukraine has restored “sovereignty” over Crimea or that the peninsula’s status has been resolved to the satisfaction “of a democratically elected government” in Kyiv. The legislation would also codify the U.S. government’s policy of non-recognition of Russian authority over Crimea, mirroring Washington’s policy of refusing to recognize Soviet sovereignty over the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The bill was passed by the House of Representatives on September 21 and sent the next day to the Senate, where it was referred to the Foreign Relations Committee.

New ambassador to Ukraine

On May 18, President Obama nominated a new ambassador to Ukraine. Marie Yovanovitch, a career member of the Foreign Service, class of minister-counselor, who since 2014 was the dean of the School of Language Studies at the Department of State’s Foreign Service Institute, was tapped to replace Ambassador Geoffrey R. Pyatt, who was nominated to serve as envoy to Greece. Ms. Yovanovitch previously served at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv as deputy chief of mission from 2001 to 2004. She was the U.S. ambassador to Armenia in 2008-2011 and the ambassador to Kyrgyzstan in 2005-2008. Speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 21, Ms. Yovanovitch stated that “more progress has been made in Ukraine in the past two years” than in the past 25 years of Ukraine’s renewed independence and said her objectives as U.S. ambassador will be to assist in reforming key sectors in Ukraine and fighting corruption. She enumerated three aspects to countering Russian propaganda: 1) get the story out, 2) put a premium on analyzing the stories andcountering with facts, and 3) build capacities in training journalists to recognize the disinformation and how to best to reply. After her confirmation by the Senate on July 4, she was sworn in on August 12 at the State Department. Ambassador Yovanovitch is the eighth U.S. ambassador to Ukraine since its restoration of independence in 1991.

The ambassador was already on the scene as Ukraine celebrated the 25th anniversary of its re-establishment of independence, although she presented her letters of credence to President Petro Poroshenko a few days later on August 30. In Washington, President Obama and Secretary

At the Helsinki Commission’s November 10 briefing on human rights and security violations in Russian-occupied Crimea (from left) are: Paul Goble, Ambassador John Herbst, Orest Deychakiwsky, Oksana Shulyar and Taras Berezovets.
Dmytro Shymkiv (left), the deputy head of Ukraine’s presidential administration, discusses the effectiveness of the government reform program at the Wilson Center on Washington on March 3. Seated next to him is the discussion moderator, William Pomerantz, deputy director of the Kennan Institute.

Among the U.S. officials who called for Nadiya Savchenko’s release from Russian captivity were U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, who spoke on March 9, noting that the previous day was her 600th day of wrongful imprisonment of Ukrainian pilot and Rada Deputy Nadiya Savchenko,” who was on a hunger strike.

The case of Nadiya Savchenko

Members of the U.S. Congress continued in early 2016 to express their concern about the case of Nadiya Savchenko, who had been captured by pro-Russian forces July 2014 and whose trial was in remote region of Russia had begun in September 2015. Reps. Sander Levin (D-Mich.), Mike Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) and Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) members of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, on January 13 called on Russia to release the former Ukrainian fighter pilot and current member of the Ukrainian Parliament. “We are gravely concerned by recent reports of her ill health since the commencement of her hunger strike. …Russian authorities have repeatedly delayed Savchenko’s trial and hearing dates, moved her trial venue to discourage attendance and restricted access to her lawyers,” they said. “We demand that Russian authorities fulfill their international obligations and the rule of law, and we join in support of Ms. Savchenko.”

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Among the U.S. officials who called for Nadiya Savchenko’s release from Russian captivity were U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, who spoke on March 9, noting that the previous day was her 600th day of wrongful imprisonment of Ukrainian pilot and Rada Deputy Nadiya Savchenko,” who was on a hunger strike.

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Secretary Kerry said on March 7 that he was “deeply concerned about reports of torture and other violations of international law by security forces of both sides.”

President Petro Poroshenko responds to questions about the situation in Ukraine after his keynote address at the “Ukraine in Washington” forum in the U.S. Capitol's Congressional Auditorium on March 30. Sitting next to him is Bill Clifford, president of the World Affairs Council of America, moderator of the session.

Yaro Bihun

Ukraine’s new prime minister, Volodymyr Groysman, briefs the White House press at the conclusion of his meeting there with Vice-President Joe Biden on June 15.

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Visitors from Ukraine

During 2016, there were many visits to Washington by Ukraine's officials and leaders. Among them was the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential administration, Dmitry Shymkiv, the official responsible for overseeing the government's national program of reforms necessary to raise the standards of the European Union. Speaking at the Kent State University's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars on March 3, Mr. Shymkiv focused on 18 of the 35 EU criteria Ukraine is striving to implement by 2020 and presented a scorecard on its progress thus far: "We have more than 70 percent of the decisions of the National Reform Council being implemented in legislative documents," he said, adding that an increasing percentage of the people surveyed in Ukraine react positively to these changes. That is especially evident in the population's support for the "strong development" in the area of defense and security, where, he said, "Russia did everything possible to destroy the Ukrainian army and we now have an army which is able to stand and defend the country." 

He did acknowledge that Ukrainians now see the most serious delays in the implementation of reforms in the areas of anti-corruption, the judiciary, public administration and health care, but underscored that anti-corruption reform is at the top of the government agenda. "We established all the necessary institutions needed to fight corruption," including the Anti-Corruption Bureau. "So, it's working. We're building the muscles," he assured his listeners.

President Poroshenko was in Washington later that month. On March 30, delivering the keynote address at the "Ukraine in Washington" conference in the Centennial Auditorium in the U.S. Capitol, Mr. Poroshenko pointed out that, after Ukraine abandoned the world's third largest nuclear arsenal in 1994, it received security assurances under the Budapest Memorandum guaranteeing its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. He asked: "But what has it turned [out] to be in reality?" He explained: "Russia simply defied its assurances to Ukraine and committed a direct armed aggression against my state." He added: "The price we paid is striking: almost 10,000 people have died and more than 2,700 Ukrainian soldiers were killed by combined Russian-military forces – more than the number of Americans who died in Afghanistan over the past 15 years. In addition, about 1.75 million people have lost their homes in the Donetsk and Luhansk region and have been forced to move to elsewhere in Ukraine.

The conference at which President Poroshenko spoke was organized in cooperation with the Embassy of Ukraine – by the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation and the World Peace; and David Kramer of the McCain Institute. Panels were devoted to the topics "The Human Cost of Kiev's Hybrid Military Invasion", "From Budapest to Minsk and Beyond"; and "The United States has over Russia.

The 2016 "Ukraine in Washington" conference, which focused on the devastating impact of Moscow's war against Ukraine and U.S. efforts to assist Ukrainians with the humanitarian, economic and security crises brought on by Mr. Putin's hybrid military invasion, also featured an address by Mr. Poroshenko's sister, Natalya Jaresko, the executive director of the International Monetary Fund, who talked about the economic reform programs, and in stopping Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. "In this very important time in Ukraine's history we now have the strong backing of our American partners," she said, describing that bilateral cooperation to members of the press on June 15, at the conclusion of his meeting at the White House with Vice-President Biden. As Mr. Biden greeted the Ukrainian prime minister at the White House, he praised him for his efforts. "You've taken on a difficult job," he said. "I think the largest piece of leverage that we have on Russia is the economic sanctions." She noted that Russia paid a price for its belligerence because "it believes it is better for Ukraine not to do anything at all.

The next day, before joining in with the leaders of more than 50 countries at the Nuclear Security Summit, President Poroshenko visited the recently dedicated Ukrainian Holodomor Memorial in Washington, where he laid a floral wreath to honor its millions of victims.

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Sanctions against Russia

The next day, Prime Minister Groysman spoke at the National Press Club, heralding his government's steps toward institutional and economic reforms, saying changeneglied to the customs service, public procurement procedures, and the courts will make the country more attractive to investors. According to a report from RFE/RL, Mr. Groysman argued that sanctions enacted by the U.S. and the European Union "can be eliminated only when the aggressor returns within its borders, when the aggressor renounces its aggressive plans."

His words echoed those of Assistant Secretary of State Nuland, who told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 7 that sanctions are the most powerful leverage the United States has over Russia. "I think the largest piece of leverage that we have on Russia is the maintenance over two years of deep and comprehensive sanctions across the U.S. and the EU countries," Ms. Nuland was quoted by RFE/RL as saying. "So again this is why we are advocating – because Minsk is not being implemented – that the sanctions have to be rolled over again." She added: "We have deterred further land grabs in Ukraine, and that was a real risk when we first started with sanctions – that they would try to roll all the way to Kyiv and Kharkiv. ... I will tell you now that the sanctions are now openly talking about the pain of sanctions..."

Secretary of State Kerry reassured Ukraine on July 7 that sanctions would remain in place unless Moscow fulfilled its obligations under the Minsk agreement. Speaking at a joint news conference in Kyiv with President Poroshenko, he also announced an additional $23 million
in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine to help those affect-
ed by the ongoing war in Ukraine’s east. (Two months ear-
lier, the U.S. had announced $20 million of similar aid. The
latest allocation of funds brought the total of humanitarian-
an assistance to Ukraine since the start of the ongoing
conflict to over $13.5 million.)

Indeed, at the end of the year, the U.S. added seven
more well-connected Russian insiders and over three
dozen companies in Russia and Russia-occupied Crimea
to its sanctions list.

Another visitor to Washington during 2016 was former
Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, now the leader of
Ukraine’s People’s Front party. As did his predecessor, Prime
Minister Groysman, two weeks earlier, Mr. Yatsenyuk met
with Vice-President Biden, thanking the U.S. government
and people for their support of Ukraine and asking that
they continue their assistance in the future. During his
June 27-30 visit, he also met with U.S. Treasury Secretary
Jack Lew, officials at the International Monetary Fund and
and with Sens. McCain, Durbin and Bob Corker (R-Tenn.).

During an open discussion at the Atlantic Council, he
responded to many questions about Ukraine’s internal
affairs and foreign relations, especially with the United
States and Russia.

Two more visitors from Ukraine were National Deputy
Savchenko and former President Leonid Kravchuk.

Ms. Savchenko arrived in late September. She received
the Atlantic Council’s Freedom Award on September 19 in
New York and then spoke at the council’s headquarters in
Washington on September 22. The pilot-turned-politician
urged the international community to fight to free every
single Ukrainian locked up in Russia. “I was not the only
prisoner in a Russian jail. I would like you to continue this
struggle to support my colleagues who are still there,” she
was quoted by the Atlantic Council as saying. “It is impor-
tant for [Russian President Vladimir] Putin to understand
he has no chance of keeping any of the Ukrainian prisoners
currently being held – illegally – by him.” She also pressed
the case for targeted sanctions against Russian kleptocrats,
criticized the “underperformance” of Ukraine’s current
government and explained that “The Kremlin is guided by
a sick idea of restoring the territories of the USSR.”

Mr. Kravchuk, the first president of the independent
Ukraine, who served from 1991 to 1994 before stepping down
up of the Soviet Union, also spoke at the Atlantic Council.
He appeared on November 18 alongside two other post-
Soviet leaders – the first president of Belarus, Stanislau
Shushkevich (center), and the first deputy prime minister
of Russia, Gennady Burbulis – to discuss the “Soviet disso-
lution, the birth of nations and the successes and challenges
25 years later.” Mr. Kravchuk stressed that “Ukraine is
growing and doing so in a democratic way in a European
way, and now Ukraine cannot be pushed off this path.”

Questions about U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s
expressed positions on Russia, President Putin and Crimea
also came up during the discussion.

Ukraine’s first president after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Leonid Kravchuk (right), analyzes the country’s
conflicts along its border with Russia and Moscow’s annexation of Crimea during a panel discussion on November
18 at the Atlantic Council with two other post-Soviet leaders, Russia’s first deputy prime minister, Gennady
Burbulis (left), and the first Belarusian president, Stanislau Shushkevich (center).

“So, one cannot fathom the world reaction if the president of
the United States is going to recognize the annexation of
Crimea,” Mr. Kravchuk said. “Neither can I fathom some of
the reported statements that Trump made during the
election campaign.” He noted, however, that Mr. Trump did
not make those comments as president, adding that he
understands that being a president in the White House
changes the way a candidate may have thought about an
issue before being elected. “If he expresses it after his
January 20 inauguration, then I will express my far nega-
tive reaction,” Mr. Kravchuk added.

At the end of the year, President Obama signed into law
the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act,
which contains a Ukraine security assistance package. The
NDAA authorizes $350 million in security assistance,
including lethal and non-lethal equipment, training and
technical assistance. Half ($175 million) of this money
is linked to Ukraine’s implementation of critical defense
reforms, such as instituting civilian control of the military
and cooperation and coordination with Ukrainian parliamen-
tary efforts to exercise oversight of the Ministry of Defense
and military forces, increased transparency and account-
ability in defense procurement, and improvement in
transparency, accountability and potential opportunities
for privatization. Also part of the NDAA is the Countering
Disinformation and Propaganda Act – legislation designed
to help American allies counter foreign government pro-
paganda from Russia, China, and other nations.

What will 2017 bring?

As 2016 came to a close, our editorial wondered what
the incoming Trump administration would bring.

Ukrainian Americans who love both the United States and
their ancestral homeland had repeatedly expressed their
concerns, as did citizens of Ukraine who feared that their
country could be abandoned to Russia’s sphere of influence.

Things became even more worrying when the Times
of London reported on December 28 that there was talk of the
Trump administration deploying Henry Kissinger to reset U.S. relations with Russia, and that the
Kremlin had reacted favorably to the idea. The Times
reported: “Mr. Kissinger is already said to have advised Mr.
Trump to roll out a plan to end sanctions on Moscow that
would recognize Russia’s dominance in the former Soviet
states of Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and Kazakhstan.”
What’s more, there are reports that Mr. Kissinger’s strategy
might include accepting the annexation of Crimea in exchange
for Moscow withdrawing from eastern Ukraine.

But there were pledges from Ukraine’s supporters in
Congress to continue or even increase sanctions against
Russia.

Sens. Portman and Durbin, co-chairs of the Senate
Ukraine Caucus, on December 8 led a bipartisan group of
27 senators to call on President-elect Trump to continue
America’s tradition of support for the people of Ukraine in
the face of Russian aggression. “In light of Russia’s contin-
ued aggression and repeated refusal to respect Ukraine’s
territorial integrity and sovereign right to choose its own
destiny, we also renew our call for the United States to
increase political, economic and military support for Ukraine.
The senators warned that “the U.S. and its international
defensive lethal assistance as part of a broader effort to help
Ukrainians better defend themselves, deter future aggres-
sion and implement key structural reforms. Similarly, we
believe that Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea should
never be accepted, nor should we lift sanctions imposed
on Russia for its behavior in eastern Ukraine until key pro-
visions of the Minsk agreement are met.”

While visiting Kyiv at the end of December, Sen. McCain
told RFE/RL that the United States will not strike a
“Faustian bargain” with President Putin, amid speculation
that President-elect Trump could scrap sanctions.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with RFE/RL’s
Ukrainian Service on December 30 along with Sens.
Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.),
Sen. McCain said any possible deal with Mr. Putin “would
interfere with and undermine the freedom and democra-
tics that exist today.” Sen. Graham said Congress in 2017
would pursue more sanctions against Russia, targeting the
energy and banking sectors, as well as Putin and his
inner circle.” While they were in Kyiv, President
Poroshenko awarded Sen. McCain the Order of Freedom
and Sen. Graham the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise for
their significant personal contributions to the enhance-
mement of relations between Ukraine and the United States.

All three senators underscored that there is strong sup-
port in Congress to provide Ukraine with “lethal defensive
weapons” to help Kyiv in its fight against combined
Russia-separatist forces.
The University Church of the Holy Wisdom of God on the campus of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv was consecrated on September 11 by Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk and Bishop Borys Gudzjak.

On March 5, Pope Francis received in a private audience Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, patriarch of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, and members of the UGCC Permanent Synod. The pope was presented with a copy of the Ukrainian version of Our Lady, the Door of Mercy. Joining the UGCC delegation were: Metropolitan Andryi Desiatytsky of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia, Metropolitan Serhiy of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, Metropolitan Anthony, Archbishop Jeremiah and members of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) of the USA in South Bound Brook, N.J.

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Ukrainian American veterans, and celebrated fellowship and a display to show broad support for the Russian World Congress in the West, whereby the library functions as a cultural and educational hub. The building also houses an agent of Kremlin policy.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. (UOC-U.S.A.) launched its Strategic Plan during its 21st regular Sobor during an information presentation on October 19-22 at the Metropolitan Center of the UOC-U.S.A. in Washington, D.C.

Participants of the 21st Regular Sobor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. that was held on October 19-22 at the Metropolitan Center of the UOC-U.S.A.

The Ukrainian Catholic University concluded its fundraising events for 2016 in the USA that were held under the theme “A New Generation for a New Ukraine.” The Ukrainian Catholic Educational Foundation hosted events in New York (November 6), Chicago (October 30), Philadelphia (October 29), Los Angeles (October 23) and Boston (October 28). In the spring, fund-raiser events were held in West Orange, N.J., on May 15 and in Paterson on May 20. Since 2010, UCU’s Comprehensive Campaign – through US, Ukrainian, Canadian and European benefactors – has raised $65.5 million. It was noted that through the work of UCU, a new generation through education, research and social work, and the nurturing of a spiritual life, the new leaders of Ukraine will come from places like UCU, where they can cultivate a moral compass. Major speakers during the fund-raisers included Dr. Boris Lushniak, former Finance Minister of Ukraine Natalie Janusek and Bishop Guzdiak, president of UCU.

Patriarch Filaret of the UOC-KP visited the Home Office of the Ukrainian National Association on November 7. During the visit to the UNA’s two publications – Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly – the patriarch was interviewed by Roma Hadzewycz, editor-in-chief of both newspapers, and Lev Khmelkovsky of Svoboda about the role of the UOC-KP in Ukraine. The UOC-MP he noted, is not on the side of the Ukrainian state and would settle for enslavement instead of a just peace where a person has complete freedom. In Patriarch Filaret’s opinion, had the propaganda campaign by Moscow that paints the Kyiv Patriarchate as a tool of Dynasty, and other Russian-infiltrated forces in Ukraine.

The UOC-MP’s popularity in Ukraine can be attributed to the propaganda campaign by Moscow that paints the Kyiv Patriarchate as a tool of Dynasty, and other Russian-infiltrated forces in Ukraine. The UOC-KP appealed to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to recognize the autocephaly of the Kyiv Patriarchate, Patriarch Filaret told the editors. The patriarch also noted that he does seek open relations with the clergy of the UOC-MP, as many of them have become priests of the UOC-KP, adding that it is easier to unite with friends than with former enemies. Relations between the UOC-KP and the UOC-U.S.A. have also improved, with the hierarchs of the UOC-U.S.A. appealing to Patriarch Bartholomew to work with the UOC-KP. The UOC-U.S.A. continues to do good work in Ukraine, and the patriarch said that his meeting that day with the Consistory of the UOC-U.S.A. was further proof of those good relations.

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Our Ukrainian diaspora: unity around the globe

Unity was the key word for 2016 in our Ukrainian diaspora. On February 20, Ukraine’s Day of Commemoration of the Heroes of the Heavenly Brigade, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress spoke for Ukrainians worldwide when it said: “Today, the Ukrainian Canadian community joins our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and around the world in commemorating the memory and heroism of all those who paid the ultimate price in the battle for a free and democratic Ukraine. From November 2013 to February 2014 the citizens of Ukraine took to the streets to protest against the corrupt, authoritarian regime of President Viktor Yanukovych. On the Maidan in Kyiv (Independence Square), and on city squares throughout the country, the people of Ukraine claimed their unalienable right to liberty and justice. Their demand of the government was simple – to be treated with Dignity. The brave demonstrators were met with state-ordered violence and in February 2014, the regime opened fire against its own people.

“Over 100 people – the Heavenly Hundred [Heavenly Brigade] – gave their lives so that the people of Ukraine can live in dignity with a government that respects their human rights. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten. The victory of Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity will forever stand as an example to us all of courage, determination and unity. Today, as we honor the Heavenly Hundred, we also pay tribute to the thousands of Ukrainians who have fallen or been wounded as a result of Russia’s invasion and the tens of thousands that are today risking their lives fighting to protect Ukraine’s independence and sovereignty.”

Next, when Nadiya Savchenko on March 3 declared a hunger strike – her seventh such hunger strike since she was taken into Russian custody in July 2014, and advised, the mail would be confiscated by Russian authorities. Similar appeals and statements, including human rights organizations, to assist with the plight of Ukrainians held as Vladimir Putin’s hostages. Among them were filmmaker Oleh Sentsov and Oleksander Kolchenko, who were tried as “terrorists” and back in August 2015 were sentenced to 20 and 10 years, respectively. In addition, according to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, many Crimean Tatars were being held in Russian-occupied Crimea and were falsely accused of being involved in a terrorist group. And then there were POWs captured by Russia and its “separatist” collaborators. The Ukrainian diaspora organizations, led by the Ukrainian World Congress, combined efforts to call on the international community to secure the release of all Ukrainian political prisoners illegally detained by Russian authorities. They also urged Ukrainians around the globe to take up the cause by contacting their elected officials. Acting in support of an October 5 appeal by the Parliament of Ukraine, the UWC urged the international community, including human rights organizations, to assist with efforts to secure the release of all Ukrainian citizens held by Russian authorities. Similar appeals and statements were issued by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) and Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organizations.

There were worldwide expressions of solidarity on Ukraine’s official Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Crimean Tatar Genocide, marked on May 18. The UCCA and the UWC joined the UCC and the government of Ukraine in remembering the forcible deportation of over 230,000 Crimean Tatars from their Crimean homeland to the Soviet east and the deaths of over 100,000 of them during this genocidal act of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the regime of Joseph Stalin in 1944. “This Sürgün, or violent expulsion,” remains hidden in the annals of 20th century atrocities,” the UCCA stated. The UCC noted, “Today, the Ukrainian Canadian community stands in solidarity with the Crimean Tatar People who mark the anniversary of the mass deportation from their ancestral homeland by the totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin. The entire Crimean Tatar people, the indigenous people of Crimea, were exiled to the Soviet east in 1944. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were forcibly and violently deported – almost half lost their lives during the first year of exile – for no crime other than their language, culture and traditions. They were not allowed to return to Crimea for almost 50 years.”

As the 25th anniversary of the re-establishment of Ukraine’s independence was celebrated, community leaders in the United States, Canada and Australia, and the leader of the Ukrainian World Congress, Eugene Czolij, shared their thoughts on the significant milestone with The Weekly in its issues dated August 21 and 28.

Mr. Czolij wrote: “The 20-million strong Ukrainian diaspora led by the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) joins the people of Ukraine in marking the 25th anniversary of the Independence of Ukraine as proclaimed on 24 August 1991 – a day that saw the fulfillment of the dreams of so many who had dedicated their lives to this goal and a day that offered hope and promise to future Ukrainian generations. Over the course of 25 years we have watched the rebirth of a nation that not only removed the shackles of oppression, but shattered them into pieces, ensuring that they can never again be used to deny our people their freedom, their aspirations or fundamental human rights. The UWC – with its member organizations and global network today spanning 50 countries – has stood with the people of Ukraine at every stage of this often tumultuous journey. There was no greater unifying moment for the Ukrainian diaspora than the proclamation of Ukrainian independence, which resulted in the fall of the Soviet Union.”

Referring to the “harsh realities of the events that have transpired in Ukraine since November 2013, including the Revolution of Dignity, the illegal occupation of Crimea by...
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the Russian Federation and its ongoing armed invasion of Eastern Ukrainian territories. Mr. Czolij stated: “The UWC, with the support of Ukrainians worldwide and in cooperation with the governing authorities and civil society of Ukraine, has worked determinedly to keep the international community—including national governments, the United Nations, European Union, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO and human rights monitoring organizations—engaged, informed and active in the defense of Ukraine’s freedom and territorial integrity.”

On the occasion of Ukraine’s Independence Day, several international Ukrainian organizations held meetings and conferences in Kyiv. The Ukrainian World Congress convened its annual general meeting in Ukraine’s capital on August 25-27, with 184 delegates and guests from 26 countries present, while the World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations held its annual meeting on August 21-23, with 18 delegates and nine official guests representing WFUWO member organizations, as well as representatives of women’s organizations of Ukraine in attendance.

The UWC meeting was addressed by, among others, Verkhovna Rada Chairman Andriy Parubiy, Minister of Culture Yevhen Nyschuk, Acting Minister of Health of Ukraine Dr. Ihana Suprun, and National Deputies Rent Chubarov, Valeriy Patskan and Ivan Krulko. UWC President Czolij delivered an address highlighting the main aspects of the work done and the key priorities for the Ukrainian diaspora led by the UWC, which were focused on assisting Ukraine in the defense of its independence and territorial integrity. Over the course of three days, reports on UWC activities from the past year and future plans were discussed during five roundtables: “Coordinating Support for Ukraine,” “UWC Humanitarian Initiatives in Aid of Ukraine,” “Promoting a Positive Image of Ukraine,” “Celebrating the UWC’s 50th Anniversary” and “Supporting the Economic Development of Ukraine.”

Taking advantage of their stay in Ukraine in August, leaders of the UCCA and the UWC had a packed schedule of meetings with members of the Verkhovna Rada, Cabinet ministers and the new U.S. envoy to Ukraine, Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch. The newly elected president of the UCCA, Andriy Fatey, and his predecessor Tamara Olexy, joined the UWC delegation at a signing ceremony with Ukraine’s Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Ukrainian World Congress. UWC delegates also participated in a special evening celebrating Ukrainian Independence Day organized by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economic Development and Trade Stepan Kubiv.

On the eve of the KUPO gathering, Plast leaders appeared at a news briefing at the Ukraine Crisis Media Center. Marla Kuzmowycz, chief executive officer of the World Plast Executive, underscored that the organization is active, while staying true to its ideals and its primary purpose of educating future leaders in a Ukrainian spirit. Stanislav Andriychuk of Plast in Ukraine reported that there are currently some 7,000 members in Ukraine. The National leadership of the organization, which was reformed in Ukraine 25 years ago, hopes to reach a membership of 10,000 by the year 2035.

Greetings to KUPO delegates were offered by special guests, among them Canada’s Ambassador to Ukraine Mark Howansky, president of the U.S.-based Organization for the Defense of Lemki-Volhynians, rings the peace bell to honor victims of Akcja “Vishna” on July 22 in Zdynia, Poland, where the 34th Lemuca Vatra was held.

Roman Waschuk, a member of Plast; the president of the Ukrainian World Congress, Mr. Czolij; and Cardinal and Major Archbishop Emeritus Lubomyr Husar, a fellow Plast scout. Delegates voted on a new World Plast Executive, electing Ms. Kuzmowycz of the United States as CEO.沃多密亚。巴扎克(U.S.)被选为主席的World Plast Executive Board.

In Australia, the Ukrainian Collectibles Society commemorated the 25th anniversary of Ukraine’s independence by releasing an Australian personalized stamp, a first day cover and a postcard. Designed by Adelaide graphic designer Tamara Jakovev, the image depicts a young girl and boy holding hands while dancing, highlighting the joyous spirit of Ukrainian tradition. On the back of the first day cover, the wording of the 1991 Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine is reproduced.

Later in the year, on November 1, the Ukrainian World Congress president met with Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv to discuss joint efforts dedicated primarily to furthering the ratification by the Netherlands of the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement; the imminence of pressuring the Russian Federation to comply with the Minsk agreements and renewing economic sanctions against the Russian Federation until it fully complies with them; the deployment by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe of a police mission in eastern Ukraine to enhance compliance of the Russian Federation with the Minsk agreements; the implementation of a visa-free regime for Ukrainian citizens traveling to EU member states taking into account the fulfillment by Ukraine of all criteria; international support for the U.N. General Assembly resolution on the human rights violations in Crimea, as initiated by Ukraine; the importance of a “Tomos of Autocephaly” for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate; and UWC support for the economic development of Ukraine. The UWC delegation also included Vice-President and Chair of the UWC Committee in Support of the Economic Development of Ukraine Olena Kovzarny and Director of the UWC Mission to Ukraine Serhiy Kasyanchuk. In support of the UWC initiative, the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America penned a letter to Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands to urge ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

Soon thereafter, on November 19, the UWC called for worldwide support of the campaign “Condennia Russia’s Crimes in Ukraine and Syria.” The UWC stated: “Emboldened by some wavering on the part of the international community regarding sanctions against the Russian Federation in response to its illegal occupation of Crimea and hybrid war on the territory of Eastern Ukraine, the Russian Federation continues to escalate its military involvement in the war in Ukraine and Syria in an effort to continue bolstering its imperialist ambitions. It is critical for the international community to understand the parallels between the Russian Federation’s military actions in Ukraine and Syria, including the indiscriminate targeting of innocent civilians, humanitarian aid convoys and hospitals. The UWC calls upon its network of community organizations to support the media campaign launched by the Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine titled "Condennia Russia’s...
Canada: marking 125 years of Ukrainian settlement

While 2017 marks the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, 2016 was the year Ukrainians in Canada celebrated the 125th anniversary of their immigration to the country – and Saskatchewan kicked the year off on January 5 when the province’s premier, Brad Wall, officially proclaimed 2016 as the Year of Saskatchewan Ukrainians, who comprise 13 percent of the provincial population. Two months later, on March 10, Manitoba followed suit with its own proclamation, which recognized the contribution Ukrainian Manitobans have made to the province, "initially through agriculture, forestry, railways and mining and, presently, in most professional fields of the work place," and in the creation and promotion of multiculturalism across Canada. Then-Premier Greg Selinger designated 2016 the Year of Manitoba’s Ukrainian Canadian Cultural Heritage through the proclamation, which also noted the provincial capital, Winnipeg, as "the first major urban city in Canada and the earliest concentrated Ukrainian community in Canada"; that Manitoba was granted its own proclamation, which recognized the contribution Ukrainian Manitobans have made to the province, "initially through agriculture, forestry, railways and mining and, presently, in most professional fields of the work place." And Manitoba also unveiled a plaque as a tribute to the five waves of immigrants who came to Canada over the past 125 years, and which acknowledged their contribution to building Canada and championing such Canadian values as multiculturalism. "Ukrainian Canadians have enriched Canada through their industriousness, rich cultural heritage, strong religious beliefs and dedication to their community and ancestral homeland," reads an inscription on the plaque.

Less than a month later, Alberta declared 2016-2017 as the year of the Ukrainian immigration to Canada during Ukrainian Day at the Leglislation Building on January 5 (are from left): Orest Gwydyka and Mary Ann Trischuk, vice-president and president, respectively, of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Saskatchewan Provincial Council; Premier Wall (holding the shirt); Gerald Luciuk, chair of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee; and Ken Krawetz, member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and legislative secretary to the premier for Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations.

The first vice-chairman of Ukraine’s Parliament, Andriy Parubiy, visited Ottawa in February, meeting with Canadian officials, including the prime minister. At that meeting (from left) are Ukraine’s Ambassador to Canada Andriy Shevchenko, Verkhovna Rada Rada First Vice-Chairman Andriy Paruby, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Member of the Parliament Borys Worzesnewskyj.

Saskatchewan Ukrainians present Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall with an embrodiery of the province’s proclamation of the Year of Saskatchewan Ukrainians. Pictured in the rotunda of Saskatchewan’s Legislative Building on January 5 are (from left): Orest Gwydyka and Mary Ann Trischuk, vice-president and president, respectively, of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Saskatchewan Provincial Council; Premier Wall (holding the shirt); Gerald Luciuk, chair of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee; and Ken Krawetz, member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and legislative secretary to the premier for Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations.

Mykola Nyzhykovskyi, the 11-year-old boy who lost his legs and an arm in Volodarsk, near the ceasefire line in eastern Ukraine, presents Prime Minister Justin Trudeau his coloring “Tree of Life” on November 9 at Parliament Hill. From left are: MP Borys Worzesnewskyj, Prime Minister Trudeau, CUF Director of Humanitarian Initiatives Krystiana Waler, Mykola’s mother, Alla Nyzhykovska, Mykola’s Ukraine’s Ambassador to Canada Andriy Shevchenko and Canada-Ukraine Foundation President Victor Hymanczuk.

Ukrainian Canadians in Canada celebrated the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada during Ukrainian Day at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village located outside of Edmonton.

Regional celebrations for the 125th culminated in the fall – back in Saskatchewan – where the XXV Triennial Congress of Ukrainian Canadians was held in the capital, Regina. But not everyone was celebrating with Canada’s Ukrainian community.

Canada’s relations with Russia

At a January 26 news conference in Moscow, Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the previous Conservative Canadian government of “blindly following the demands of radical representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada.” The following day, and four days before his visit to Ukraine, Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion said the liberal government would "not tolerate from any Russian minister any insults against our community" and "deeply disagree[d] with the invasion and interference of the Russian government in Ukraine".

Mr. Dion echoed that position in March, when he released a statement marking the second anniversary of “Russian aggression and illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean peninsula.” He said that, "Russian occupation and aggression has led to human rights violations, including unlawful seizure of property, harassment and restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly. Self-proclaimed ‘authorities’ use force and intimidation to foster a climate of intolerance, where residents who express views contrary to those of Russia face discrimination and persecution.” Mr. Dion accused Russia of “displaying a blatant disregard for international law, including the European Convention on Human Rights” and said its actions “continue to undermine peace and security in the region.”

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Canadian parliamentarians also heard about systematic violations of human rights by terrorists in the occupied territories of eastern Ukraine and on the situation in Crimea from Andriy Parubiy, the first vice-chairman of the Verkhovna Rada during his late February visit to Ottawa. Ms. Parubiy also met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Defense Minister Harjit Sajjan to discuss Ukraine’s need for military equipment, joint training and continued training missions.

Mr. Parubiy (who in April became chairman of the Rada) also participated in an event on Canada’s Parliament Hill to commemorate the Maidan activists – the Heavenly Brigade – who were killed by forces loyal to Ukraine’s then-President Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014. Mr. Parubiy also said he would help establish a friendship group involving Ukrainian and Canadian parliamentarians.

Russia’s imprisonment of Ukrainian national deputy and former military pilot Nadiya Savchenko captured global attention, including that of both the Canadian government and the UCC.

On March 8, Minister Dion released a statement in which he expressed concern about Ms. Savchenko’s health, noting that she had refused food and water after the Russian court adjourned proceedings and denied her the right to make closing remarks. “Canada has repeatedly underlined that Ms. Savchenko’s transfer to Russia was illegal, the charges brought against her politically motivated and her treatment during her detention a matter of grave concern,” said Mr. Dion, who noted that the court process had been “marked by irregularities from the start.” He called for Ms. Savchenko’s immediate release.

On the eve of Freedom for Nadiya Savchenko Global Day of Support, March 9, the day her trial was scheduled to resume, the UCC also issued a statement denouncing the “illegal” court proceedings and “fabricated charges” against 35-year-old Ms. Savchenko, which show “the Russian regime’s utter cynical contempt for international law, due process and human rights.” The UCC also praised Ms. Savchenko, who was serving in Ukraine’s armed forces in eastern Ukraine when she was taken hostage in June 2014 by pro-Russian forces on Ukrainian soil, for responding to her imprisonment and prosecution “with bravery, dignity and heroism.”

“Her resistance to injustice is the embodiment of the determination of the people of Ukraine to defend their country against Russia’s brutal invasion,” said the UCC statement, which called on Canada and the international community to push for the resumption of the hearing, and to exert pressure on the Russian Federation to ensure the immediate safe return to Ukraine of Ms. Savchenko and all other Ukrainians illegally imprisoned by Russia.

Ms. Savchenko was eventually released, in May, as part of a prisoner swap with Russia, and visited Canada in early December meeting with Mr. Dion and International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland, a Ukrainian Canadian. Ms. Savchenko warned Canadian leaders of the global threat posed by Russia.

Canada should be “relentless in supporting human rights and political rights in Russia and in Ukraine” and “to be strong in how” that message is delivered to Russia, which “only understands the language of strength,” Ms. Savchenko said in an exclusive interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. (CBC). She said she expects her upcoming meeting with US President Donald Trump, who seeks to establish a better relationship between the US and Russia, “will very soon find out that you cannot have a warm relationship with a country that has no principles [and] that doesn’t respect other democratic rights.”

As for her own future, Ms. Savchenko told interviewer Terry Milewski that she is ready to serve her country “in any capacity, either as soldier, politician or president, as long as people want,” but that she is “not interested in the presidency for the sake of power.” Her involvement in politics, she said, is “a way to change politics in itself,” and “when you want to do something, you do it.”

Another – much younger – victim of the hostilities in Ukraine also visited Parliament Hill.

Mykola Nyhyniovskyi, an 11 year-old boy who lost his legs and an arm in Volodarok, near the ceasefire line in eastern Ukraine, traveled from Montreal’s Shriners Children’s Hospital to meet with Prime Minister Trudeau while spending the afternoon of November 9 on Parliament Hill as a guest of Toronto’s Liberal Member of Parliament Borys Wizniewskyj.

On August 24, 2015, Mykola and his brother Danyo were playing with two other friends in a field near their home and saw an object that piqued their curiosity. Mykola picked up what he thought was a toy, but it was a grenade that detonated, immediately killing Danyo and leaving Mykola a triple amputee with severe injuries to his face, teeth, eyes and other parts of his body.

Dr. Oleh Antonyshyn, a plastic surgeon at Toronto’s Sunnybrook Hospital, led a team of 22 volunteer Canadian medical professionals who treated Mykola’s facial injuries at a hospital in Kyiv as part of a medical mission to Ukraine organized by the Canada-Ukraine Foundation. The CUF also arranged for Mykola’s further treatment in Montreal’s Shriners Hospital, which has provided ongoing assessment and treatment of Mykola’s prosthetic needs.

In February, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko presented Dr. Antonyshyn with the Order of Merit, and two other members of the CUF medical mission team – plastic surgeon Dr. Carolyn Levits of Hamilton, Ontario, and Kristyna Water, director of humanitarian initiatives from Toronto – were awarded the Order of Princess Olga Olga for their ceremony in Kyiv. All three were recognized for outstanding achievements in service to Ukraine.

Prolific Ukrainian Canadian journalist Victor Malarek profiled the CUF’s medical mission to Ukraine, along with Mykola’s plight, on CTV’s investigative-news program, “W5,” in January.

Crimea on the agenda

Crimea was also on the agenda in Canada in 2016.

On May 18, Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev met with Prime Minister Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Dion, who told him that Canada will never accept Russia’s military invasion and illegal occupation of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, and that Canada stands shoulder to shoulder with the indigenous Crimean Tatar people. Meanwhile, Mr. Dzhemilev, who sits in Ukraine’s Parliament, told CBC News that “if Western countries decide to re-establish relationships with Russia and become friends again, it is a disaster for the entire Crimean Tatar people.”

Later in the year, in November, Crimean democracy advocate Hennadi Afanasyev met with parliamentarians and attended a working dinner in his honor with members and associates of the House of Commons Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. He shared details of his kidnapping, torture and imprisonment in Russia, after a Russian court convicted him of terrorism and sentenced him in December 2014 to seven years in a maximum security prison. Freed in June 2016, Mr. Afanasyev, who was born in 1990 and holds a law degree from Tavrida National V.I. Vernadsky University in Kyiv, now serves as a special representative of Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is responsible for helping to free 42 Ukrainians illegally imprisoned in Russia, including filmmaker Oleh Sentsov and Ukrainian activist Oleksandr Kolchenko, who have also been convicted on trumped up charges of terrorism.

In September, Edmonton Conservative MP Kerry Diotte introduced a private member’s bill in the House of Commons to establish a Crimean Tatar Deportation Memorial Day and recognize the mass removal of more than 230,000 Crimean Tatars from their ancestral homeland by Soviet Josef Stalin’s
2016: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Bilateral trade opportunities

But it wasn’t all bad, or sad, news from Ukraine. Bilateral trade opportunities were a top issue for Canada’s government and business communities.

On June 20, a Canada-Ukraine Business Forum, which was presented by the federal department of Global Affairs Canada and Ukraine’s Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, in partnership with the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce (CUCC) and the Ottawa-based national think-tank, the Conference Board of Canada, was held in Toronto. The forum focused on four key sectors: information and communications technologies (ICT), agriculture and food, infrastructure and logistics, and energy efficiency and renewables within the framework of the Canada-Ukraine Trade and Investment Support project (CUTIS), a five-year initiative sponsored by the Canadian government to increase trade and investment between the countries that is being implemented by the CUCC and the Conference Board.

Prime Minister Trudeau was the headline speaker at the one-day event, where he announced that he would make his first official visit to Ukraine in July, and meet with President Poroshenko. Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Verkhovna Rada Chairman Parubiy after attending the NATO Summit of Heads of State and Government in Warsaw. While in Ukraine, Mr. Trudeau would also witness the signing of the much-anticipated Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA).

Canada would continue to defend Ukrainian sovereignty “in response to Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea, as well as its support to insurgents in eastern Ukraine,” and Canada stands “firmly” behind Ukraine in its efforts to “strengthen democracy, respect the rule of law, and encourage economic growth,” the prime minister told the business forum. “We will continue to contribute assistance and expertise wherever possible, because we understand that a strong democracy is at the heart of economic prosperity,” he said. “Ultimately, we want to help create stability in Ukraine so that the middle class can grow and thrive.” That goal took a step closer on July 11 when International Trade Minister Freeland and Ukrainian First Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development and Trade Stepan Kubiy signed CUFTA in Kyiv in the presence of Messrs. Trudeau, Poroshenko and Groysman.

The trade agreement represents an “endorsement” of the Ukrainian economy and “is about Canada strengthening and deepening its historically close friendship with Ukraine, and of supporting Ukraine at a crucial moment” in its history, Ms. Freeland told The Weekly in a telephoned interview from Lviv. “We really understand, as do the Ukrainian people, that a change in the country where she once lived and studied, at the University of Kyiv as an exchange student from Harvard, and where she began her journalistic career as a Ukrainian Catholic parents – Mykhailo Chomiak and Halyna Chomiak Freeland, the minister’s late mother, Halyna Chomiak Freeland, was a “great moment” for her – and her family. The minister’s late mother, Halyna Chomiak Freeland, was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany when her Ukrainian Catholic parents – Mykhailo Chomiak and Alexandra (Leban) Chomiak – fled their home in western Ukraine before World War II when “they knew the Soviet would invade,” Ms. Freeland told the Toronto Star in 2015. She said her maternal grandparents’ experience had a “very big effect” on her, and that “they were also committed to the idea, like most in the [Ukrainian] diaspora, that Ukraine would one day be independent and that the Canadian community had a responsibility to the country they had been forced to flee… to keep that flame alive.”

During her visit to Ukraine in July, Ms. Freeland noticed a change in the country where she once lived and studied, at the University of Kyiv as an exchange student from Harvard, and where she began her journalistic career as a stringer for the Financial Times, The Washington Post and The Economist in the late 1980s.

“Ukraine is more united and more determined than at any time I’ve seen it,” said Ms. Freeland, who first traveled to the country in 1980. “There has been a big transformation over the past three years – a changing of Ukrainian society. The Ukrainian people are taking responsibility for themselves and their country.”

She said the 2016 popular uprising on Kyiv’s Maidan “was called the Revolution of Dignity for a reason, because it was about people taking charge of their own lives. And you can really see that and people are aware of that.”

During his visit to Ukraine, Prime Minister Trudeau, who was also accompanied by Mr. Wrzesnewskyj (chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group) and a delegation of community leaders from the UCC led by President Paul Grod, visited the Babyn Yar Monument, the Park of Eternal Glory and the Holodomor Monument and Holodomor Commemoration Museum. The prime minister also visited the Maidan, where he laid flowers honoring the Heavenly Brigade, and the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in Yavoriv in the Lviv region, where he met with Canadian Armed Forces personnel who are providing training to Ukrainian forces as part of Operation UNIFIER.

During his visit, Mr. Trudeau announced that Canada would provide $13 million (about $9.7 million U.S.) in humanitarian assistance to support the humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population in eastern Ukraine; deploy additional Canadian monitors to the Special Monitoring Mission in eastern Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and deploy additional Canadian police to Ukraine, focusing on training and institutional development.

Following his meeting with the Canadian prime minister, President Poroshenko said Canada is not just a special partner, but also a true friend that will not leave Ukraine in a difficult situation.”

In November, Minister Freeland tabled legislation in the House of Commons to implement CUFTA, which is expected to soon receive the parliamentary green light in both Canada and Ukraine.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj told The Weekly that Ukrainian businesses operating in Canada under CUFTA would be able to take advantage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that includes Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. “A company located in a place like southern Ontario would have access to the U.S. market,” Mr. Wrzesnewskyj said.

Members of the newly elected board of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, including re-elected President Paul Grod, at the 25th Triennial Congress of Ukrainian Canadians, which was held on September 29-October 2 in Regina, Saskatchewan.
such issues as eliminating all forms of forced labor and minimum wages and overtime pay, could also ensure collective bargaining, and sets out employment standards, giving workers the rights to join unions and collective bargaining. Along with another made-in-Canada chapter on transparency, and a section outlining how Canada could help Ukraine tackle corruption, since the pact devotes an entire chapter to transparency, and a section outlining how the food-processing industry could be an incubator for new products and new ideas in Canada, is a boost to both Ukraine's and Canada's strengths in the agri-food sector.

The benefit for Canada, in Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's view, is that small and medium-sized Canadian businesses can set up a plant or facility in Ukraine and operate it at a much lower cost than in an EU-member country, such as France. They can also look to importing goods from Ukraine at a lower price, which is an economic benefit in large part by coal – and Canada could help Ukraine look for opportunities to do some drilling in Ukraine to increase its domestic production.

Canadian companies are looking for opportunities to do some drilling in Ukraine to increase its domestic production. However, the Minister added that, as abundant as coal is in Ukraine, it could only be a temporary supply for Ukraine's energy needs, particularly in light of the Paris climate change accord that came into force on November 4.

In 2016, the Holodomor Mobile Classroom is the centerpiece of the Holodomor National Awareness Tour. The tour is a partnership between the Holodomor Research and Education Center (HREC), the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Center and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and which received funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (UCCLA). The tour is a response to the needs of communities in the Prairies and beyond, who have asked for more information about the Holodomor.

The Holodomor is a term used to describe the famine in the Soviet Union from 1932 to 1933, which is estimated to have killed between 7 and 10 million people. The Holodomor Mobile Classroom is a mobile exhibition that travels to communities across Canada to educate people about the Holodomor and its impact on Ukrainian communities.

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The $20 fine silver pysanka coin released by the Royal Canadian Mint to mark the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada.
Ukrainians in the U.S.: Activity and advocacy

Ukrainians in the U.S. were busy with the events, festivals and humanitarian projects of various Ukrainian organizations. With the election cycle coming to a close in November 2016, political advocacy was of the utmost concern for many Ukrainians in the U.S.

Ukraine’s wounded veterans – Vadim Sviridenko, Vadym Maznichenko, Col. Ihor Hordiychuk and Oleksandr Kovalenko – who were receiving care at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., were greeted by Christmas carolers on January 10. Singers included local members of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization and the Ukrainian American Youth Association.

The United Ukrainian American Relief Committee (UUARC) continued its great work in delivering humanitarian aid and other medical supplies to Ukraine. Roman Dzivinskyi, who lost his left arm from the elbow and fingers of his right hand during the Maidan revolt in Kyiv, got fitted in Philadelphia for a biomechanical prosthetic hand and arm. Nearly the entire cost of $47,000 was paid for by UUARC donations. Mr. Dzivinskyi, via Facebook, thanked the UUARC and the Ukrainian American community of the United States, as well as the Touch Bionics Ukraine company that helped design the prosthesis.

For the second year in a row, UUAR hosted children living in the frontline cities of the Donbas for a two-week camping trip in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in July-August. The program served nearly 200 children at a cost of $25,000. Children were also able to enjoy a tour of Kyiv and the Kinopark regions.

The St. Joseph’s Adult Care Home in Stoughton, NY, is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2017. In 2016, the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, who have owned and operated the facility since 1941, announced their plans to expand and renovate buildings – among them a former carriage house and horse stables – on their 256-acre property. The work would include increasing the number of rooms for senior citizens from 31 to 50. The location was at one time part of an estate that was owned by the great-grandson of Alexander Hamilton. The expansion was estimated to cost $6 million, and at the time, only $500,000 had been raised. Major advocacy for the project came from Bishop Paul Chomnycky of the Stamford Eparchy of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and a $50,000 initial donation came from Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union, with more contributions promised.

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, in a statement on March 8, called on President Barack Obama to demand the immediate release of Nadiya Savchenko. The statement also called on the international community to publicly condemn Russia’s illegal imprisonment of Ms. Savchenko and demand that she and other illegally imprisoned Ukrainians be freed.

In a release on July 21, the UCCA said it had met with the Democratic and Republican national committees and each leading candidate’s policy advisors to express the foreign policy concerns of Ukrainian Americans in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election. The UCCA proposed party platform commitments in areas of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, maintaining and strengthening sanctions against Russia, rejecting Russian rule of Crimea, the withdrawal of Russian troops and equipment from Ukraine’s territory, increased military assistance and training programs with Ukraine, NATO’s membership policy and U.S. commitment to its allies, development of civil society with educational, professional and democracy-building programs, reform of immigration regulation with the Visa Waiver Program, U.S. trade and investment in Ukraine, and energy independence from Russia.

On July 31 the UCCA expressed its concerns about statements made by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, following its June meeting with Sam Clovis, policy advisor for Mr. Trump. The UCCA underscored the reality on the ground in Ukraine, with Russians having invaded Ukraine and Russia’s occupation of Crimea. “The United States, as a signatory to the 1994 Trilateral Agreement, has an obligation to assist Ukraine in defense of its national security and territorial integrity, and its efforts to institutionalize democratic and economic reforms,” the UCCA statement noted.

On August 8, members of the UCCA executive board, who were joined by Bishop Daniel of the UOC-U.S.A. and Metropolitan-Archbishop Stefan Soroka of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, met at the U.S. Department of State with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. The meeting was held to express the concerns of the UCCA and the Ukrainian American community regarding the threats to the international legal system posed by Russia’s actions “...the security of the U.S. (and the world’s democracies) lies in the expansion of democracy and mutual security guarantees, not the appeasement of imperial states,” the September letter stated.

At the XXII Congress of Ukrainians at the Ukrainian National Home in Hartford on September 23-25, Andriy Fuety was elected president of the Ukrainian Congress of the U.S. (UCU). Other board members elected to a four-year term included National Council Chair Stefan Kaczaraj (president of the Ukrainian National Association and chairman of the board of the Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union), Executive Vice-President Michael Sawlow Jr. (director of the Ukrainian National Information Service in Washington), Executive Secretary Marie Duplak and Treasurer Myron Kolinsky. The remaining board posts were announced in December at the National Council meeting. The board includes a representative of the UCCA Educational Council, the director of the Ukrainian National Fund, and appointed representatives of the Providence Association of Ukrainian Catholics in America, Ukrainian National Credit Union Association, United Ukrainian American Relief Committee, Ukrainian American Youth Association, New Ukrainian Wave, Organization for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine and the Illinois Division of the UCCA.

Also during the congress, the Taras Shevchenko Freedom Award was presented to: Roma Hadzewycz (editor-in-chief of The Ukrainian Weekly and Svooboda); Marie Duplak (executive secretary of the UCCA), Michael Sawlow Jr. (director of UNIS), and Dr. Larissa KjY (director of the UUARC).
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Interviewed while in Kyiv, Mr. Futey explained the tasks for the UCCA in the next four years. Using his familiarity with elected officials on Capitol Hill and in his home state of Ohio, he said he will focus on the November presidential election with an information campaign to brief the candidates about Ukraine and the concerns to the Ukrainian American community. Other areas of development for the UCCA are new communities that are just beginning to form and encouraging their involvement in expressing concerns to elected officials on the local, state and federal levels. Also on the agenda are working closely with Ukraine’s elected officials to facilitate engagement with Washington, and expanding work with the Ukrainian community’s partners in the Central and Eastern European Coalition.

Outgoing UCCA President Tamara Olexy offered her reflections following eight years in office. The first woman president of UCCA, she said she was honored to serve the Ukrainian community at large. She noted that she is proud of advocacy efforts in Washington and locally among Ukrainian Americans, and said that witnessing the unveiling of the Holodomor monument in Washington was among her most treasured accomplishments in office. Russia’s attacks against the UCCA were among the major challenges, and this appears to be something that the organization will continue to face as part of Russia’s hybrid war. The UCCA continues to grow, Ms. Olexy underscored, and through online resources the UCCA has been able to reach a larger audience. Ms. Olexy thanked the community for its support and underscored that she trusts Mr. Futey’s experience to lead the UCCA through the difficult challenges ahead.

In preparation for the presidential election, the UCCA initiated a questionnaire to see where each candidate stood on Ukrainian American issues of concern. The questionnaire included points on military assistance to Ukraine, economic sanctions against Russia, Russian disinformation, NATO and government reform in Ukraine. Mr. Trump’s advisor’s responses were simple one-word yes or no answers, but Ms. Clinton responded at length, with supportive statements, the UCCA pointed out.

The UCCA released a statement on US-Ukraine relations on November 1, following the election of President Donald Trump. The statement urged no recognition of Crimea, called for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory. The UCCA said the U.S. should continue to assist Ukraine in modernizing its military capabilities in the interest of collective security, provide defensive equipment, promote democratic institutions and stabilization, as well as support NATO’s “open door” policy of membership for pro-NATO’s “open door” policy of membership for pro-UCCA said the U.S. should continue to assist Ukraine in modernizing its military capabilities in the interest of collective security, provide defensive equipment, promote democratic institutions and stabilization, as well as support NATO’s “open door” policy of membership for pro-UCCA’s “open door” policy of membership for pro-UCCA’s “open door” policy of membership for pro-European Coalition.

With fears of another “reset” of U.S.-Russia relations, the UCCA released a statement on December 13, underlining that any retreat from sanctions or military, political or economic support of Ukraine would signal a capitulation with terrifying consequences for Ukraine. The statement cited Russia’s involvement in Georgia in 2008, Russia-Iran ties, Russia’s meddling in Ukraine in 2010 to place Viktor Yanukovych in power and with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014, as examples of Russia’s destabilizing practices. The statement urged Ukrainian Americans to contact their elected officials, promoting #NotAnotherReset.

During a meeting of the UCCA National Council on December 10, two new organizations joined the UCCA – the Ukrainian American Veterans and the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America. More than 20 organizations are now members of the UCCA. The Executive Board of the UCCA discussed various projects for 2017, including an information campaign targeting the Trump administration and new members of Congress. On the agenda for 2017: the 20th anniversary of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus, the 50th anniversary of the founding of UNIC. Another project is the film “Secret Diary of Symon Petliura” by Oles Yanchuk and the Dovzhenko Film Studio that is scheduled for a 2017 release but needs additional funding to be completed in time for the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The board voted to donate $5,000 to the film project.

The UCCA hailed the U.N. resolution on Crimea adopted on December 19, recognizing Russia as a temporary occupier of Crimea, calling for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory.

The UCCA released a statement in support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The UCCA said the majoriy of the people votes came from countries that identify with the Commonwealth of Independent States (except Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan) and called for Ukraine’s withdrawal from the OS.

The Ukrainian National Women’s League of America (UNWLA) announced in April a major donation to the Ukrainian Catholic University’s Mental Health Institute in Lviv. The project aims to assist in the treatment of those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues. Dr. Oleh Romanchuk, director of the institute, stated: “The mental health care system in Ukraine is one of the most neglected areas of the modern health care in our country. The quality of care and medical services for people with mental disorders remains very poor... and is very far away from the current European standards.” An initial donation of $100,000 was delivered to the Ukrainian Catholic Education Foundation in Chicago. Dr. Ulana Suprun, who is Ukraine’s acting Minister of Healthcare and co-founder of the Patriot Party project, noted that the institute would not only serve the needs of patients, but would also serve as an educational center for students, doctors and psychologists.

For its 65th annual membership meeting of Selah. Ukraine at the Keystone Federal Credit Union, 27 members gathered at St. George Academy in New York on March 19. In its annual report, the credit union said it ended 2015 with $1.159 billion in assets, an increase of $71.4 million (6.6 percent) from 2014. Net income was up by $1 million to $10.5 million, membership totaled 14,941, with a dividend return of $18.5 million. The institution made donations of $1.5 million to cultural, religious, humanitarian and youth organizations. Many of these organizations were represented at the meeting and people voiced their thanks to Selah. Ukraine for its financial support.

The meeting voted to re-elect board member Adam Hapij and board chairman Stefan Kacaraz to three-year terms in office.

The Ukrainian American Youth Association (UAYA), in its 100th anniversary year, continued its exchange program with Ukraine. The Ukrainian American Youth Association (UAYA), continued for the second consecutive year the “Warming Hearts with Warmth” campaign. The humanitarian project sent gifts to contacts in Ukraine who distributed them to those children whose families may currently be on the battlefront or have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of Ukraine. Other participating countries included Canada, Australia, Germany, Belgium and Great Britain. Gifts were delivered to active centers of the UAYA, including those in Kalush, Lviv, Ternopil, Khmelnytsky, Chernihiv, Skvyra, Bohynt, Dnipro and Kyiv.

The UAYA continued its exchange program with Ukraine during the summer camp season. U.S. participants included: Alexander Gorodiski (Chicago), Lesia Hrycyna (Rochester, NY) and Jessica Deminick (Jersey City, NJ); and Ukraine participants were: Lesia Hohy (Ternopil), Daryna Symch and Anya Berezhovska (both from Kyiv). The Ukrainian participants spent time at the UAYA camp in Ellenville, NY, and at Beskyd camp in Baranow, Wis. In Ukraine, U.S. participants attended camp north of Lviv near the city of Chernovzhod. The U.S. participants wrote about their experiences, friendships and learning in an immersed environment, and compared the U.S. experience.

During the 2016 presidential election, Ukrainians across the United States organized a coalition tooust cand didate Donald Trump’s campaign managers Paul Manafort who was used by the Party of Regions of Ukraine that was headed by the ousted president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych. On April 23 in New York, Conn, on the eve of a presidential primary, Ukrainians picketed on Paul Manafort Drive in front of Central Connecticut State University. Many of the protesters described Mr. Manafort...
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as a “Trojan horse” for Vladimir Putin.

For the 40th time, New Yorkers celebrated Ukrainian culture, music and dance at the annual St. George Ukrainian Festival on May 20-22 in front of St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church on Seventh Street (between Second and Third avenues). Founded in 1976 to mark the bicentennial of the United States, the annual street festival has been a success thanks to the various organizations that support the event, including the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America, The Ukrainian Museum, Plant Ukrainian Scouting Organization, Razom, the Lemko Research Foundation, Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union and the Ukrainian National Association.

California Ukrainians commemorated the 108th anniversary of the passing of the Rev. Agapij Honcharenko on May 21 at Garin Regional Park. The events included a panakhyda (requiem service) at the Rev. Honcharenko’s grave site, a walk to the Honcharenko homestead site that has been declared a California State Historic Landmark, and musical performances by a handa trio as well as a Ukrainian Brass Orchestra from Sacramento, Calif. The Rev. Honcharenko lived with his wife in the Hayward Hills from the late 1800s to the early 1900s and is cited as being a nationally conscious Ukrainian who served as a pillar in assisting Ukrainian immigrants in the U.S.

Razom, a non-profit organization founded in 2014 to support the people of Ukraine, hosted its annual meeting in New York on June 25 at the Ukrainian National Home. Since launching it has launched its initiatives: Razom IT, Razom Culture, Razom Think with Ukoloko.org, Reformers without Borders, Razom Aid with Toy Drive and Razom Partners. Participants learned more about planned projects to support the creative arts, entrepreneurship and social enterprises.

The featured performers at Chicago’s City Winery included Tsvyntarna, more than $57,000 was raised from the event, and was joined by jazz singer Olha Skrypka, who had a brief band had performed in Ukraine in 2000, and noted how ed R&B singer Lynne Jordan and her band, The Shivers, were organized by Ira and served to support human rights and democratic practices. Since 1991, the Ukrainian American community in Parma, Ohio, has been a success thanks to the various organizations that support the event, including the Ukrainian Weekly.

The Holodomor memorial service is led by hierarchs (from left) Bishop Paul Chomnycky, Metropolitan Antony and Bishop Emeritus Basil Losten at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York on November 12.

The Ukrainian American community in Parma, Ohio, marked the 25th anniversary of Ukraine’s independence with its annual parade on August 27. The 1.5-mile parade route stretched from the Cleveland Selfreliance Federal Credit Union to the entryway of the Ukrainian Village section of Parma on State Road. Major landmarks in the Ukrainian Village include over 40 businesses as well as St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral and St. Joseph Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral, where the festival stage was located. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), a co-chair of the Ukrainian Congressional Caucus, greeted the crowd and encouraged steadfast support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. Greetings were also read from Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Gop John Kasich.

Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union, the Veselka Restaurant and the East Village Meat Market.

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The U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, with the Friends of Ukraine Network, in December launched a policy dialogue with President-elect Trump and his transition team, headed by Vice-President-Elect Mike Pence. Many of these policy recommendations were discussed during the Ukraine in Washington meeting held on September 14 at the Capitol Hill and October 25 at the National Press Club. The U.S. Congress is hoped, will work to inform the Trump administration about Russia and its threat to Ukraine and the U.S.

The Ukrainian American community met with various elected representatives and senators in Washington, including Sen. Portman, Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) and Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.). Many of these meetings were held as part of advocacy events to thank and recognize officials for their support of Ukraine. The UCCA chaired the November 3 meeting in Parma of the Ohio nationalities communities, including the Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Czech, Slovenian, Serbian, German, Slovak, Romanian, Italian, Macedonian and Lebanese communities. Joining the meeting were Sm. Portman and John Barrosa (R-Wyo.). Issues of concern centered on Russia’s threat to the United States and its allies in Europe.

The first anniversary of the unveiling of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington was marked on November 7. Ukraine’s Ambassador to the U.S. Valeriy Chaly opened the commemorative event that included prayers offered by Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic clergy, as well as Ukrainian religious and patriotic songs sung by the Nyv Chamber Choir following its concert in Washington.

The Ukrainian National Credit Union Association (UCCA) held a meeting on September 14 and 30 October 1 in Somerset (N.J.). The 35 delegates who represented 11 Ukrainian American credit unions elected a new board and celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian National Federal Credit Union with a banquet and dance at the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Somerset. The next meeting is to be held in Washington, and it will mark the 65th anniversary of the Ukrainian Selfreliance Federal Credit Union. Hundreds of Ukrainians gathered on November 12 at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York to commemorate the Holodomor of 1932-1933. Bishop Paul Chomnycky of the Ukrainian Catholic Church’s Stamford Eparchy noted, in his keynote address, that the Holodomor is not a lesson for Ukraine, but for the whole world that such an atrocity should never be repeated anywhere.

The first was a symposium that attracted over 150 attendees. Government and non-government representatives, as well as renowned scholars came together to discuss the historical significance of Ukraine and to delve into the country’s prospects for achieving mature nation statehood and becoming a full-fledged member of the Euro-Atlantic community. The day was capped off by speeches by three former Cabinet-level government officials: Gos Tom Ridge, who had served as U.S. secretary of homeland security in 2003-2005; Ambassador Madeleine Albright, who had served as U.S. secretary of state in 1997-2001; and Borys Tarasyuk, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs in 1998-2001, and Borys Tarasyuk, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs in 1998-2001, and Borys Tarasyuk, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs in 1998-2001, and Borys Tarasyuk, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs in 1998-2001, and Borys Tarasyuk, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs in 1998-2001, and Borys Tarasyuk, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs in 1998-2001. Speaking of conferences, among the most active groups in this regard was the Center for U.S.-Ukrainian Relations (CISUR), which sponsored or co-sponsored six major forums, including several that are annual events.

The Ukrainian Weekly carried several news stories about two of them, both special events presented in New York as part of the “Ukrainian Historical Encounters Series.” The first, “Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Modern Ukrainian State,” took place at the Princeton Club on September 17, and the second “Ukraine at 25: A Decade of Progress: Challenges and Prospects,” was held at the Shevchenko Scientific Society.

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Sixteen leading Ukrainian organizations local to the New York City area signed on as co-sponsors of the event throughout the conference, perspectives of Ukrainian diaspora organizations were included as an important voice in interpreting Ukraine’s past, present and future. CISUR’s Walter Zaryckyj was the program coordinator. In December, CISUR partnered with the Shevchenko Scientific Society to present a symposium that commemorated the 25th anniversary of the national referendum in which more than 91 percent of Ukraine’s electorate voted to confirm Ukraine’s August 24 declaration of independence.

At what was the first Rock Climbing Camp ever held by Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization in the U.S., campers summit Seneca Rocks holding a Ukrainian flag. The camp took place in West Virginia on August 7-13.
Jonathan Peri, the new president of Manor College, is pictured with Manor College Board of Trustees Chair Leonard Mazur before his inauguration on April 21.


At the end of 2016, on December 9 in New York, the CUSUR was involved in presenting a discussion on “Contemporary Lithuanian-Ukrainian Relations: Common Concerns; Common Approaches; Common Solutions; Common ‘European’ Future.” The event was organized by the Ukrainian Institute of America and the Lithuanian-American Community, New York district.

Universities and colleges

In early January, the Harriman Institute at Columbia University announced its spring schedule, with eight courses and several events in Ukrainian studies, and Prof. Sergei Zhuk as associate visiting professor. In these classes, students were able to explore topics such as: challenging traditional Soviet-Russian historical interpretations of Ukrainian history; how consumption of Western books, movies and music contributed to the crisis of Soviet identity after Stalin; and historical perspectives on the development of current Ukraine, contentious issues and non-issues in Soviet and Post-Soviet studies. Additionally, in the spring, Serhiy Zhadan presented the English translation of his award-winning novel “Voroshylovhrad” and Valentina Khakhun delivered a lecture titled “Museums of Communism in Ukraine within the Context of Political Memory.”

For the fall semester Columbia offered six different courses, with Dr. Simone Bellezza, a research fellow in contemporary history from Italy, as the visiting professor. The term’s courses examined nation and identity, the evolution of Ukrainian history and the role of the Ukrainian cultural dissident in the 1960s in the national debate during the Soviet period, and how Ukraine’s foreign policy can ensure international support for its efforts to refurbish the aggression in the east of the country.

That semester also saw a lecture by Mykola Riahchuk titled “Examined by War: New Bonds and Old Cleavages in the Post-Maidan Ukrainian Society,” as well as the 14th installment of the Contemporary Ukrainian Literature Series, which featured poet, screenwriter and journalist Lyuha Yakimchuk.

Both the spring and fall semesters offered three levels of Ukrainian language instruction, as well as screenings of the newest Ukrainian films through the Ukrainian Film Club of Columbia University under the directorship of Dr. Yuri Shevchuk.

On February 7, Manor College in Jenkintown, Pa., hosted a forum and public discussion titled “Ukraine 2016: A Stability Dialogue at Manor College.” The event addressed what Western countries can do to promote future peace and stability in Ukraine. Featured speakers included Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Ukrainian National deputy Andrey Artemenko, Ukrainian businessman and investor Alex Rott, former Congressman Curt Weldon and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Bruce Weirard. The college noted that it plans to feature more Ukrainian-themed programming in the future.

There was major news at Manor College in the spring, when Jonathan Peri was inaugurated as its ninth president – and its first lay president. Leonard J. Mazur, chairman of the Manor College Board of Trustees (and co-founder of Akrimax Pharmaceuticals, LLC) conducted the investiture ceremony on April 21. Mr. Peri had been with Manor College since November 2015, when he was selected by the board after an extensive national search.

Speaking of Manor, President Peri underscored: “It is a Ukrainian heritage institution, founded by and faithful to the Ukrainian Catholic Sisters of St. Basil the Great. Manor College is the only Ukrainian heritage institution, founded by and faithful to its Ukrainian Catholic Sisters of St. Basil the Great. Manor College is the only Ukrainian heritage institution for higher education in the United States – we are incredibly proud of our Ukrainian heritage.” Today the two-year college, which was founded in 1947 as St. Macrina College, offers more than 30 majors and has a variety of partnerships with other colleges and universities that allow its students to earn associate, undergraduate and graduate degrees.

In September, The Weekly reported on Mark von Hagen’s appointment as interim director of Arizona State University’s Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies. Prior to his appointment Prof. von Hagen taught at Columbia University for 24 years. He also served as the chair of the history department and director of the Harriman Institute, where he developed Ukrainian studies in the realm of humanities and social sciences. Prof. von Hagen remarked, “The Ukrainian language, like all the languages we teach at the Melikian Center’s Critical Language Institute, is a gateway to a rich culture and dynamic society. After two years of Russia’s war with Ukraine, the teaching of this language will also likely become a national security priority for the United States.”

He added, “I remember fondly and gratefully the generosity of the Ukrainian communities of North America for our Ukrainian programming during my Columbia years.”

In November, The Weekly reported that the University of St. Michael’s College (USMC) at the University of Toronto had come to an agreement with the Metropolitan Andre Sheptytsky Institute Foundation (MASIF) about the relocation of the Sheptytsky Institute from Ottawa to Toronto as an autonomous academic unit within the Faculty of Theology. The Sheptytsky Institute was founded by Father Andry Chirovsky in 1986 at Catholic Theological Union, a graduate school of ministry in Chicago. In 1990, at the request of the Ukrainian Catholic bishops of Canada, it relocated to Ottawa. The institute publishes a peer-reviewed journal, as well as books and audio-visual materials. It is supported by the Metropolitan Andre Sheptytsky Institute Foundation and operates under the moral and financial aegis of the Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy of Canada.

Special events

In February, The Weekly reported on an exhibition titled “Maidan. Ukraine. Road to Freedom” hosted by the

U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt spoke on March 11 at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy about the future of U.S.-Ukraine relations.

“What is Left of ‘Two Ukraines’? 2 New Divisions and New Connections in Ukrainian Society, 2014-2016” was the title of a lecture by Mykola Riahchuk at the Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine of the Holy Family on June 12. The event was sponsored by the Washington chapter of the Shevchenko Scientific Society.
Jackson Institute for Global Affairs at Yale University and the Yale World Fellows program. Curated by Serhiy Fomenko of Kyiv and previously presented in Berlin, London, Los Angeles, Washington and New York City, the exhibit included the works of Maidan participants: artists, musicians, filmmakers, photographers, journalists and writers who documented their individual views of the Maidan events. Hundreds of students, faculty and visitors came to view the exhibit. The opening reception featured a panel discussion with Marci Shain, associate professor of history at Yale; Stathis Kalyvas, Arnoul Wolfers Professor of Political Science at Yale; Timothy Snyder, Bird White Housum Professor of History at Yale; and Svitlaniv Tarasanov, poet laureate of the Ukrainian government.

On March 11, U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt spoke at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy on the future of U.S.-Ukraine relations. The ambassador shared his optimism about Ukraine’s long-term future. “Ukraine should be a very wealthy country. You have all the ingredients in terms of human capital—its civil society organizations, your culture, your pride, the deep sense of patriotism that the bitter experience of the past two years has helped to reinforce.” He continued, “My message to you is to be confident that if you stick to the path of reform, the United States and your other international partners in the G-7 will stand with you, because we want to see Ukraine succeed.” He also commented on the war in the east and Russia, affirming, “The United States is very clear that there is a victim and an aggressor in this conflict...I think the challenge now is to consolidate peace through the Minsk agreement, to deliver good governance for all of Ukraine, to include the occupied territories.

On June 12, over 50 people gathered at the Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine of the Holy Family in Washington to hear Ukrainian political commentator Mykola Riabchuk discuss changing Ukrainian attitudes. In his lecture titled, “What is left of Two Ukraines? New Divisions and New Connections in Ukrainian Society, 2014-2016,” Mr. Riabchuk cited a variety of statistics to demonstrate that the stereotypical conception of “two Ukraines”—one patriotic and pro-Western, the other Russian and pro-Soviet—is misleading. According to him, the “other” Ukraine does not have a Russian identity, but rather a different kind of Ukrainian identity. Furthermore, the balance has changed in recent years, so that the patriotic and pro-Western portion of the population is now dominant.

In October, two online academic conferences were held to discuss the newest international research about language, culture and higher education reform in post-Maidan Ukraine. Offered in English, the peer-reviewed conference held on November 4-5 by the Our Ancestors Family History Group—the Nashi Predky Initiative—at the Ukrainian Historical and Educational Center of New Jersey in Somerset.


The Rev. Bohdan Prach (right), rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University, receives the 2016 Antonovych Foundation award from the foundation’s president, Ihor Vovyts’ka (center), and board member Andriy Levytsky.

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Special projects

A story in The Weekly on October 2 featured the back story behind the “Memory Books of Lemkiwchyna 1944-1946,” a book written by Yaroslava Gałyk and published with the support of the Lemko Research Foundation (LRF) in the U.S.A. The book contains the names of Lemki who were deported to Ukraine between 1944-1946. The record contains full names, years of birth, family relationships and final destinations of households, original villages of residence and finally the Ukrainian oblasts to which they were deported.

Throughout 2016, despite the challenges of conducting excavations in Batyrn, Chernihiv Oblast, at a time of war, Ukrainian and Canadian archaeologists and historians proceeded with researching the town and publishing their findings. In the summer of 2016, about 70 students, PhD candidates and scholars from the universities of Chernihiv, Kyiv and Samy, and the National University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy took part in the annual Batyrn excavations. On October 30, The Weekly featured an article by Dr. Volodymyr Mezentsev of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) at the University of Alberta, who is the Canadian executive director of the Batyrn archaeological project. Dr. Mezentsev reported on the 2015-2016 work of these scholars, including hypothecial reconstructions of the interior of Mazepa’s palace, as well as excavations of the site of a wooden church at Mazepa’s manor and of the remnants of the household of Judge General Vasyl Kochubei.

In December, the Peter Jacyk Center for Ukrainian Historical Research of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta and CIUS/PR announced the publication of a new volume of Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s “History of Ukraine-Rus’.” The new English-language Volume Three: “Literary works, polemics and writings” between 1917 and 1944 was compiled by the CIUS/PR.

The Holodomor

Ongoing throughout 2016, The Weekly reported on several conferences and events regarding the Holodomor—underlining its importance in various fields within academia. The first were scholarly conferences held in Calgary, Alberta, and in Lviv organized by the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium (HREC).

At the University of Calgary on May 31, the HREC organized the panel “Refugees and the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine: Accounts of Flight, Early Testimonies, Memoirs and Other Writings (1932-1950)” at the conference of the Canadian Association of Slavists (CAS), the major Canadian professional organization in Slavic studies. The conference was part of a larger gathering of 69 members of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

On June 26 HREC invited speakers to examine the role of demography and the “othering” of Ukrainians in the context of the Holodomor. The panel was part of the Lviv conference of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, an international organization with more than 3,200 members that supports teaching, research and publication related to Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia and Eastern Europe. Titled, “Images of ‘the Enemy’ and the National Interpretation of De-Kulakization and the Holodomor in Ukraine (1929-1933),” the panel focused on three distinct collections of primary sources on the 1929-1933 period in Ukraine.
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On September 15 at another HREC-sponsored event, Prof. Oleh Wolowyna of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill spoke at a University of Toronto seminar titled, “What we now know about the Holodomor: New research results.” His presentation addressed the results of research conducted in collaboration with a team of demographers in Ukraine. Prof. Wolowyna noted the progress achieved in the study of the Holodomor, particularly since the opening of Soviet-era archives. However, much is still unknown and common assumptions about the famine have been shown to be inaccurate. His presentation focused on three topics: questionable “facts” about the Holodomor; direct losses by oblasts in Ukraine; and comparison of famine losses at the regional level in Ukraine and Russia.

Also in September, Valentina Kuryliv, director of education at the HREC, traveled to Kyiv to deliver master classes for educators from throughout Ukraine. While research on the Holodomor has increased in recent years, the famine has yet to be integrated into curricula at all levels of education in Ukraine, and many Ukrainian teachers are only now beginning to consider how the subject should be taught in the 21st century classroom. Among the topics addressed at the symposium were developments in research on the Holodomor; the deportation of the Crimean Tatars and other genocides. Mrs. Kuryliv encouraged educators to embrace themes related to human rights in their teaching of the Holodomor, as a means of broadening the Holodomor’s applicability across disciplines, including history, law, politics, literature, civic and media studies.

The Holodomor was also a central theme at the symposium “Empire, Colonialism and Famine in Comparative Historical Perspective,” held October 28-29 at the University of Toronto. This was the fourth international conference organized by the HREC at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. The conference featured presentations on the Irish famine, the Holodomor and the Bengal Famine of 1943 by scholars and genocide specialists. The meeting also welcomed 20 early career scholars from around the world whose research interests ranged from famine relief in colonial India, visual culture of the Bengal famine and hunger in 20th century Ghana, to empire and public health in the Caribbean in the 20th century.

On November 11, the 19th annual Ukrainian Famine Lecture was delivered in Toronto by Serhiy Plokhy, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi Professor of Ukrainian History and director of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. His presentation was attended by a full auditorium at the University of Toronto, was titled “The Fields of Sorrow: Mapping the Great Ukrainian Famine.” The event was organized by the HREC with the support of the Petro Jacyk Program for the Study of Ukraine, the Canadian Foundation for Ukrainian Studies and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (Toronto branch). Prof. Plokhy provided an overview of the HURI project “Mapa: Digital Atlas of Ukraine.” One of the most striking maps, “Total Direct Famine Losses in Ukraine by Region, 1932-1934,” shows that the area hardest hit by the Holodomor was the central Ukrainian heartland in the Kyiv and Kharkiv oblasts rather than the main grain-growing region of southern Ukraine, which had suffered the most during the famine of the early 1920s when the Soviet Union had accepted food aid.

On November 17, the Holodomor was the topic of presentations at the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington at an event organized by the Shevchenko Scientific Society’s District of Columbia chapter, together with the HREC and the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. Speakers included: Frank Syzn, director of the Peter Jacyk Center for Ukrainian Historical Research at the CIUS; Bohdan Klii, director of research at HREC, and co-editor with Alexander Motyl of “The Holodomor Reader: A Sourcebook on the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine” (2012), who gave an overview of HREC’s major publication projects: HREC Executive Director Marta Bazik, who described activities of IREC that engage scholars from a range of fields; Larysa Kurylas, the design architect and sculptor of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington, who described the genesis of the memorial’s design and challenges in its execution; and Liudmyla Hrynewych, director of the Holodomor Research and Education Center in Kyiv, who spoke on the topic “The Holodomor and the Language of Hate in Stalinist Propaganda.”

Finally on November 20, an article by Lana Bahi followed up on an earlier report on the Holodomor information project, stating that during this year’s peak period for school reports (March through June) the Holodomor information website, www.holodomor.rc.org, received approximately 75,000 visits, showing the growing popularity of the website throughout the English-speaking world. There is obvious interest and need for an online guide to Holodomor resources that are authentic and comprehensive to the general public and students of varying ages and backgrounds: that meet today’s educational standards, and that are readily accessible to a social media-savvy population. Created in 2007, the website’s original intent was to inform the Connecticut public of the upcoming 75th anniversary commemoration plans of the newly formed CT Holodomor Awareness Committee. The website has since turned into a passionate commitment for its webmaster, marka Sanzovna. Still a work in progress, the site is looking to add new features and welcome all comments.

An event related to the Holodomor was held at the Embassy of Ukraine on November 17. Speakers included (from left): Oksana Shultyar, counselor and head of the Political Section of the Embassy; Bohdana Urbanovskyi, head of the Shevchenko Scientific Society’s Washington chapter; Dr. Frank Syzn, director of the Peter Jacyk Center for Ukrainian Historical Research at CIUS; Larysa Kurylas, architect/sculptor of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington; Liudmyla Hrynewych, director of the Holodomor Research and Education Center in Kyiv; Marta Bazik, executive director of the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium; and Bohdan Klii, director of research at the HREC.

Culture and the arts in all their diversity

Vasyli Slipak, a Ukrainian opera singer who left the Paris National Opera in 2014 to fight Russia-backed militants in eastern Ukraine was killed on June 29 by sniper fire.

The year 2016 witnessed several anniversary celebrations of important Ukrainian artists and seasoned Ukrainian ensembles and organizations, as well as the birth of new groups. Even when not directly related to the ongoing specter of war in their homeland, the activities of Ukrainian artists and performers found a resonance far beyond their local communities.

Music

The operatic world mourned the tragic death of baritone Vasyli Slipak, a soloist for 20 years with the Paris National Opera, who was killed by sniper fire in eastern Ukraine on July 29. Born in Lviv, Mr. Slipak, a former member of the Dudaryk boy’s choir, returned home to participate in the 2014 Maidan Revolution and joined the Right Sector 7th Battalion to fight Russia-backed militants near Luhansk. Adopting the nom de guerre “Meph” (a reference to the aries of Mephistophiles from “Faust”), Mr. Slipak told his colleague at the Paris Opera, Guillaume Dussau, that it “was about culture and the freedom of his country… he insisted Ukraine needed him more than French opera.” In Paris he was well-known for his powerful portrayals from “Carmen,” “Aida” and “Faust” to rarities like Ulmann’s “Emperor of Atlantis.” Major media outlets all over the world covered the story of the opera singer-turned-warrior.

On March 20, Toronto’s Vesnivka Choir launched the first phase and public presentation of its ambitious e-library of Ukrainian choral music sheet music in the public domain of its webpage (www.vesnivka.com/e-Library). The goal is to share the choir’s vast collection of over 1,000 works composed by Ukrainian and Canadian composers of Ukrainian heritage. This initiative was created as a legacy project of Vesnivka’s 50th anniversary and as a gift to all who share the love of singing and Ukrainian choral music. The aim is to show the downloading of sheet music either in the original Ukrainian or in a transliterated form, using the English alphabet. This most valuable program also provides an audio recording and a YouTube link to view the actual score as a synthesizer generates all the voices. Now many Ukrainian songs with informative historical notes will be easily available to choir directors and singers all over the world.

Also in March in New York, Music at the Institute presented a program by the ensemble Origo directed by Eric Rice called “Musical Grammar in 17th Century Cracow and 19th Century Poland.” The aim was to show how music from Eastern (Italy and Germany) musical styles in the lands of the East – Poland and Ukraine. Half the program was devoted to the divine liturgy of Mykola Dyletsky, one of the most important figures in early Ukrainian music and author of the first book on musical theory in Eastern Europe, “Musical Grammar.”

Violinist Solomon Jaskiv in February released her CD recording of 20th and 21st century Ukrainian music for violin and piano. Together with her pianist, Angelina Gadenka, Dr. Jaskiv began to record these compositions of the previous summer. One unique aspect of the CD is the close personal collaboration she has with the living Ukrainian composers. Dr. Jaskiv explained, “For me this was deeply personal as well as professional. I wanted to expose the work of the featured Ukrainian composers and to raise awareness of Ukrainian musical culture.” Each of the composers faced many obstacles in trying to main-
Violinist Solomiya Ivakhiv in February released a CD on November 6. The concert was part of the choir’s “Sounds of Ukraine” tour of the U.S.

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The newly founded Women’s Bandura Ensemble of North America presented its first full-fledged concerts in October and November. Above, the ensemble is seen during its concert at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., on November 19.

The newly formed Women’s Bandura Ensemble of North America gave its first concerts, titled “Expanding Traditions,” at The Ukrainian Museum in New York on February 13 and in October-November in Detroit, Cleveland, Whippany N.J., and at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. The ensemble has 20 members from several states and Canada. The programs included a wide mix of instrumentals, vocals, smaller quartets and solos.

Four members of the Canadian Bandurist Capella presented a concert called “Bandura Without Borders” at The Ukrainian Museum in New York on May 21. In their first program as a quartet, Ivan Dusanowskyj, Orest Chornomaz and Oleksander Petlura omitted all vocals, instead showcasing the possibilities of the modern bandura instrument. In addition to more familiar Ukrainian folk tunes, the concert featured arrangements of Mozart, Bizet and even a pop song by Steven Tyler and a set of variations on a tune from the movie “Pirates of the Caribbean.”

The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago on February 21 hosted a recital by two opera stars: internationally acclaimed bass Stefan Szkafarowsky and Liviv Opera soprano Marta Zaliznyak-Derzhko.

Three Ukrainian performers assumed principal roles in a new production of Modest Mussorgsky’s “Boris Godunov” at the Commonwealth Lyric Theater in Boston in May. Adrian Brettan conducted a cast that included soprano Olga Lisovskaya as Ksenia and Dmytro Pavlyuk, bass soloist from the Odesa Opera, in the title role.

On May 14, Crimean Tatar R&B/soul-style singer Jamala succeeded in drawing the world’s attention to the Russian government’s persecution of her people by winning the annual Eurovision Song Contest with her song “1944,” about Stalin’s mass deportations and genocide. This was widely reported as a victory for Ukraine and the Crimean Tatars. Former winger and singer Ruslana wrote: “What’s most important to me is that Ukraine is sending the world a message with this song of its deep pain and strong spirit. Only something real is capable of transmitting that energy! Ukraine looks like the real thing.”

Pianist Mykola Suk opened The Washington Group Cultural Fund’s 2016-2017 Music Series with his solo recital on October 2, featuring Myroslav Skoryk’s Partita No. 5, which Mr. Skoryk composed and dedicated to Mr. Suk. Another notable concert was held on November 13 with jazz pianist John Schi.

The Ukrainian Museum in Chicago held its annual fund-raiser on September 24 with the theme of a “living exhibit” of the renowned Chicago-based band Good Times and its contribution to the Ukrainian American heritage.

In Washington on November 6, the 21-member Kyiv Chamber Choir, directed by Mykola Hobdych, sang the last of nine concerts of its 2016 “Sounds of Ukraine” tour that began in Chicago and continued through Cleveland, Toronto, Rochester, N.Y., Hartford, Conn., Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Enthusiastic audiences welcomed its programs, which combined the best examples of Ukrainian sacred and classical songs with folk music, as arranged by contemporary Ukrainian composers.

Art/Folk Art

2016 saw a kaleidoscope of artistic activity, from traditional folk art genres to cutting-edge contemporary artists. The Ukrainian Museum in Chicago on January 8 launched its “Bohdan Soroka [1940-2015] Retrospective Art Exhibit” devoted to the artist’s most recent graphic series, including Ukrainian Christmas traditions, angels, musicians, the four seasons and Ukrainian wooden churches. The son of politically active parents, Mr. Soroka was born in a prison in Lviv, where his mother was being held for assisting in anti-Soviet uprisings. The artist has

Kyiv Chamber Choir conductor Mykola Hobdych joins his choristers in responding to the audience’s ovation at the conclusion of their Ukrainian sacred and folk music concert at the National City Christian Church in Washington on November 6. The concert was part of the choir’s “Sounds of Ukraine” tour of the U.S.

had personal exhibits in Ukraine, England, Germany, France and Canada, and throughout the United States.

A unique exhibit titled “Imagination Redivus” depicting the hybrid war waged by Russia in Ukraine opened at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York on January 22. Kyiv-based artist Mykola Zhuravel offered viewers a look at current events in Ukraine not as a documentary, but as a highly personal metaphorical reflection with striking elements of surrealistic grotesque. Through his paintings, 3-D panels, installations and videos, Mr. Zhuravel created a phantasmagorical world of life-sized Russian TV propaganda “zombies” and aggressive bears with videos linking to flight MH17 shot down by Russian terrorists and zombies tearing itself away from the Soviet past, the varied forces of Russia tearing Ukraine to pieces.

Another multi-media exhibit, “Ukraine Exists,” which was also on view at the United Nations, opened on January 31 at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey in Whippany. Dubbed “A Project of Truth and Art” this exhibit featured installations, posters, embroidery, calligraphy and ceramics by various contemporary artists in war-torn Ukraine. By developing the theme of a country tearing itself away from the Soviet past, the various artists underscored that through their work they are not indifferent to the fate of Ukraine and its people. This exhibit later traveled to the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago.

An exhibition of paintings, titled “Folkways and Fantasies,” by Jewish scholar and artist Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern opened at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York on February 27. Professor Petrovsky-Shtern teaches at Northwestern University in Chicago. His paintings evoke fantastic fairy-tale imagery and echoes from the artist’s conflicted unconscious.

Martu Kuzma, vice-chancellor and rector of the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, was appointed to be the next dean of the Yale School of Art on February 9. Born in New Jersey, Ms. Kuzma brings more than 25 years of experience in leading international institutions of contemporary art as a curator, writer and academic.

Kyiv-based artist Petro Bezza exhibited his paintings exploring metaphysical imagery titled “Jordan” also at the UN on March 18. As stated in the title, the central imagery is of water in Ukrainian folk traditions as cleansing and as a symbol of longevity, renewed emotions, and irresistible force. Mr. Bezza attempts to unlock the hidden secrets of immediate and distant spiritual memory.

Marking its 40th anniversary, The Ukrainian Museum in New York launched an exhibition of the works of an artist long associated with the museum, titled “Jacques Hnizdovsky: Content and Style. Evolving Perspectives” on March 13. Mr. Hnizdovsky had designed the museum’s logo for its debut in 1976. This current exhibit comprised more than 100 works, including oils, woodcuts, linocuts, ceramics, sculptures and drawings.


Co-curators Myroslava Mudrak and Tetiana Rudenko received the 2016 Alfred H. Barr Award for Smaller Museums, Libraries, Collections and Exhibitions for the catalogue “Staging the Ukrainian Avant-Garde of the 1910s and 1920s” which accompanied the exhibition organized by The Ukrainian Museum in New York in cooperation with the Museum of Theater, Music and Cinema Arts of Ukraine in Kyiv. The jury deciding on the award made it clear that “these artists, filmmakers, dancers, scenographers, theater directors and costume designers deserve to be considered alongside their better known counterparts in the Paris and the Russian avant-garde.”

The multimedia exhibit “Ukraine Exists,” which was on view at the United Nations on January 8-20, opened on January 31 at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey (UACCNJ). Seen above is a detail from “Hryhorovych,” a painting by Yura Shapoval.

A contemporary take on the age-old Kozak Mamai image was displayed starting on June 12 at The Ukrainian Museum in New York in an exhibit of the works of Lviv-based artist Orest Skop. While referencing the traditional role of Mamai as musician/warrior of the steppe, musician/philosopher and a sort of Ukrainian Robin Hood, Mr. Skop imbues his colorful paintings with the imagery of the new contemporary Ukraine.

The ancient and colorful Petrykivka style was on prominent display during Philadelphia’s Fairmount Avenue Arts Crawl festival on June 3-5. This art form began as painting on adobe white-washed walls, beams and hearths, as well as furniture and household items. This exhibit was presented by the Cultural Trust of the Ukrainian League of Philadelphia. The Petrykivka style was recently added to the list of “Intangible Cultural Heritage” by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2001, an exhibition of Petrykivka masters took place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

In a unique cross-cultural exhibition, The Ukrainian Museum in New York presented Romanian and Ukrainian folk textiles side by side beginning on October 9. Titled “Carpathian Echoes: Traditional Textile Materials and Technologies in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania and Ukraine,” the exhibit featured complete costumes, sashes, shirts, vests and coats woven out of colorful fabrics made of hemp and sheep wool. This exhibition was the result of a fruitful collaboration between guest curator Dr. Floreira Zaharia from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lubov Wolynec, curator of folk art at The Ukrainian Museum.

Meanwhile in Cleveland, another collaboration took place between the Costume Society of America and the Ukrainian Museum-Archives. For its 2016 project, the CSA trained UMA volunteers on professional handling of pre-acid-free storage boxes.

When the Costume Society of America held its annual meeting this year in Cleveland on May 24-29, it chose for its “CSA Angels Project” the Ukrainian Museum-Archives. Seven college professors, four professional textile conservators and more than a dozen volunteers came to the UMA to clean, catalogue and place more than 300 items into acid-free storage boxes.
Damin Kolodiy's film "Freedom or Death" was screened on February 4 at the Ukrainian Center in Passaic, N.J., as part of a commemorative evening marking the two-year anniversary of the sacrifices made by the Heavenly Brigade. Mr. Kolodiy (center) is seen here with community activists and the event’s organizers.

In early October, Adrian Byrtan presented a series of lecture exhibits in Tannersville, N.Y., showcasing his large-sized gold-leafed sculptures based on Scythian themes. He conducted two classes for students and faculty at local high schools.

On October 14, the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York opened an exhibit of paintings by Lvit-born artist Serhiy Hai depicting archaic motifs with echoes of Hellenic and Etruscan art, such as riders and horses, nudes, masks and still life.

And in Chicago on October 30, the Ukrainian National Museum showcased the paintings of Khrystyna Koz'yak, titled "A Colorful Kaleidoscope of Cultures." Ms. Koz'yak uses oversized canvas to experiment with a variety of vibrant colors, textures and shapes.

Seven contemporary Ukrainian American artists from the New York City area were featured in the exhibition titled "CIM" at The Ukrainian Museum on December 11. The participants were Luba Drozd, Adriana Farmiga, Maya Hayuk, Roman Hrab, Yuri Masnyj, Christina Shmigel and Marko Shuhan; they had studied at places like Bard College, Pratt Institute, Cooper Union and the School of Visual Arts. A wide variety of materials and styles was the hallmark of the exhibit from the representational to conceptual, incorporating drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, video and sound.

The year closed with a far-reaching decision on December 14 by the Amsterdam district court, which ruled that the priceless collection of gold artifacts on loan to a Dutch museum when Russia occupied Crimea must be returned to Ukraine. While provoking an angry Russian reaction, the decision drew praise from Ukraine, whose president said it meant "Crimea is ours, period." The battle created by Russia, and the way we showed the facts on the ground. The film serves as a tool for learning." A similar screening was held in Philadelphia.

Julia Blue is a film about a university student, Julia, falling in love with a traumatized soldier in war-torn Ukraine. The filmmakers held a panel discussion at St. George Academy in New York City on April 3 to discuss their movie, then in post-production. "Julia Blue" was shot entirely on location with breathtaking cinematography of the Carpathian Mountains and Kyiv, and was written and directed by Roxy Toporowych. On November 28, Ms. Toporowych was announced at the 26th annual Gotham Independent Film Awards as the winner of the Calvin Klein Spotlight on Women Filmmakers “Live the Dream” grant. The $25,000 cash award aims to further the careers of emerging women directors by supporting the completion, distribution and audience engagement strategies of their first feature film or episodic series.

Oksana Uschenovych, an independent film producer and director, interviewed Holodomor survivors in every city in Canada for her documentary "Holodomor: Voices of Survivors." It was screened at the Yorkton Film Festival in Saskatchewan on May 28 and at the International Short Film Festival in Toronto on November 25.

The Iskra Ukrainian Dance Academy and the Iskra Ukrainian Dance Ensemble that emerged from it, celebrated 20 years of educating youngsters and delighting audiences with their productions of Ukrainian folk dance. "A Celebration in Dance," was presented on October 16 at the College of St. Elizabeth in Morris Township, N.J.

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Ukrainian National Association: caring for our community

Traditionally, the UNA marks the beginning of a new year with the release of its new Almanac. The Almanac of the Ukrainian National Association for 2016 (Petru Chasto, editor) marked several notable anniversaries, including the 70th anniversaries of both the so-called Lviv Shtar of 1946 that liquidated the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church by proclaiming a “reunion” with the Russian Orthodox Church and of the famine of 1946 in Ukraine. Also at the beginning of the year on January 19, the UNA coordinated a meeting between U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) and several leaders from the Ukrainian American community at the congresswoman’s New Brunswick office. Included in the group were: Andrei Dobriansky from the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Walter Zaryckyj of the Center for US-Ukrainian Relations, as well as Roma Lisovych, UNA treasurer and Yuriy Symczuk, UNA Internal Coordinator. The congresswoman had reached out to Mr. Symczuk, expressing his desire to meet with leaders of the Ukrainian American community to share details from his trip to Ukraine and reafirm his efforts in continuing to help Ukraine, including providing military and humanitarian assistance, and supporting a Crimean annexation non-recognition bill.

As always, the UNA continued to care for its members of all ages. The organization’s scholarship program continued in 2016 and in an editorial in the April 17 issue of The Ukrainian Weekly highlighted that popular fraternal benefit “It’s that time of year when our high school seniors are making decisions about where to attend college – decisions that will have a far-reaching effect on their future. Thus, it’s a good time to remind readers that our publish the Ukrainian National Association offers scholarships and monetary awards to college students who are its members. In fact, you may have noticed that this newspaper and our sister publication, Svonoda, have been running advertisements announcing that applications for the 2016-1017 academic year are now being accepted...”

The editorial also noted that the program traces its beginnings to the informal granting of scholarship assistance almost since the organization’s founding in 1994, and that since its formal establishment in 1996, the UNA has disbursed over $2 million to students. The UNA’s 2016-2017 scholarship recipients were featured in the September 4 issue of The Ukrainian Weekly (and in Svonoda as well) – just as the new academic year begins under way. Notably, issues that were distributed during the month of August featured a large presence of the Sovenizka Heritage Center, which are attended by hundreds of our community’s young people. For the 2016-2017 school year, the UNA assisted 42 of its student members with scholarships totaling $11,050.

The UNA Seniors – rebranded as “Savvy Seniors” – held their annual conference and getaway at Soyuizka on June 12-17. On the agenda were informative presentations, workshops, delicious meals and various social activities. Also in June, a front-page story in The Weekly cited the work of the Ukrainian National Foundation (an affiliated company that performs charitable activities on behalf of the UNA), the Markian Pasiwsky Fund and the Kyiv-based International Alliance for Fraternal Assistance, who are working together to develop a modern rehabilitation space at the Lviv State Enterprise for Prosthetics and Mobility. The Markian Pasiwsky Fund was organized by the family and friends of the Ukrainian American who died while fighting with a volunteer battalion in the battle of Buzivka. Representatives of the Pasiwsky family and the IIAF agreed that developing a modern rehabilitation facility in Ukraine was a worthwhile endeavor. The UNF played a key role in generating much-needed funding that allowed the project to progress. At the same time it was reported that the UNF and the Pasiwsky Fund were in talks with the Ukrainian Catholic University to work together for the rehabilitation of war victims.

Part of the UNA’s community outreach program during 2016 was a Petrykivka Workshop held on April 8 at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey in Whippany. About 50 participants – a full house – were instructed in this Ukrainian art form by Natalia Lyubytska, an artist who hails from Lviv. The evening’s five-course dinner of small plates paired with various wine selections was arranged by Soyuizka Manager Nestor Pasiwsky and prepared by Soyuizka’s head chef, Andrey Sovenytsky. The event was organized by the UNA in support of the UACCNJ’s Arts, Education and Culture Committee.

To mark Life Insurance Awareness Month, The Ukrainian National Association Forum pages in The Weekly in September featured a series of four articles...
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Speaking of insurance, the UNA published a new version of its full-color magazine. This year, it was called "Guide to Life." Inside, readers could find not only facts and figures about the UNA, its products and UNA benefits, but also concise explanations of insurance products and their value in establishing financial well-being. At the same time, "Guide to Life" was a comprehensive explanation of the value and benefits of turning to the UNA in particular for these products.

Throughout the year – and especially during festival season – the UNA’s representatives were busy promoting the organization and its offerings, which include life insurance, endowments, and annuities, as well as various fraternal benefits. Also in the spotlight at such events were the Ukrainian National Foundation and its Soyuzivka Heritage Center. Readers will recall that it was in January 2015 that the UNA announced it had realized its goal of charitable status for the Soyuzivka Heritage Center, as the Ukrainian National Foundation Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, became the owner of Soyuzivka. The first festival of the season at which the UNA and the UNF were represented was the St. George Ukrainian Festival in New York City on May 20-22.

The UNA booth at the Ukrainian Cultural Festival at Soyuzivka turned out to be very popular with guests, especially the youngsters who were treated to beautiful and unique free face-painting by artist Athena Zhe. Ms. Zhe was a hit also at the UNA table during the Ukrainian Festival at the UACCNJ on October 1.

A notable event of 2016 for the UNA was the observance of the international Vyshyvanka Day. Staffers at the UNA’s top life insurance professional and one of three full-time executive officers, Ms. Kozak passed away on June 27 at the age of 62. She was hired as an underwriter in the UNA’s Recording Department in 1996, then rose to become director of various operations and was elected as national secretary in 2002. She was re-elected in 2006, 2010 and 2014.

The 2016 annual meeting of the UNA General Assembly was convened at the Soyuzivka Heritage Center on November 18-19. The business sessions were marked by good news about the UNA’s continued progress during 2016 – the first year in a row that the fraternal organization has enjoyed net profits. In addition, during the past year the UNA’s surplus has grown by nearly $1 million and was projected to stand at $9.3 million by the end of the year. Reports were delivered by the full-time executive officers of the UNA, President Stefan Kaczaraj, as well as deputy national secretary at the beginning of April. Meanwhile, at Soyuzivka, there were several new developments. In March, Roma Lisovich, treasurer of the Ukrainian National Foundation, reported that renovations of Soyuzivka’s Main House were in full swing. She noted: “The right wing of the second floor has been stripped to the studs, leaving the bare bones structure. Plumbing is being fixed and new bathrooms, walls, ceilings and light fixtures, as well as carpeting, are being installed. Each renovated room will have its own air conditioning/heating unit installed in the wall, allowing guests to control the settings. In addition, the balcony rooms have been beautified with the installation of new screened-in French doors.” In addition, pavilion projects were completed and a major renovation of the reservoir was underway. Over 3,000 visitors flocked to the Soyuzivka Heritage Center for the 10th Ukrainian Cultural Festival on July 8-10. Oleksa Malka of Lviv, and Kvjans Ivo Bohli (originally from Chernivtsi) and Viktor Pavlik (originally from Terebovlia, Ternopil Oblast) were the show’s headliners. They were joined by virtuoso violinist Vasyl Popadiuk, master handartist Victor Mizhalov and vocalist/musician Oleh Skrypka. Also on the bill were the perinatal festival favorites, the Dumas Chorus of New York and the Roma Pryma Bohachevsky Ukrainian Dance Workshop, as well as folk musicians known as Hirt Mełch. License plates from various parts of the United States and Canada were spotted entering Soyuzivka: Nebraska, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Ontario and Quebec, and from the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Another notable feature of the 2016 festival was the Ukrainian Artisan Village, a depiction of Ukrainian village life with arts and crafts demonstrations, information on the folk uses of various plants, as well as folk singing, all presented by artisans and artists coordinated by Halyna Shepko of nearby New Paltz, N.Y. In addition, there were crafts activities for children. Of course there were also the annual varenyk-eating competition, a vendors’ marketplace and a food court.

As the festival was getting under way on Friday evening, a fund-raising gala on the theme of “Solidarity with Ukraine” was taking place on the expansive lawn of the Lyv camp. More than 100 people attended the event, held under a beautifully decorated party tent. The reception, which included a cocktail party, a five-course dinner and performances by the festival’s top stars, was sponsored by the Ukrainian National Foundation in cooperation with the Ukrainian Catholic University of Lviv. A total of $33,000 was raised for the UCU rehabilitation center via the fund established in memory of Markian Paslawsky. Another notable event at Soyuzivka was the annual Miss Soyuzivka Contest, which this year marked its 50th anniversary. Crowned Miss Soyuzivka 2017 at the August 13 events was Irene Kulhidza of Niskayuna, N.Y.; Teya Shepko of nearby New Paltz, N.Y. It was a hit also at the UNA table during the Ukrainian Festival at the UACCNJ on October 1. The festival of the season at which the UNA and the UNF were represented was the St. George Ukrainian Festival in New York City on May 20-22. The business sessions were marked by good news about the UNA’s continued progress during 2016 – the first year in a row that the fraternal organization has enjoyed net profits. In addition, during the past year the UNA’s surplus has grown by nearly $1 million and was projected to stand at $9.3 million by the end of the year. Reports were delivered by the full-time executive officers of the UNA, President Stefan Kaczaraj, as well as deputy national secretary at the beginning of April. Meanwhile, at Soyuzivka, there were several new developments. In March, Roma Lisovich, treasurer of the Ukrainian National Foundation, reported that renovations of Soyuzivka’s Main House were in full swing. She noted: “The right wing of the second floor has been stripped to the studs, leaving the bare bones structure. Plumbing is being fixed and new bathrooms, walls, ceilings and light fixtures, as well as carpeting, are being installed. Each renovated room will have its own air conditioning/heating unit installed in the wall, allowing guests to control the settings. In addition, the balcony rooms have been beautified with the installation of new screened-in French doors.” In addition, pavilion projects were completed and a major renovation of the reservoir was underway. Over 3,000 visitors flocked to the Soyuzivka Heritage Center for the 10th Ukrainian Cultural Festival on July 8-10. Oleksa Malka of Lviv, and Kvjans Ivo Bohli (originally from Chernivtsi) and Viktor Pavlik (originally from Terebovlia, Ternopil Oblast) were the show’s headliners. They were joined by virtuoso violinist Vasyl Popadiuk, master handartist Victor Mizhalov and vocalist/musician Oleh Skrypka. Also on the bill were the perinatal festival favorites, the Dumas Chorus of New York and the Roma Pryma Bohachevsky Ukrainian Dance Workshop, as well as folk musicians known as Hirt Mełch. License plates from various parts of the United States and Canada were spotted entering Soyuzivka: Nebraska, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Ontario and Quebec, and from the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

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The wide world of Ukrainian sports

The 2016 sports year was an internationally competitive one with Ukraine an active participant on the world stage. After a dreadful performance at soccer’s 2016 Euro Cup and a disappointing result at the Rio Summer Olympics, Ukraine demonstrated it is a world leader in Paralympic sports.

A challenging grouping with Poland, Germany and Northern Ireland cost national coach Mykhailo Fomenko his job. Ukraine continued its downward trend of medaling at the Summer Olympics, where Oleh Vernayev was the rare celebrated podium presence. Expectations for Ukraine were still high heading into the third international contest and this time the nation exceeded them with an unbelievable result in the third overall showing at the Rio Paralympic Games.

Ukraine won 117 medals at the Paralympics, including 41 gold and 37 silver. On the heels of winning 04 medals and placing fourth overall in 2012, Ukraine firmly established itself as a Paralympic power. Ukrainian Vasyl Lomachenko solidified himself as a boxing champion by winning and defending the WBO junior lightweight title. Ukrainian tennis star Elina Svitolina shocked the world when she defeated defending the WBO junior lightweight title. Ukrainian tennis star Elina Svitolina shocked the world when she defeated Russian Ruslan Berchuk for the WBO European Championship in Slovenia on March 16-20.

The ninth Ukraine Little League Championships for Ukraine won its first European Under-21 Championships in Slovenia on March 16-20. Ukraine beat Rivne 7-1 in the June 1 final. Ukraine’s Paralympic Swimming Team.

• Team of the Year – Ukraine Paralympic Swimming Team.
• Rookie of the Year – Colton Parayko, St. Louis Blues.
• Most Outstanding Coach – Hennadiy Vdovychenko, Paralympic swimming team.
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Here comes our annual highlight package of the year’s top performances in sports competitions and a recap of Ukraine’s sports headlines from around the globe and our diaspora.

Eight all-star teams competed at the 17th Little League tournament in Kremenchut, Ukraine, at the end of May with Kremenchut beating Rome 7-1 in the final. Ukraine won its first European Under-21 BASEBALL Championship on August 14-19 in Tel Aviv, Israel, after defeating Russia 7-5. The Ukrainian Little League Championships for orphans and invited New Programs was played in Kremenchut, Ternopil Oblast in late September.

Kevin McHugh enrolled at the University of Kansas to play BASEBALL at one of the NCAA’s most storied college hoops programs in hopes of an NBA career. Alex Len of the NBA’s Phoenix Suns enjoyed a break-through second half of the 2015-2016 season when he averaged 12.5 points and 10 rebounds per game, making himself a valuable contributor to a rebuilding squad and setting himself up for a most lucrative second contract.

Ukraine’s men’s BIAITHION team (Iryna Varvynets, Yuliya Zhyravuk, Nadia Bielikina, Andriy Dotsenko + Artem Pryma) won gold at the IBO Cup Biathlon 5 in Italy on January 13-17. Ukraine’s mixed relay team (Bielikina, Yana Bonda, Ruslan Tkalchenko + Dmytro Rusynov) won gold at the IBO Cup Biathlon 6 in Italy, on January 14-19. Ukraine’s single mixed relay team (Anastasiya Merkuslyna + Artem Tyshchenko) won gold with a 4:50:19 time. Pinrodzyna won gold in the women’s 1.75-km event at the BMW World Cup 7 on February 3-7 in Alberta, Canada. Bielikina won first place in the women’s 7.5-km event at the IBO Cup Biathlon 8 in Italy on March 9-13. Merkuslyna won gold in the women’s junior 12.5-km event at the IBU Junior Open European Championships in Slovenia on March 16-20.

April 23 in Kiev saw featherweight Oleg Malinovsky defeat Russian Raulan Berchuk for the WBO European Union title. Ukraine’s 6.5-km event at the BMW World Cup 7 on February 3-7 in Alberta, Canada. Bielikina won first place in the women’s 7.5-km event at the IBO Cup Biathlon 8 in Italy on March 9-13. Merkuslyna won gold in the women’s junior 12.5-km event at the IBU Junior Open European Championships in Slovenia on March 16-20.

Hanna Ushenina won gold in the European Women’s Chess Championship held on May 26-June 3 in Romania.

In CYCLING, Natalia Krompots won the Portugal Cup race in Vau de Mraket on March 17 with a time of 1:25:02 seconds. Ukraine’s women’s saber team (Kharlan, Komashchuck, Kravatsky + Voronina) won 45-44 in the final and qualified to the 2016 World Championship in Athletics on January 31. Olena Kharlan won first place in the women’s individual saber event at the Yves Brasseur World Cup on February 19-21 in Belgium.


Hanna Ritaivanova won gold in the World Cup on May 13-15. Italy. Ukraine’s pairs ranked third overall showing at the Rio Paralympic Games.

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The Ukrainian Weekly’s sports correspondent’s annual sports awards for 2016:

• Most Outstanding Male Athlete – Maxim Krypak, Paralympic swimming.
• Most Outstanding Female Athlete – Hanna Ritaivanova, Paralympic swimming.
• Most Outstanding Coach – Hennadiy Vdovychenko, Paralympic swimming team.

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Arizona and New York Islanders, respectively. Defender Mark Pyynyk was traded by Buffalo to Florida. Lee Stempniak signed with Carolina, and Dave Schlemko cashed in on a new deal with San Jose. Kyle Brodziak stayed in St. Louis, while Jordin Tootoo hooked up with the Blackhawks. Two-time Stanley Cup champion Russian Fedotenko announced his retirement from professional hockey at the age of 37 on October 11.

Ukraine is a team of athletes to the 2017 INVICTUS GAMES in Toronto. In November 9 with a call for some 1,500 volunteers to join the community efforts to support Team Ukraine's participation in the games.

Artem Benchenko (100 kg) won gold at the RIO Grand Prix Havana 2016 on February 8. Jakob Khammo (+100 kg) won gold in the men's division at the Judo Grand Prix in Dusseldorf, Germany on February 10-21. At the Judo Grand Prix in Hungary on June 25-26, Stanislav Bondarenko (+100 kg) won gold. Dmytro Kaniets (+73 kg) won gold at the Judo Grand Prix in Croatia on September 23-25.

Ukraine won 11 medals (two gold, five silver and four bronze) at the 2016 Rio OLYMPICS. Gymnast Oleh Vernayev and fencer Olena Kharchenko each earned a pair of medals. The two-time Stanley Cup champion Russian Fedotenko announced his retirement from professional hockey at the age of 37 on October 11.

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Serhiy Kulish (rifle shooting), Zhan Beleniuk (80 kg) won gold. Dmytro Kanivets (73 kg) won gold at the Judo Grand Prix in Hungary on June 25-26, Stanislav Bondarenko (+100 kg) won gold. Dmytro Kaniets (+73 kg) won gold at the Judo Grand Prix in Croatia on September 23-25.

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Serhiy Kulish, silver medalist in the 10-meter air pistol at the Rio Summer Olympic Games in August.

Elna Svitleva celebrates after defeating Serena Williams of the U.S.A. in the round of 16 at the Rio Summer Olympic Games in August.

Saber fencer Olena Kharlan celebrates her bronze medal at the Rio Summer Olympic Games in August.

Olympic champion gymnast Oleh Vernayev

Zhan Beleniuk, silver medalist in Greco-Roman wrestling, at the Rio Summer Olympic Games in August.

High-jumper Bohdan Bondarenko, bronze medalist at the Rio Summer Olympic Games in August.

The silver medal-winning women’s sabers team – Olha Kharchan, Alina Komashchuk, Olena Kravatska and Olena Voronina – at the Rio Summer Olympic Games in August.
Ukraine's women's freestyle team also won first place.

WRESTLING
Championships in Riga, Latvia, where
(85 kg, Greco-Roman) won gold at the 2016 European
itive for a banned substance, meldonium. Zhan Beleniuk
Kviatkovsky, Olena Zasayeva and Oksana Herhel tested pos-
Pielieshenko (85 kg + 204 kg) won two golds.

Yulia Paratova (53 kg) won one gold and Oleksandr
April 8-16. Iryna Dekha (75 kg) won three gold medals,
WEIGHTLIFTING
Syutkin won gold in the combo run (swim/swim/run) event.
France on June 25-26 in the elite men's category. Oleksiy
European Aquathlon (swim/run) event.

Ukraine's seven-a-side men's soccer team won the gold medal at the Summer Paralympic Games in Rio. Pictured
left are: Oleh Len, Edhar Kahramanian, Volodymyr Antoniu and Vitalii Romanchuk. Pictured right are:
Kostiantyn Symashko, Vitaliy Trushchev and Taras Dudko.

In 2016, Ukraine's first medalist at the Rio Summer Paralympic Games was Ruslan Katyshev, who won bronze in the men's long jump, was
Ukraine's second medalist at the Rio Summer Paralympic Games.

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Inna Cherniak, a judoka who was the first female to win Ukraine's first gold medal, at the Rio Paralympic Games in September.

Roman Danyliuk, who won Ukraine's first medal at the Rio Summer Paralympic Games – a bronze in shotput.

Ievgenii Bogodaiko, who won Ukraine's first gold medal at the Rio Summer Paralympic Games in the 100-meter backstroke.

Vaslav Lomachenko (right) displays his high-tech skills against Nicholas Walters of Jamaica at the Cosmopolitan arena in Las Vegas on November 26 to retain his WBO junior lightweight title.
The noteworthy: people and events

This section features the noteworthy events and people of 2016 that defy easy classification (or could fit under more than one of our Year in Review categories).

- Representatives of Ukrainian American community organizations and institutions gathered on January 10 at the Ukrainian Restaurant in New York to bid farewell to Ambassador Yuriy Sergeyev, Ukraine’s permanent representative to the United Nations from 2007 until the end of 2015, and his wife, Dr. Nataliya Sergeyev. Speaking on behalf of the community, President Tamara Olexy of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America thanked Ambassador Sergeyev for his many years of work for the benefit of Ukraine and his exemplary cooperation with Ukrainian Americans.
- Volodymyr Yelchenko, Ukraine’s new ambassador to the United Nations, along with his wife, Iryna, hosted a luncheon reception for Ukrainian American community representatives on February 5 at Ukraine’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. Thanking his guests for their support, Ambassador Yelchenko urged the community leaders to continue their work for Ukraine and its democratic evolution.
- It was announced in February that Kyiv model-turned-designer Anna Karenina would be included in 2016 Fashion Week in New York, scheduled for September 7-15. Ms. Karenina was born in Kremenchuk in 1995 and graduated from Kyiv State University of Technology and Design. She began her modeling career at the age of 14 and designed her own line of clothing at the age of 16. Her fashions have been shown for several seasons at the Mercedes-Benz Kyiv Fashion Days. Ms. Karenina’s designs have been featured in more than 40 top international retailers in 25 countries.
- Ivan Pasichnyk, a 28-year-old hailing from Kyiv, was named as one of Forbes’ magazine’s “30 under 30” young leaders, creative inventors and entrepreneurs. Mr. Pasichnyk helped launch a project called Ecois.me, which sells specially designed sensors that track electrical energy consumption. Data from the sensors is uploaded to a website, from which a mobile app will provide tips on how to save energy — recognizing the most energy-efficient devices and finding ways to optimize their usage during energy consumption peaks.
- Hoping to raise awareness of the situation in Ukraine, first-time marathon runner Ukrainian American Maya Surma (widowed by competing) continued a “Walk for Ukraine” cross-country trek across the United States, which she had begun on November 21, 2015, in Front Royal, Va. Maya was motivated by a desire to do something for Ukraine; a previous long walk of 500 miles in Spain as well as time spent living in Ukraine — teaching English to orphans while in high school and summer study at the Ukrainian Catholic University while in college — helped her decide on this trek. Averaging 10-12 miles per day, Maya stopped her walk in Tennessee in May for a planned summer hiatus. She restarted in October for several weeks, reaching Arkansas — a total distance of over 800 miles — before stopping for the winter. She plans to resume the walk in the spring of 2017 when the weather improves.
- Freedom House published its annual Nations in Transit report, which monitors the development of 29 countries in the former Soviet Union, the Balkans and Central Europe, on April 12. The report warned that economic woes are threatening the stability of “entrenched dictatorships” in the former Soviet Union, the migration crises is fueling populism in Eastern Europe and reforms in the Balkans are in retreat. The situation is particularly grim, the report noted, in the seven countries led by dictators who have been in power at least 10 years: Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. On a positive note, the report called Ukraine “the single most important opportunity for establishing democracy” in the region and said that the government had achieved “some progress” in reforms in 2015 but that continuing Russian occupation of Crimea, the separatist conflict in the east, widespread corruption and impunity for crimes during the political upheaval of 2014 are “holding back further progress.” If Ukraine does not move forward, the report noted, “there’s a real significant threat that Ukraine falls back and continues a tradition of very, very corrupt governance.”
- The U.S. State Department’s annual human rights report released on April 13, said that the world faces a “global governance crisis” as both governments and non-state actors increasingly infringe on human rights. Secretary of State John Kerry, writing in the report, denounced governments for cracking down on freedom of expression by “filing reporters for writing critical stories” or targeting non-governmental organizations “for promoting supposedly ‘foreign ideologies’ such as universal human rights.” The report accused governments across the former Soviet Union of both overt repression of political freedoms and bureaucratic measures aimed at stifling opposing voices. In particular, it accused Russia of “especially” targeting individuals and organizations that have opposed the Kremlin’s forceful and illegal annexation of Crimea and Moscow’s support for separatists in eastern Ukraine. In Crimea, the report added, Russian authorities have subjected Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars to “systematic harassment and discrimination.”
- The Group for Tomorrow’s Ukraine (GTU), together with the Harvard Ukrainian Student Society, led an experimental trip to Ukraine in May for 20 Harvard University graduate students, with the goal of introducing future leaders in the public, private and non-profit sectors to Ukraine. The group, which visited Kyiv and Lviv, had a packed schedule of meetings with representatives of Ukraine’s government, members of Parliament, key figures in media and industry, Ukraine-based members of the U.S. Foreign Service, as well as cultural, historical and leisure activities. The GTU is a non-profit organization of young professionals and academics offering analysis on Ukraine and dedicated to promoting human rights as the country changes.
- Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States Valeriy Chaly was decorated with the Officer’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland during a ceremony at the Polish Embassy on May 23. Awarded by Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski in recognition of Ambassador Chaly’s outstanding achievements in promoting friendly Ukrainian-Polish relations, the award was presented by Polish Ambassador to the U.S. Ryszard Schneep. In his remarks, Ambassador Schneep mentioned not only Ambassador Chaly’s role in strengthening the strategic partnership between Ukraine and Poland, but also pointed out that Poland was the first country to recognize the independence of Ukraine. “In the face of unprecedented Russian aggression... we wish to once more be a source of support for our neighbor, to be close to Ukraine and Ukrainians,” Ambassador Schneep noted.
- After 98 years in business, the Surma Book & Music Company of New York closed its doors in June. Founded by Myron Surmacz Sr. in 1918, the store had been operated by Marlan Surmacz for the last 30 years and sold pysanka-making supplies, embroidery, fabrics and trims, books and assorted items, many from Ukraine. Mr.
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney Bohdan Vitvitsky points to the date (September 12) when the final applications were accepted for some 80 inspector general positions within the Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine. Dr. Vitvitsky was tapped on August 8 to serve as an advisor to the prosecutor general.

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Surnach told The Weekly: “My cultural and heritage roots are as strong as ever, but reality being as it is, the increasing costs of running the store, as well as limited personal time for family have been the main motivating factors in this decision.”

Two Ukrainian American women were among the 17 recipients of the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit’s 2016 Michigan International Professional Women’s Awards, which recognize distinguished women in Michigan, from different cultural backgrounds, who have succeeded in their professional endeavors and who have markedly contributed both to their own ethnic community and to the Michigan community at large. The Ukrainian honorees were Dr. Anna Czubatyj and Ulana Ober-Kushner. Dr. Czubatyj is the director of the Ren to BSN completion program at South University; Ms. Ober-Kushner is a successful businesswoman. Both women are active in the Ukrainian American community.

2016 marked the 25th anniversary of the founding of the sister city relationship between Kyiv and Chicago, which was marked by two special events: the Armed Forces Memorial Day Weekend Run and the visit of Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko. The Kyiv Committee of Sister Cities International was chosen as an official participating charity of the Soldier Field 10-Mile Run, which celebrates the service and supports the needs of the U.S. Armed Forces. Over 50 runners and volunteers participated as part of the Friends of Ukraine team, including Larysa Gerasko, the consul general of Ukraine in Chicago, and her entire staff. Three Ukrainian sailors undergoing physical rehabilitation in the Chicago area received financial help as a result of the race. Mayor Klitschko visited Chicago to attend a roundtable hosted by Mayor Rahm Emanuel on June 1, in conjunction with the second annual Chicago Forum on Global Cities. Mr. Klitschko’s jam-packed schedule included visits to the Ukrainian National Museum, the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, the St. Nicholas Cathedral School, a community meeting at the Ukrainian Cultural Center and an appearance on NPR’s “Worldview,” where he stressed Ukraine’s geopolitical significance and the importance of continuing to support its European trajectory.

Former Assistant U.S. Attorney Bohdan Vitvitsky, a Ukrainian-born corruption expert from New Jersey who specialized in prosecuting and investigating complex financial fraud, joined a selection committee whose job is to choose members of a newly created General Inspectorate at the Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine, it was announced by Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko on August 8. The committee was to choose up to 80 inspector generals, who, “will supervise the legality of actions of officials and investigators through out the prosecution system,” Dr. Vitvitsky explained. Dr. Vitvitsky was the resident legal adviser at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv in 2007-2009. On his current role, he said, “I wasn’t looking for this. It was presented as an opportunity to be helpful in some way that might have a little bit of an impact.” He added, “I like to find ways to be helpful, and there’s no shortage of things to do here.”

The remains of a U.S. Army second lieutenant who was shot down near Novi Triglav, Odesa Oblast, in June 1944, were repatriated to U.S. custody at a ceremony at the National History Museum in Kyiv on August 12. The officer had been participating in Operation Frantic—a series of shadowy fighting operations against Germany during World War II conducted by American aircraft based in Britain and southern Italy where he landed at three airfields in Ukraine. U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and Ukrainian Deputy Chief of General Staff Sirotenko spoke at the ceremony.

Ukraine’s Culture Minister Yevhen Nyschuk and Musician Televizor (Igor Krutskyi) announced on September 9 that Kyiv had been chosen as the host city for Eurovision 2017, edging out the other finalist, Odesa, in a 19 to 2 vote with one abstention. Other cities that had expressed interest were Donipro (formerly known as Dnipropetrovsk), Kharkiv, Kherson and Lviv. Ultimately, Kyiv won because of its superior infrastructure; the 11,000-seat International Exhibition Center was chosen as the Eurovision 2017 venue. Ukraine was awarded the right to host Eurovision 2017 after Ukrainian singer Jamala, who is a Crimean Tatar, won the 2016 contest. Kyiv also hosted Eurovision 2005, after Ruslana won in 2004.

On September 15, an appeal to the European community, signed by over 30 political leaders and intellectuals and titled "On being tired from being conscienceless," was released by the First of December Initiative Group. Calling Russia’s war against Ukraine, the occupation of Crimea, the armed conflict in the Donbas, tens of thousands of victims, 1.5 million internally displaced persons, daily Russian provocations and blackmail, the group said Europeans have become accustomed to these problems, routine dulls empathy, and indifference equates the victim and the aggressor. The European exhaustion with the war in Ukraine is Russia’s strongest ally, signatories noted. The appeal called in “all thinking people of our joint European community to show solidarity” and adhere to the values that created Europe’s civilization: freedom and the rule of law, the vision of a united Europe over local interests and ambitions.

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) awarded its highest honor - the Shevchenko Freedom Award - to seven individuals in 2016. The award is given to individuals of remarkable understanding and given substantial assistance to the Ukrainian American community and the Ukrainian people. Five recipients were honored during the XXII Congress of Ukrainians in America held on September 23-25: Michael Sawkiw, longtime director of the UCCA’s Washington office, the Ukrainian National Information Service, and a former UCCA president; Dr. Larissa Njig, longtime president of the United Ukrainian American Relief Committee; Marie Duplak, longtime UCCA executive secretary, distinguished editor, business owner and former president of the organization, for the Defense of Lemkivschyna; Roma Hadzewycz, editor-in-chief of Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly; and posthumously, Markian Paslawsky, the only Ukrainian American to have given his life in the line of duty, for his continued efforts to keep Ukraine from the latest Russian aggression. Mr. Paslawsky’s award was accepted by his family. Presented with awards at their offices were U.S. Sen. Bob Portman (R-Ohio), in recognition of “his continued support of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and for pursuing steadfast relations with Ukraine in recognition of its vital importance to trans-Atlantic peace and security” and U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) for “deep understanding and ongoing support for the Ukrainian American community and the Ukrainian nation.”

Ivan Dzyuba, writer and former Soviet-era dissident, received the Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky Medal for 2016 on September 28 in Kyiv at a dinner commemorating the 75th anniversary of Babyn Yar. The award is given by the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, and recognized Mr. Dzyuba for his decades-long commitment to human rights and fostering dialogue between nations, and for speaking out against anti-Semitism during the Soviet years. Dr. Boris D. Lushniak was appointed dean of the University of Maryland School of Public Health. Prior to his appointment as dean, Dr. Lushniak was with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), where he served as professor and chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics, and professor of dermatology at F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine. Before his tenure at USUHS, Dr. Lushniak served as the U.S. deputy surgeon general; in 2013-2014 he served as acting surgeon general. He retired from the U.S. Public Health Service in 2015 as a rear admiral.

The Ukrainian Technological Society (UTS) of Pittsburgh honored U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy (R-Pa.) with its 2016 Friendship Award. The award was presented at the society’s annual dinner-dance on November 5. The UTS annually recognizes a Ukrainian of the Year or a Friend of Ukraine, individuals of local, national and international stature who have contributed to the Ukrainian community or Ukrainian scholarship, or who have demonstrated significant achievement, which brings recognition and prestige to the Ukrainian community. In accepting his award, Rep. Murphy recalled his visits to the Maidan and the lasting impression this made on him, and he reiterated his support for a strong U.S.-Ukraine relationship.

Sorhi Plochky, one of the foremost historians of the former Soviet Union, authored a new book, a novel called “The Man with the Poison Gun,” based on the true story of KGB assassin Bohdan Stashynsky, who defected to the West in 1961. Stashinsky’s story captured the attention and imagination of the West, inspiring Ian Fleming’s “The Man with the Golden Gun,” but there were always doubts about its veracity. Using previously unavailable files from the CIA, Soviet, German and Polish archives; and memoirs and interviews of former KGB officers, Dr. Plochky was able to put to rest much of the early theories about Stashinsky. The book was served as the U.S. deputy surgeon general; in 2013-2014 he served as acting surgeon general. He retired from the U.S. Public Health Service in 2015 as a rear admiral.

The Foundation of the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America (UMANA) was among the organizations honored on December 15 at a ceremony at the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington. The award was received by Dr. Maria Krycak, president of the UMANA Foundation. The organization was recognized for providing assistance in the training of Ukrainian medical personnel and volunteers who care for wounded soldiers. The UMANA Foundation had partnered with the World Federation of Ukrainian Medical Associations and the California Association to Aid Ukraine to raise funds enabling the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and the Department of Defense Tactical Combat Casualty Care courses to medical personnel in Ukraine. A key component of this training was providing sophisticated technical mannequins – total body simulators as well as specialized anatomical units – for trauma response training.

Mark Funkhouser

Ivan Dzyuba was awarded the 2016 Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky Medal on September 28 in Kyiv as part of the solemn commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre. The award was conferred by the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter.
Our community mourns their passing

During 2016 our community mourned the passing of many of its prominent members: artists, church leaders, soldiers and community activists. Among them were the following, listed in order of their passing.

Orest Kaczmaryszkyj, 74, Genterville, Va.; pursued an Army career after college, serving for 21 years as an infantry, logistics and foreign area officer throughout the world; known for his fluency in six languages and his intrinsic ability to quickly adapt to native dialects; recipient of the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and the Army Good Conduct Medal; with family, friends and soldiers in attendance, was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on May 27 – January 8.

Sophia Lada, 74, Toronto, visual artist who explored several media – painting, iconography, textile art; commissioned by the Sisters of St. Basil the Great in Rome to decorate the chapel of their Motherhouse with icons in the Byzantine style; worked on many commissions and took part in various solo and curated group shows; her works are found in collections in Canada, the United States and Europe – February 14.

Walter Barn鹏sky, 96, Maplewood, N.J., longtime member of the Ukrainian Institute of America, who served multiple terms as president and vice-president; served as head of the non-profit Coordinating Committee to Aid Ukraine; provided invaluable philanthropic support for UPA initiatives in projects, especially those involving the preservation of the institute's landmark building – February 18.

Ivan Lobay, 106, New Haven, Conn., worked as a university professor and mechanical engineer in Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Venezuela, Algeria and the US; was a professor at the College of Engineering at the University of New Haven for 15 years and taught post-graduate courses at Yale University; was appointed official consultant at the Ministry of Education of Ukraine in 1993, at the age of 82 – March 3.

Nina Ilnytzkyj, 91, Oradell, N.J., worked at ProLog Research and Publishing Corp. in New York from 1965-1990, where her duties included administering the journal Suchasnist, as well as translating, proofreading and editing; was instrumental in publishing the memoirs of UPA veteran Ivan Dmytryk, titled “In the Forests of the Lemko Region,” in 1976, as well as those of another soldier, A. Plechen, in 1987, titled “Nine Years in a Bunker” – March 14.

Michael Pap, 93, Ishpeming, Mich., professor at Notre Dame University and at John Carroll University in Cleveland, where he founded the Institute for Soviet and Eastern European Studies in 1961, which became a center for scholarship and public outreach; served as director of human resources and economic development in the administration of Cleveland Mayor Ralph Perk in 1972-1974; founder and longtime head of the Ukrainian American Association of University Professors, president of the United Ukrainian Organizations of Cleveland 1969-1970; honored by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America with its Shevchenko Freedom Award in 1964 – April 1.

John Shmyrko, 79, born in Yaremche, Ukraine; architectural engineer; partner at Weiskopf & Pickworth in New York before founding Shmyrkoyszky Consulting Engineers in 1966; led construction projects up and down the East Coast in addition to high-rises on Park Avenue, Fifth Avenue and Maiden Lane in New York; Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers; was actively involved in the Ukrainian Engineers Society of America and the Ukrainian Institute of America – April 2.

Mykola Katsal, 75, Lviv, Ukraine; graduate of Lviv Polytechnic Institute, Lviv Music School and Lyсенко Lviv State Conservatory; founder; in 1971, and permanent director of the male choral group Dudakiv; Honored Artist of Ukraine – May 26.


John Hvozda, 89, Syracuse, N.Y.; taught political science at Cayuga County Community College 1961-1962, where he created a Model United Nations Conference; engineer at Cayuga County Community College 1963-1982, where he created a Model United Nations Conference; in 2014, returned to Ukraine to serve his country by the popular uprising on the Maidan; killed by sniper fire in an attack launched from Debaltseve – June 27.

Vasyl Slipak, 41, near Debaltseve, Ukraine; born in Lwów; considered a musical prodigy; graduated from the Lwów National Music Academy; moved to France in 1996, where he had a successful career with the Paris National Opera for almost 20 years; in 2016, returned to Ukraine and joined volunteers fighting the Russian-backed forces in the country’s east, saying he was inspired to serve his country by the popular uprising on the Maidan; killed by sniper fire in an attack launched from Debaltseve – June 29.

Orest Subtelny, 91, Morristown, N.J.; member of the Ukrainian Institute of America, who served multiple terms as president and vice-president; served as the time administrator of the publishing house and print shop of the UNA’s newspapers, Svoboda and The Ukrainian Weekly – June 29.

Christine Kozak, 62, Pompton Plains, N.J.; national secretary of the Ukrainian National Association since 2002; oversaw the staff of licensed insurance professionals at the UNA Home Office in Parsippany, N.J.; and organized insurance courses for the UNA’s branch secretaries; added several new policies to the UNA’s portfolio of products; produced the UNA’s life insurance illustration software, co-created the resource center for branch secretaries and field agents and created the UNA rate book tutorial; produced the “UNA and the Community” magazines in 2013 and 2014 – June 27.

Michael Pap

John Hvozda

Christine E. Kozak

Orest Subtelny

Bishop Richard Seminack

Bohdan Hawrylyshyn

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2016: THE YEAR IN REVIEW
**2016: The Year in Review**

At The Ukrainian Weekly: special issues, special focuses

Nothing like starting the year off right! On January 30, Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union made yet another generous donation to The Ukrainian National Association’s two newspapers, Svoboda and The Weekly, in the form of a check $12,500.00. The $25,000 donation was noted in the Press Fund reports of both newspapers. (The credit union had made a donation for that same amount to Svoboda and The Weekly in late 2015: “2015: The Year in Review” published January 17 through February 28.)

Editor-in-Chief Roma Hadzycyw commented that Self Reliance’s donations “have gone a long way toward helping the newspapers continue their mission of informing the world about the Ukrainians and keeping Ukrainian communities in touch with each other.” Thanks to such donations, the complete archives of Svoboda and The Weekly were digitized, and the websites of the two newspapers were redesigned, giving them not only a new look but also a new functionality. (Take a look by visiting svoboda-news.com and ukrweekly.com.)

Self Reliance writes: “I will never forget my long walk home to the Maidan four days after the shooting stopped. As I made my way on February 24, 2014, down now halved home to the Maidan four days after the shooting stopped. As I made my way on February 24, 2014, down now halved...”

The Weekly published a significant address by the well-known analyst Paul Goble, an expert on the USSR and the post-Soviet space, titled “Ten reasons why we must remain anti-communists” (July 10). The speech was delivered at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation’s Triumph of Liberty reception and dinner on June 9 in Washington. The next day, in recognition of his decades of work advancing freedom and opposing tyranny, Mr. Goble was awarded the foundation’s Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom during a wreath-laying ceremony at the Victims of Communism Memorial. As is now traditional, The Weekly marked its own anniversary in January with an editorial. The 2016 editorial, however, was dedicated to two anniversaries, as was evident from its title, “The Weekly at 83; Svoboda at 123.”

Our editorial stated: “As usual, we take the opportunity offered by the annual anniversary of our founding in 1933 to share some thoughts in this editorial space. This year, we thought it would be appropriate to also note the incredible 123 years of uninterrupted service to our community of our sister newspaper, Svoboda.”

And, in this day and age, when we see newspapers dying, or curtailing their publication, left and right, and the fact that the Ukrainian National Association continues to support The Weekly and Svoboda is not noteworthy but praiseworthy as well. Clearly, our community still needs these two newspapers that have served Ukrainians for a combined 206 years...”

Which brings us to a mention about The Ukrainian Weekly Press Fund. We received a total of $26,319 for all of 2016 (almost $4,000 more than in 2015). We greatly appreciate these donations, which ensure that our newspapers continue to be published. During 2016 there was a changing of the guard for The Weekly in Kyiv. Our longtime correspondent Zenon Zawor was replaced as our Kyiv correspondent by Mark Raczkiewycz, who hails from Chicago and has 10 years of journalism experience in Eastern Europe. Our principal free-lance correspondent very quickly made his presence felt – getting the moniker of appointment of Dr. Ulana Suprun, a Ukrainian American radiologist, as Ukraine’s deputy minister of health – and we trust read...
ers are enjoying and benefiting from his fine reporting.

There was sad news to report about one of our columnists. Orysia Paszczak Tracz, a well-known writer and activist who specialized in Ukrainian culture and ethnology, died suddenly on November 10 in Winnipeg, Manitoba; she had been hospitalized briefly after suffering a stroke. An obituary in the Winnipeg Free Press noted that a local broadcaster had once called her “a walking, talking Ukrainian encyclopedia.” Her column for The Weekly, “The Things We Do,” was enjoyed by readers for many years. Many of those columns appeared in Ms. Tracz’s highly popular book “The First Star I See Tonight,” a collection of her articles on Ukrainian Christmas traditions. Less than two months before her passing Ms. Tracz had been honored with two major awards of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress: the provincial Bulava Award in Manitoba and the national Taras Shevchenko Medal, the UCC’s highest honor.

The Weekly’s editor-in-chief also was honored this year, receiving the highest award of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, the Shevchenko Freedom Award, for “commitment to pursuing the truth regarding Ukraine.” The award was presented in September, during the Congress of Ukrainian Americans. At the same time, Ms. Hadzewycz received the Order of Princess Olha (third degree), which had been announced in an August 2015 decree by President Petro Poroshenko, for “contribution to strengthening the international authority of Ukraine, popularization of its historical heritage and modern achievements.” The Ukrainian state honor was presented by Ukraine’s Ambassador to the U.S. Valeriy Chaly at the congress banquet.

In concluding this last section of our “2016: The Year in Review,” we are pleased to report that the number of "Likes" for our Facebook page as of the end of 2016 was 7,029. In comparison, at the end of 2015 we had 4,300. We’d like to reiterate that what we do on Facebook differs greatly from what we offer on the pages of our newspaper. On Facebook, The Weekly shares links to interesting stories from a variety of sources, lets our friends know when a new issue becomes available online; and allows visitors to take a look at our latest front page. We encourage all our readers to subscribe to our newspaper and to like us on Facebook.

Rolling the credits

This edition of “The Year in Review” was prepared by Roma Hadzewycz and Matthew Dubas of The Weekly’s editorial staff; our part-time staffer Christine Syzonenko; our Kyiv correspondent Mark Raczkiewycz; our colleagues Chris Guly, Adrian Bryttan and Deanna Yurchuk; and Ihor Stelmach, our sports columnist. Credit for the layout goes to our design artist, Stepan Slutsky.

The articles in this yearender were prepared based on stories about developments in 2016 that were published in The Weekly. The materials used were articles written by our staffers and regular correspondents, news sources like RFE/RL and Eurasia Daily Monitor, and submissions by local community activists. A huge thank you is hereby sent out to all!