

# *Changing with the times to be the leader in the future*

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What an exciting time it was!

If I were to characterize the efforts of the first half of this term, I would say: “Changing with the times”. The fruits of our labor had been harvested, and Ukraine was an independent country. The multitude of changes occurring in Ukraine obviously impacted the Ukrainian communities in the diaspora and in particular, Washington, our nation’s capital, which seemed to be the most popular destination for visiting Ukrainians. At the onset of these changes, TWG was ready, responding to the needs of the community when the call came for organizing any and all events relating to Ukraine. But the question the TWG administration now had to answer was: to which new initiatives should TWG turn its energy??

We Ukrainians knew perhaps better than anyone else that the world was changing radically. TWG didn’t want to simply live out of the past, but wanted to be the leading association of the future. To develop a strategic plan for TWG, the Board of Directors sponsored a management retreat/seminar at the Coolfont Resort in West Virginia, where we undertook a systematic planning process to explore the directions we could take.

What took place in the second half of this term greatly exceeded our hopes and expectations, with TWG bringing events of a truly outstanding nature to the public. Ours was a time when there was no more Ukrainian SSR, just Ukraine.

The 1992 Leadership Conference dealt with this “New World Order”. Attending diplomats, scholars, business people, and journalists — all had first-hand knowledge of the new order in Ukraine. Our “Breakfast Speaker Series”, with guests such as Congressman David Bonior (D-Mich.), former CIA Director William Colby, and Republican Party strategist John Sears, garnered excellent reviews, especially from those people for whom evening

events were difficult to attend. The Friday Evening Forums similarly attracted top-notch speakers such as Bohdan Havrylyshyn, Yuri Shcherbak, and Susan Eisenhower, and gave our members an opportunity for social, cultural, and professional enrichment. Our Anniversary of Ukrainian Independence Day (January 22) dinner at Fort Myer, featuring then-Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney as guest speaker, was one of the highlights of the year for the Ukrainian community.

When the former Soviet Union dissolved, Hungary was among the first European countries to recognize newly-independent Ukraine. In Washington, that reality was recognized and celebrated at a gala banquet held under the auspices of The Washington Group, and hosted by the Hungarian Ambassador to the U.S., who graciously opened the Embassy to the Ukrainian community.

We welcomed Ambassadors' incoming and out-going and established relations with each. Our second leadership conference drew a national audience as we examined the role of U.S.-Ukraine relations.

TWG indeed continued to be the prominent Ukrainian organization. We made a concerted effort to strike a balance — focusing on the cultural, business, political, and social needs of our members here, as well as doing our share to impact the situation in Ukraine. Forums with representatives of various levels of government, both Ukrainian and American, helped establish a network of possibilities. Concentrating on building relationships with various other groups proved to be successful and good for our community.

TWG grew to be a dynamic organization, constantly regrouping in order to meet the challenges of the day. We hosted Peace Walkers, IMI Kiev MBA candidates, and political strategists speaking on the Ukrainian vote in the 1992 election. We welcomed noted guests such as Ambassadors Roman Popadiuk and Oleh Bilorus, Consul General Jon Gundersen, Ivan Pliushch, Kostyantyn Morozov, Oleksandr Honcharenko, Volodymyr Mokry, Robert Cullen, Myron Kuropas, Charles William Maynes, editor of the distinguished periodical *Foreign Policy* (and later president of the Eurasia Foundation), and Vyacheslav Briukhovetsky. We sponsored art exhibits, benefit concerts for Chernobyl victims, producing TWG directories, organizing BBQs, brewery tours, Christmas parties, a bon voyage party for the first Peace Corps volunteers to Ukraine, screenings of documentary films and Shevchenko readings. Through its active agenda, TWG took a

place at the forefront of Ukrainian organizations, not just in the Washington area, but in North America.