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Task force: U.S. policies must change in response to 'Soviet new thinking'

by Natalia A. Feduschak

NEW YORK — The United States and its Western allies should "welcome the reformist tendencies" that General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev has initiated in the Soviet Union and also "encourage those which promote a moderation of Soviet power," according to a report recently released by a task force of 38 prominent Americans. Meeting regularly for eight months, the task force represents the first concerted effort in the United States to analyze and evaluate the significance of

Mr. Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policies and their implications for East-West relations. The report, titled "How Should America Respond to Gorbachev's Challenge: A Report of the Task Force on Soviet New Thinking," proposes a series of policy recommendations and goals that respond to the new opportunities presented by the changes in the Soviet Union.

The task force, which was made up of a bi-partisan panel of academics, journalists, businesspeople and others, was convened under the auspices of the New (Continued on page 4)

Former political prisoners form new human rights group in Ukraine



Founding members of the Initiative Group for the Release of Ukrainian Prisoners of Conscience: (from left) Vasyl Barladianu, Ivan Hel, Mykhailo Horyn, Zorian Popadiuk and Vyacheslav Chornovil.

by Roman Solchanyk

MUNICH — Five former Soviet political prisoners have formed an Initiative Group for the Release of Ukrainian Prisoners of Conscience in Ukraine.

In a statement dated October 3, the founding members — Vasyl Barladianu, Ivan Hel, Mykhailo Horyn, Zorian Popadiuk and Vyacheslav Chornovil — assert that the existence of prisoners of conscience in the USSR contradicts international agreements signed by the Soviet Union, the essence of the Soviet Constitution, as well as "those democratic changes that have been initiated in the country."

The new group is the first such organization set up in Ukraine since the liquidation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The group's statement maintains that the further course of democratization of Soviet society is in conflict with the reality of the existing political situation:

"The release of some prisoners of conscience by pardoning them does not remove the reason for their incarceration, and it is a way of shifting the blame from people of the Brezhnev-Andropov period to their opponents, who for decades carried on the struggle against the infringement of national and religious rights of citizens. Support for democratization clashes with the barbed wire of the concentration camps, arouses fear and hesitation. The forces of the toiling aktiv of the country could be mobilized by the humane act of releasing prisoners of conscience."

The authors appeal to the Soviet government to:

- (1) eliminate from the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR and the criminal codes of other republics the discriminatory articles that have been used to imprison those who have struggled for democratization;
- (2) rehabilitate prisoners of conscience and compensate them for damages; and
- (3) return to Ukraine the remains of those prisoners of conscience who have died in the camps.

The statement says that the group will provide information about political developments in the country, and announces its readiness to cooperate with other organizations that have similar aims in Ukraine, in other Soviet republics and outside the USSR.

The establishment of a new human-rights monitoring group in Ukraine comes at a time of increased political activity within the community of Soviet dissidents and former political prisoners.

On October 6, only several days after the Ukrainian group issued its statement, four Moscow activists announced the formation of a Soviet branch of the Frankfurt-based International Society for Human Rights. They told Western (Continued on page 15)

Rudenkos to travel to West Germany

As The Weekly was going to press, the External Representation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group reported that Mykola and Raisa Rudenko had received permission to travel to West Germany.

The Rudenkos notified Dr. Anna-Halja Horbatsch of Beerfurth, a town near Frankfurt, West Germany, of the Soviet authorities' action. Dr. Horbatsch received the telegram on Wednesday evening,

October 14.

In mid-May the Rudenkos had stated that they wished to travel to West Germany for medical treatment. It is not known when the couple will arrive in West Germany.

Mr. Rudenko, leader and founding member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, and his wife have each served labor camp and exile terms for "anti-Soviet" activities.

D.C. conference studies Ukrainian image problem

by Yaro Bihun, Maria Rudensky and R.L. Chomiak

WASHINGTON — More than 150 Ukrainian American community activists from the U.S. and Canada spent Columbus Day weekend in Washington discussing the problem of how Ukrainians are perceived during the second annual Leadership Conference sponsored by the The Washington Group, a Ukrainian professionals organization.

The participants also heard a senior Reagan administration official describe the new Soviet "glasnost" and "demokratyzatsiya" policies as falling short of freedom of expression and democratization in the Western understanding of the terms.

The October 9-11 conference, which featured 27 speakers, panelists and moderators, looked at how history, the media and non-Ukrainians perceive Ukraine and Ukrainians, and discussed the possibilities of improving the Ukrainian image.

Schifter on glasnost

Ambassador Richard Schifter, assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, was the keynote speaker of the conference. Addressing the luncheon on October



Ambassador Richard Schifter addresses the Leadership Conference II luncheon.

10, he analyzed the phenomenon of glasnost and demokratyzatsiya in the Soviet Union.

Just as glasnost does not mean free speech, demokratyzatsiya does not mean democratization in the Western sense, he said.

Freedom of speech as the current Soviet leadership sees it, he noted, "is

useful when it is exercised for a specific utilitarian purpose, namely to expose... inefficiency, ineptitude and corruption at the lowest levels of Soviet bureaucracy, where the leadership might otherwise not be able to identify existing problems.

"What the leadership itself does, whether the Soviet troops stay in or withdraw from Afghanistan, what weapons systems are built, who should be elected to the Politburo — none of these questions are appropriate subjects for public discussion. Glasnost, as you can see, has limits."

In this period of glasnost and demokratyzatsiya, Ambassador Schifter said, "dissenters who constitute danger must indeed be severely punished," but those whose views are seen only as a nuisance are tolerated and even utilized. He gave as an example of the latter the publication of the new magazine Glasnost.

The distribution of a few hundred copies of such magazine, he said, "need not land its writers in jail; harassing the writers and otherwise interfering with their work will do. Besides, tens of millions of readers of Western publications are informed of the new phenomenon... a new magazine of dissent, and as the result think more kindly of the Soviet Union. The small number of

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copies produced and the difficulties encountered by persons who publish them are overlooked. Glasnost thus produces significant benefits not only within the country but beyond its borders, as well."

But there are those in the Soviet Union, said Mr. Schifter, who are very much aware of the limits of glasnost. They are the people, he continued, "who consider the maintenance of minority language or culture as central to their life. And these are the dissenters about whom the Soviet leaders prove to be most neurotic, a neurotic so clearly reflected in the extraordinarily severe prison sentences that are imposed on them: seven years of hard labor, followed by five years of internal exile. Please keep in mind that there are persons in the Soviet Union who are now serving sentences of that length for writing poetry in Ukrainian, for having translated and distributed George Orwell's '1984' in Latvian, and similar 'heinous' crimes."

how this problem affects their work.

Dr. Bohachevsky-Chomiak criticized the propagation of the "colorfully ethnographic folk" image of Ukraine's past and present, both within the Ukrainian community and to the world. "We fail to realize that the idealized image of the ethnic does injustice to the past and does not reflect the present," she said.

"A major impediment we face in the image we project is that we do not know enough about ourselves to have others see how interesting, challenging and creative our past has been," she said, citing Hetman Khmelnytsky's alliance with the Russian tsar as an example.

The tsar hesitated in accepting Khmelnytsky's offer, she explained, because the Kozaks brought with them Ukrainian traditions and characteristics "that could not readily be integrated into the tsarist state." Among these traditions was that of the enterprising landlord, merchant and manufacturer — an independent-minded class of people that derived its status from inherited and acquired wealth and not, as in Russia, from a position granted by

the monarch. They also had a knowledge of law and legislative procedure that made the tsar wary. And while the flight from serfdom swelled the Kozak ranks, serfdom was the economic and political cornerstone of the Russian Empire — then, and remains to this day in the guise of a centralized economy and political party control, she said.

"Consciously and unconsciously, tsarist Russian policy tried to wipe out those peculiarly non-Russian features and integrate Ukraine into Russia," Dr. Bohachevsky-Chomiak said.

"The image of the ethnographic Ukraine is not threatening to centralized Russia, the historical characteristics of Ukrainian development are," she stressed. "By failing to recognize this, by the eagerness with which we perpetuate the image of the colorful, charming, folksy Ukrainian, we unconsciously help replace our real ancestors, torn by the ambiguities and opportunities of their position, by the lovable folksy caricature dressed in exotic clothing and performing intricate dance steps.

"In reality it was not the dance, it was the intricate diplomacy, the excruciatingly painful dilemmas of a Gogol, the undercurrent of the thought of a Shevchenko, whose poetry we memorized and whose dairy we overlooked, the final decision of a Skoropadsky in exile, that saved the nation from immersion in the Russian imperial sea."

Dr. Bohachevsky-Chomiak said that a lack of knowledge of Ukraine's past and present also serves to perpetuate the idealized, one-sided, good-and-evil, black-and-white view of Ukrainian history and politics. Ukrainians must learn and acknowledge some of the important points of history that do not fit the idealized view, she said, citing some examples: that their ancestors were not only serfs but helped rule the empires of which they were a part; that Petliura was, after all, a socialist; that Ukrainian nationalism found ready supporters not because of their "love for an abstract Ukraine or a desire for self sacrifice," but because it addressed their basic needs; and that the Ukrainian Insurgent Army fought the Soviets, yes, but it also had an agricultural policy.

"It is unrealistic to impute exclusively idealistic motivation to Ukrainians, and equally unrealistic to have non-Ukrainians accept that explanation. On the contrary, the presentation of such an idealized picture undermines the veracity of the whole story and perpetuates a negative image of the Ukrainian," Dr. Bohachevsky-Chomiak said.

Some of those negative stereotypes, she pointed out, have included being the "rabid savages" to the Polish chauvinists, "disorganized and lazy peasants" to the Germans, "folksy misguided Little Russians" to the Russians, a "potentially anti-Semitic mob" to Jews, and "blind nationalistic anti-Soviets" to Americans.

"The better we know ourselves, the more realistic an image we project, the less credible the negative stereotype," she said. "Our lack of knowledge of our own past limits our understanding of the situation of Ukrainians in the present and helps perpetuate old myths and stereotypes about Ukrainians."

Media perceptions

Mr. Malarek followed Dr. Bohachevsky-Chomiak's historical analysis with a look at how Ukrainians project their image in the media. He asked: "How does the press perceive Ukrainians?"

"I think we're seen as screamers, beggars, pleaders, reactors," he said.

"We're seen as those quaint people in red boots who paint Easter eggs. We are seen as those bizarre people, demonstrating in front of the Soviet Embassy and chanting slogans about a free Ukraine and one dissident or another. We are seen also as Jew-bashers and Jew-killers, anti-Semites, Nazi collaborators, and in general, all-around nasty people."

In other words, the Ukrainians have "horrendous" relations with the media, he said. "We are not getting our story out, we are not being taken seriously, we do not have a credible voice."

There has been some movement in improving that relationship — more so in Canada than in the U.S. — he said and added that "we have a lot of work to do before we have any hope of being taken seriously." He cited some of the things that should and should not be done in that direction, discussing them in more detail during a media panel discussion in the afternoon.

Public perceptions

The next three speakers — all lawyers from Phoenix, Ariz. — came from segments of American society involved in the Ukrainian image problem: Mr. Wolf is active in the Jewish community. Ms. Huntwork described herself as a "WASP" (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant), and Mr. Jejna is a Ukrainian activist known for his work in behalf of Myroslav Medvid, the Ukrainian sailor who tried to defect in New Orleans. The Independent Task Force on ABA-Soviet Relations, which is co-chaired by the three lawyers, has been working against maintaining official ties between the American and Soviet lawyers' organizations.

Mr. Wolf said that the Jewish and Ukrainian communities have many common interests and that it is in the Soviets' interest that the two communities remain antagonists. "And we should not let them do it," he said.

He suggested that the suspicions that divide the two communities can be overcome through contacts and a willingness to learn about each other. In this way, mutual opinions will be based on knowledge and not on ignorance, he said. Citing himself as an example, Mr. Wolf said he did not know about the Great Famine in Ukraine or about the scope of Ukraine's suffering during World War II until he started working on the task force with Mr. Jejna.

Ms. Huntwork, too, became aware of Ukraine for the first time through an interest in a news clipping about Mr. Jejna's efforts on behalf of Mr. Medvid. At about the same time, she also got to know the Jewish community, she said, and noticed that the two communities, both of which backed the goals of the task force, were not communicating. "I was communicating with both of them, but they were not communicating with each other," she said.

Ukrainian defamation is a problem; it is "part of the reaction to any Ukrainian involvement in anything," Ms. Huntwork said. She showed a pamphlet she received after she got involved in Ukrainian affairs. It included pictures and excerpts from a book about pogroms, accusing Petliura and Ukrainians for those atrocities.

"And this is supposed to be relevant to whether I associate with Orest Jejna?" she asked.

Mr. Jejna continued on the defamation theme, by calling on the Jewish and Ukrainian communities to recognize their parallel interests and goals. "The sooner that we realize it, the better off we are," he said.

In talking about the defamation of one group or another, he added, "some-

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At the Ukrainians in politics session (from left): Tanya Gajecky-Wynar, Andrew Fedynsky, Joseph Charyna, Mark Murowany.

Daria Stec, recently re-elected to her second term as president of TWG, opened the conference, welcoming the 150 participants from around the U.S. and Canada. She then introduced the speakers of the morning session, whose presentations on how Ukraine and Ukrainians are perceived in the world was to lay the foundation for the six panel discussions that followed in the afternoon.

Historical perspective

Dr. Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak, of the National Endowment for the Humanities and George Washington University, led off the morning session by giving the perception problem a historical perspective; Victor Malarek, senior writer for the Toronto Globe and Mail, followed with an analysis of these perceptions in the media; and three lawyers — William J. Wolf, Patience T. Huntwork and Orest Jejna — members of the Independent Task Force on ABA-Soviet Relations, spoke about



Victor Malarek speaks on the media image of Ukrainians.



(From left) Orest Deychakiwsky, Jurij Dobczansky, Maria Shust, Ihor Bemko — participants in the session on enhancing the Ukrainian image through information.

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times we fail to realize...that we personally are defamed." He said that the "negative energy" that builds within a person in reaction to such defamation, however, should be channeled in a positive way and not into lashing out in kind. Ukrainians need to build their self-esteem, he said. "We really are a good people."

The afternoon program of the conference had six panel discussions, divided into two sessions. The first set of three looked at Ukrainian participation in U.S. politics, business and government; the last three discussed possible means of enhancing the Ukrainian image through the legal system, the media and other information sources.

Politics

The session on Ukrainians in politics brought together persons with varied and proven experience to share it with the participants.

It was chaired by Andrew Fedynsky, who described how his organizing abilities in actions on behalf of then-Soviet political prisoner Valentyn Moroz brought him to the attention of Congresswoman Mary Rose Oaker of Ohio. He became her legislative assistant and in that capacity, a few years later, had an opportunity to discuss issues with the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Volodymyr Shcherbysky, who was visiting Washington.

Joseph Charyna, a political activist for 40 years and currently a leader of the Ukrainian Massachusetts Democratic State Committee, commented on the minimal participation of Ukrainians in politics. He contended that there is no reason Ukrainians could not elect one of their own to Congress, but they have to "do it as a group...pick a candidate and support him."

He also said the Ukrainian community needs more activists in the political process who would join campaigns, contribute to them, and run for office.

Tanya Gajecy-Wynar told how her small Ukrainian National Women's League of America branch in Denver (28 members, half of them retired) made their fellow citizens aware of Ukrainian issues in a four-phase campaign following the Chernobyl disaster. They mailed hundreds of letters to elected officials, planted a memorial tree in a public park, raised funds and placed a granite memorial bench near the tree, and arranged for the mayor's proclamation of the Chernobyl Commemoration Day. All this, she said, was done with the participation of elected officials and good coverage in the media.

Mark Murowany, who after several years of political activity in the state of Delaware launched his own campaign for elected office, echoed Mr. Charyna's thoughts about the negligible support of Ukrainians in political campaigns. Mr. Murowany said he lost his election by 900 votes. The support of Ukrainians which he had assumed would be there, did not materialize. In contrast, he said, the lieutenant governor of Delaware, who is of Chinese descent, received support for his campaign from Chinese-Americans around the country.

Business

In the business panel, Andrew Bihun, director of market analysis in the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, gave an overview of Ukrainians in high-level positions of U.S. business and business-related U.S. government departments and suggested that the time had come to organize this numerous and powerful

group into a network.

Don Wynnyczak, president of Trade International Inc., gave the participants a flavor of how one can get involved in international trade, especially in dealing with foreign governments.

And Peter Zakharkiw, founder of Bohdan Associates Inc., related his Horatio Alger story of how the sale of his used personal computer through a newspaper classified ad three years ago developed into a Washington area computer sales firm that today employs 65 and has grossed 40 million dollars this year. Following the conference Mr. Zakharkiw was scheduled to fly to Denver to open a Bohdan Associates office there.

The business panel, chaired by Olha Holyoya of J.W. Charles-Bush Securities, also heard a written presentation from Bohdan Denysyk, senior vice-president of Global U.S.A., who was called away on an urgent business trip to Tokyo.

Government contacts

United States government officials must have ready access to authoritative sources of information about Ukrainian matters if they are to handle situations pertaining to Ukraine and Ukrainians effectively. So advised Paul Goble, a top official at the State Department's unit on the Soviet Union.

In the panel discussion on government, Mr. Goble was joined by Rudolf Perina, who oversees Soviet matters at the National Security Council, and Oksana Dragan, chief of the Ukrainian Branch at the Voice of America. The panel was moderated by Katya Chumachenko, special assistant to the assistant secretary for human rights and humanitarian affairs.

Ukrainians have "the best case against Soviet power," Mr. Goble said, "but it's been botched."

Mr. Goble offered some insights on how Ukrainians may improve their image among the general American public. For one thing, he said, "the Ukrainian emigration in the U.S. is viewed as incredibly disorganized." He cited "three mistakes" often committed by Ukrainian community leaders:

- they fight over the past;
- they present issues negatively, that is, Americans are informed about what Ukrainians oppose — never what they support — and Ukrainians concentrate on issues that they can only fail at;
- they use vocabulary that is "simply off-putting" and inappropriate to the context in which it is used.

"Why should you constantly have a chip on your shoulder?" Mr. Goble asked. He also chided Ukrainians who operate with "a militance and militarism" that is not conducive to advancing their cause.

To counteract these unproductive behaviors, a little self-confidence would be advisable. But Ukrainians sometimes seem capable of boosting their self-image solely through an inordinate amount of "feel-good activities," Mr. Goble observed. These exercises are not wrong or valueless in and of themselves, but they are not the most effective ways of achieving the community's goals.

Mr. Goble advised that the following are musts:

- quick response to crises, ideally, tapping already established and centrally accessible resources, "so you don't have to start from scratch every time" in telling the Ukrainian story or in having government officials hunt down the appropriate experts or spokespersons;
- knowledge of what is wanted and where in the government it should be sent, and information submissions to government offices should be brief and

easily understood.

Mr. Goble also commented on the issue of collective guilt, a concept that has recently received much attention in connection with the war crimes trial of John Demjanjuk. Prefacing his remarks by saying that he does not know whether Mr. Demjanjuk is guilty or innocent, but that the defendant deserves a fair trial, Mr. Goble said that "to the extent that people lash themselves to one mast [on an issue such as Demjanjuk's guilt or innocence], that's a risk."

He also counseled Ukrainians not to claim that the Millennium of 1988 is exclusively a Ukrainian anniversary. "Of course it's yours, but it's not yours alone," he said.

Mr. Perina, who is National Security Council director for European and Soviet Affairs, offered tips on approaching government officials. Personal visits are almost always preferred over letters. Issues must be presented with as much specificity as possible, and constant follow-up is essential.

When it comes to presenting the Ukrainian message to Ukrainians in Ukraine and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, a key vehicle is VOA, said Ms. Dragan, who has led the 29-member Ukrainian VOA staff for 10 years. The staffers are "a microcosm" of the Ukrainian community in America, she explained. They offer listeners a diverse array of feature programs, as well as conventional news.

"The thirst for knowledge of the West is tremendous," said Ms. Dragan, who just returned from six weeks in Kiev with the U.S. Information Agency's "Information U.S.A." exhibit. And while Americans can learn much from studying the Soviet press and other sources of information about Ukrainians' existence in Ukraine, there is nothing like actually visiting the country, she said.

The legal system

A suit against CBS and Chrysler over the production and broadcast of "Escape from Sobibor" was discussed during the panel dealing with using the legal system to enhance the Ukrainian image. The suit, brought by the Delaware chapter of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America in an effort to limit the docu-drama's negative fallout on Ukrainians, was described by George Pazuniak, a Wilmington, Del., lawyer.

Contrary to the impression made by the docu-drama, historical evidence indicates that not all Sobibor guards were Ukrainian, nor did they all volunteer for guard duty, Mr. Pazuniak said. "Half the truth is the same as misrepresentation," he added.

Lawyer Patience Huntwork and Orest Jejna, who spoke in the morning session, also participated in the panel discussion.

Using the media

To suggest ways to enhance the Ukrainian image in the media, the conference program offered a panel comprising Mr. Malarek of the Toronto Globe and Mail, Andriy Bilyk of Continuum Communications, and James Sawchuk of Sawtel International, with Myron Wasyluk, director of the Ukrainian National Information Service in Washington, as moderator.

All three panelists stressed the importance of professionally conducted public relations campaigns, cultivation of media contacts in advance, and delivery of concise and clear press releases to the editors.

Mr. Malarek also pointed out that well-written letters to the editor are effective, even if they do not get published. These letters are read, he

said, and if a reporter generates too many letters which show errors in his coverage, that is noted on his record.

Mr. Sawchuk said it was important to know the types of stories a given station likes to broadcast and tailor Ukrainian offerings to that angle.

Mr. Bilyk presented a recent case study from Scranton, Pa., where the Ukrainians were able to use a visit by Russian Orthodox clergymen from Moscow to draw the media's attention to the plight of Ukrainian Churches in the Soviet Union.

Information

Jurij Dobczansky, of the Library of Congress, was moderator of the information panel, which included Orest Deychakiwsky, staff member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission); Ihor Bemko, a Texas A&M University history lecturer who served as a staff researcher on the Ukrainian Famine Commission; and Maria Shust of The Ukrainian Museum in New York.

Mr. Deychakiwsky said that some Ukrainian information gathering and disseminating groups have worked well with the Helsinki Commission in providing it with data on human-rights developments in Ukraine. He mentioned the World Congress of Free Ukrainians, the External Representation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, and Smoloskyp as effective sources.

What the Ukrainian community sorely needs, he said, is an office in Washington, with a small but professional staff to serve as an information conduit between the community and the U.S. government and media.

Mr. Bemko described some of his findings as he researched government cables, memoranda, letters and memoranda of conversations from the 1920s through the 1940s. He described the results of his research for the U.S. Ukrainian Famine Commission as "fascinating." The documents suggest, for example, that Walter Duranty's slanted reporting on the Ukrainian famine reflected more what his employers wanted to see in The New York Times than his own bias, he said.

On another point, Mr. Bemko noted that human-rights issues were not considered in the internal government debate in the 1920s and 1930s on whether to recognize the Soviet Union or not. The predominant issue was whether the Soviet government would pay compensation for expropriated American firms.

And in the early 1940s, he said, it appears the State Department had a better understanding of the nature of Ukrainian organizations in the U.S. than the FBI, which was on the lookout for possible Nazi saboteurs among Ukrainians.

Ms. Shust described The Ukrainian Museum's role as a repository of artifacts and information on Ukrainian culture in the U.S. and pointed out some of the problems it faces: the building it now occupies is "closet-size"; the bilingual nature of the institution has special requirements in the hiring of staff and in preparing exhibit materials and publications; and the need for more funds.

Benefit gala

The day's activities were capped with a gala banquet and dance sponsored jointly by The Washington Group and the Ukrainian American Bar Association in the Grand Ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel. Approximately 250 people attended the gala, the proceeds from which went to the scholarship funds of the two organizations.