



**THE WASHINGTON GROUP**

An Association of Ukrainian-American Professionals

**POSITION PAPERS**

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Washington Group strongly supports the proposition that the promotion of human rights and individual liberties world wide should be an integral component of US foreign policy. We believe that peace and security, on the one hand, and respect for human rights are inextricably connected. Within this context, we stress our belief that the Helsinki process of the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is of paramount importance in the achievement of lasting peace and security among nations and of the promotion of human rights. We also reiterate our strong support for the Helsinki process vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

One of the crucial areas of our concern in US human rights policy towards the Soviet Union is the human rights situation in Ukraine. We commend the United States government- both in its bilateral initiatives and in unilateral fora such as the CSCE- and in particular the US Congress, for their persistent efforts to raise the plight of individual Ukrainian dissidents and political prisoners; the suppressed Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox churches, which are denied a legal existence in the Soviet Union; and the denial of cultural and linguistic rights to Ukrainians. We urge that the United States government not only continue, but increase its efforts to bring to the Soviet government's attention both the denial of human rights to individuals and the suppression of national rights in Ukraine.

While we note some improvement in the general human rights picture in the Soviet Union, including Ukraine--such as the release of approximately half of the known political prisoners, an increase in emigration and family visits, and a greater tolerance of free expression which is consistent with the Soviet leadership's campaign for more openness and democratization--Soviet compliance with its international human rights commitments, including the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, remains inadequate.

We would like to register the following areas of special concern:

(1) the continued imprisonment of individual Ukrainian human and national rights activists who are being penalized for exercising their rights to free expression;

(2) the continued suppression of the underground Ukrainian Catholic church, the largest banned religious denomination in the Soviet Union, and the continued denial of a legal existence to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church;

(3) the continuing policies of Russification in Ukraine (the denial of cultural and linguistic identity), despite some limited recent improvement in this area; and

(4) the continuing restrictions on emigration, family reunification, family visits and travel, as well as restrictions on postal communications.

## OPENING OF THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE IN KIEV

The Washington Group strongly supports the opening of a US Consulate in Kiev, Ukraine. A Consulate in the Ukrainian capital would provide the US with a window into the largest non-Russian republic in the Soviet Union. Moreover, by opening a Consulate in Kiev, the US government would be taking a major step toward ending the Soviet-imposed

political and diplomatic isolation of the 40 million Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR.

Maintaining an official presence in Kiev would be of great value to the United States. Contacts with the dissident and refusenik communities would be widened and Soviet compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords could be monitored

more closely. The Consulate would give the United States the ability to measure more accurately the impact of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in what is one of the most important agricultural and industrial regions of the USSR. It would assist US companies wishing to do business in the area and it would provide citizen services for the many Americans touring the area or with family ties there.

For some fifteen years the US has been preparing to open a Consulate in Kiev. In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US suspended plans to open the Consulate as one of the sanctions it imposed against the USSR. With the revival of more cordial US-Soviet relations initiated by the 1985 Geneva Summit, US and Soviet leaders renewed plans to open reciprocal consulates in Kiev and New York City. However, the opening of the Consulate in Kiev was again delayed due to the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986, followed by revelations of significant security breaches at the US Embassy in Moscow, and the budget cuts imposed by the Gramm-Rudman Act.

Apparently the latest obstacles to the opening of a US consulate in Kiev have once again

been overcome. Recently, Secretary of State George Shultz visited Kiev, and the Consulate was a high priority item at the May 1988 Moscow Summit between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. The key to opening the Consulate could be to set it up as an "unclassified" Consulate, which would make it possible to bypass the security and budget requirements for consulates and embassies. Ambassador Richard Schifter, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, points out that the most recent plans for the Kiev Consulate call for a staff of only five or six Americans, who would handle only unclassified information. All classified information would continue to go via Moscow.

As Secretary of State Shultz recently told the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee: "We can no more claim that our view from Moscow accurately represents the progress of *perestroika*, than a foreigner could claim to understand the mood of the American people on the basis of the Washington gossip." Certainly a thorough understanding of events in Ukraine is indispensable in formulating US foreign policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING

### Current State

In her 1988 report on the state of humanities in the United States, Lynne Cheney, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, noted that, in the past two decades, the number of college students majoring in foreign languages dropped 29 percent.

A report compiled by the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages shows that, in 1986, enrollment in Russian courses, the most commonly taught Slavic language in the US, totalled approximately 34,000 students, or 7,000 fewer than 20 years earlier.

### Importance of Foreign Language Training

Knowledge of foreign languages is as much a part of America's strategy to compete in the world marketplace as the production of quality goods for export. It is no less important for effective diplomatic activities, for research in cultures of present and potential friends and enemies of the United States, and for the clear dissemination of American points of view throughout the world.

### Difficulties of Foreign Language Training

Dan Davidson, the director of the American Council of Teachers of Russian, estimates that level-3 competency in a language like Russian (where level-5 is competency of a native speaker), requires between 1,500 and 2,000 hours of training. An average American college graduate majoring in a

Slavic language reaches level 1 or level 2, and some of them increase their proficiency through subsequent training and especially lengthy stays in the country where the given language is spoken.

While in the Soviet Union some of the best primary and secondary schools are those where all instruction is in English, foreign language training in the US, with few exceptions, is limited to a few hours a week in schools, leading to just enough proficiency to satisfy a foreign language requirement.

### **Importance of Non-Russian Languages of the USSR**

Russian is the *lingua franca* of the USSR, but it is the native language of only half of the country's population. Moreover, there is no official language for the entire country, and since 1987 there has been a broad move to make the native languages of Soviet republics official languages of those republics. In order to communicate throughout all of the Soviet Union, knowledge of Russian is adequate; in order to communicate effectively, knowledge of the language of the area is a must. Again, this applies to diplomacy, intelligence gathering, dissemination of information, or business. (In a move to improve the Soviet economy, the present leadership is encouraging decentralization and self-accounting of enterprises by allowing local businesses to conclude agreements directly with foreign firms. Estonia is even lobbying for its own convertible currency to maintain trade links with the West. Success of a potential business deal with an Estonian firm would thus not be assured if one were to rely on Russian, rather than Estonian, in negotiations.

### **Existing Language Training Resources in the US**

It would not be practical to introduce tens of foreign languages into the curricula of American schools. It would be useful and cost-effective to "fertilize" foreign-language training facilities that already exist in the U.S. and to encourage others to take root.

Most of the multi-national (or "emigre", or "ethnic") communities in the United States organize and maintain native-language schools. Armenians in California, for example, maintain all-day accredited private schools. Ukrainians maintain dozens of Saturday schools in most areas of Ukrainian settlement, and four all-day schools in larger cities.

These schools vary in quality, but they do teach the rudiments of the native language and culture, on which some (too few!) of their graduates are able to build and perfect their language proficiency subsequently.

A state or national policy to recognize these "ethnic" or "emigre" schools as a valued resource through subsidies or credits for the purchase of language-training equipment (language lab materials, textbooks) would enhance the attractiveness and prestige of the existing ones, and stimulate establishment of new ones.

The unparalleled spread of museums, symphony orchestras, theatrical groups, and other cultural enterprises throughout the United States in the past two decades can be directly traced to the work of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In the 1960s, college- and graduate school-level language and area studies received a boost from the National Defense Education Act.

A focused policy to enhance the native-language schools in the US would go a long way toward a significant rise in foreign language proficiency for the benefit of effective US relations and communications with the USSR.

## CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES

### Contacts Between an Open and a Closed Society

The policy of the United States has traditionally been one of open borders and free cultural exchanges. When dealing with governments that seek to maintain closed societies, however, it has been necessary to develop formal machinery to handle the exchanges that in other parts of the world develop freely and mutually.

Contacts between the United States and the USSR and other Eastern European states have traditionally been controlled by the closed societies. The opportunity to establish closer contacts is determined in large measure by the internal politics in the USSR. Each thaw in that country facilitates the institution or the progress of closer contacts between the governments, organizations and citizens of both countries.

Since the first policies of de-Stalinization and Khrushchevian thaw, cultural exchanges have been initiated through academic exchange. American counterparts of Soviet and Eastern European scholars and cultural leaders can travel abroad in pursuit of their interests only if they have the official sanction of their government. American scholars also need official Soviet permission to pursue their cultural goals in the Soviet Union. For this reason the US and the USSR signed the first cultural exchange agreements some twenty years ago. These agreements provide for the exchange of scholars on a one-to-one basis.

### Changes Since Glasnost

There was also some provision for the exchange of citizen groups, but the flow of that exchange depended upon the vagaries of the wishes of the Soviet certification groups. Lately, under the Reagan administration and the fledgling policies of glasnost in the Soviet Union, the scope of the exchanges has been expanded to include not only scholars, but also more groups of citizens, sister-city exchanges, and related programs. Of great

significance is the agreement to exchange 1,500 high school students signed in October 1988.

After a hiatus of seven years, the governments have renewed and increased the number of official cultural exhibits and travelling shows. The first travelling library book exhibits opened in Washington and in Novosibirsk in September 1988.

### Benefits for the US

These programs, when fully implemented and wisely thought out, benefit US society in general, and its elements whose roots are in what today is the Soviet Union, such as the Ukrainian community in America, and they should be supported. They offer a chance to expose Soviet visitors to the American tradition of open boundaries. They enable groups such as Ukrainian-Americans to know more about the country from which their ancestors came. These exchanges provide Soviet citizens, Ukrainians among them, with some direct contact with America and, ideally, with some sense of the Ukrainian role in the life of America.

### Requirements of Effective Programs

In promoting cultural exchanges, no effort should be spared to ensure that the exchanges are not be limited to the Russian Republic. The Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education of the Ukrainian SSR, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ukraina Society (Association for Cultural Relations with Ukrainians Abroad) should be actively involved in planning specific programs and in selecting groups or individuals for travel to the US

American programs, in turn, should not be limited to Moscow, Leningrad, or other major Russian cities and the central institutions located in them. Ukraine, with its 50 million inhabitants, with its ancient language, history and culture -- the Second Republic of the USSR, the leading center for computer science and geriatrics research in

the Soviet Union, and the world leader in welding research and applications-- should be included in virtually all exchange program venues.

It was the pressure of the Ukrainian-American community that led to the inclusion of Ukrainian-speaking guides for the Information USA exhibit in Kiev in 1987. Their presence (as well as the American Ambassador's opening remarks delivered in Ukrainian) enhanced immeasurably the success of this exhibit in the Ukrainian capital and increased respect for the United States as a truly pluralist society. This, of course, should have been obvious to the exhibit organizers and the community's pressure should not have been necessary.

Ukrainian-Americans, as individuals and through organizations, have participated in various private and government sponsored exchange efforts. They want to ensure that Ukrainians from the Soviet Union visiting the United States, in whatever capacity, be made aware of Ukrainian-American communities in the US, and their endeavors to preserve their Ukrainian heritage

## US COMMISSION ON THE UKRAINE FAMINE

The US Commission on the Ukraine Famine began work in 1986 to document and publicize Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's genocide of 1932-33 against the Ukrainian nation, in which millions of lives were lost in a purely man-made famine.

The Commission has held public hearings to gather eyewitness testimony in Washington, D. C., California, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Arizona. It has published a 550-page *Report to Congress*, two volumes of public hearings, and a guide for secondary school teachers. It has worked closely with state and local education officials to include material on the Ukrainian famine in public school curricula in New York and California and has participated in teachers' conferences in numerous states.

The Commission has also lectured widely and published extensively in scholarly

Formal institutional ties commit the Soviet Union to responsibility to Ukraine. It would be politic and wise to call on these ties and to use existing formal mechanisms in dealing with the USSR in all capacities as American citizens e.g. deal with the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture if a concert or a tour is being planned; ask the Ministry of Education to send Ukrainian-speaking students to the US; request Ukrainians to represent the USSR in areas where there are concentrations of persons of Ukrainian origin.

The strength and attractiveness of the American system lies in its openness which all our members embody. The expansion of all contacts with Ukrainians, Soviet and non-Soviet alike, by all means possible to promote genuine understanding among our people is a goal for each American to pursue in all opportunities that present themselves.

publications, including the *International Journal of Oral History*, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, and the *Harvard Ukrainian Studies Journal*. In addition to its public hearings, the Commission has compiled over 200 in-depth oral histories from eyewitnesses of the famine, which it is currently preparing for publication in the original language, and this will constitute a major body of source material for future scholarship on this tragedy.

Thanks to the continued support for the Commission's efforts from all segments of the Ukrainian-American community, the Commission's mandate was extended by PL100-340 to June 22, 1990. In the next two years, it is devoting the bulk of its efforts to its oral history project, research on published eyewitness accounts, foreign

diplomatic dispatches on the famine, and curriculum development.

The Ukrainian-American community's sustained interest in the work of the US Commission on the Ukraine Famine is evidenced by the fact that, in the absence of public funding, it has completely taken over the financial burden of paying for its work through private contributions. The community believes, however, that a work of this importance continues to deserve government funding to help it complete its work.

The community applauds the Commission's efforts in both scholarly research and raising public consciousness about this tragic chapter in the history of the Ukrainian SSR and considers the Commission's continuation a matter of vital concern.

However, growing public recognition of the fact that the Ukrainian famine stands alongside the Jewish Holocaust and the Armenian Massacres as one of this century's most heinous examples of genocide inevitably raises the issue of inclusion of the Ukrainian Famine in the Holocaust Museum, currently being built on the Mall, especially in view of its planned inclusion of the Armenian Massacres.

The Ukrainian-American community believes that the US Holocaust Commission has shown admirable sensitivity to broader issues of collective victimization in including the Armenian Massacres and believes that doing likewise with an exhibit on the Ukrainian genocide would further the development of friendship and understanding between the Jewish and Ukrainian communities as well as to further the museum's teaching mission by placing the Holocaust within the context of major twentieth century genocides.