



UKRAINE MISSION REPORT

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UKRAINE MISSION REPORT

May 7- June 1, 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Primary Mandate:** To evaluate the situation in the region surrounding the Crimea and assess the question of whether residents of the recently annexed region were able or willing to vote in the May 25th presidential election in Ukraine.
- **Secondary Mandate:** Meet with representatives of the minority cultural communities to discuss their concerns regarding reported discrimination.
- **Tertiary Mandate:** Meet with local and national religious leaders to discuss whether they felt they had a role to play in easing political and social tensions in Ukraine.
- **Primary Conclusion:** While the new government of Ukraine did what it could to make it possible for residents of Crimea to vote in the election, the peninsula remained occupied territory throughout the campaign. While information on the campaign was available through television, radio and the internet, the Russians would not allow Ukrainian polling stations to be set up in the Crimea as they are in more than 100 other countries (nor were candidates allowed to campaign there) which meant a lengthy, expensive and troublesome cross-border excursion for the few who were willing to make the attempt, first to cross to register then to cross again to vote.
- **Secondary Conclusion:** After meetings with representatives of the Roma, Tatar, Polish, Slavic, German, Muslim, Jewish and Russian communities a common thread emerged - the fear of an emerging right-wing, extremist element to society
- **Tertiary Conclusion:** Leaders from all religious groups understand the gravity of the situation and have been working together to ease tensions. However there is not always complete agreement and sometimes religion has emerged as a political tool, supporting political candidates in elections, as well as even supporting unrest, especially most recently the unrest in the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine where the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) is predominant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ukraine's Central Elections Commission should consider legislation to allow for on-line voter registration to save people the cost of sometimes extensive and expensive travel just to register.
- Increased political and government communication with minority groups and cultural associations throughout Ukraine, particularly to address the issue of "east versus west" stereotyping.
- Ukraine's school systems should include linguistic, cultural and historical teachings of minority groups to broaden the outlook of all Ukrainians, to be more accepting of differing cultures and improve government messaging on the importance of cultural and linguistic inclusivity in Ukrainian society with consultations with the regions for concerns.
- Because language has been made to be a political issue, Russian and other minority languages should be given increased politically acceptable rights and further legal protection in regions where numbers warrant, to teach and enrich the knowledge of the young on how to read and write their language.
- Victims of circumstance must be allowed to safely leave eastern Ukraine's troubled regions.
- The Government of Ukraine must fully investigate the deaths on May 2nd in Odessa and other similar incidents in other regions, in partnership with European Union investigators to assure transparency.
- The government must examine and address international concerns about the awareness of the growth of ultra-nationalist groups in Europe, something that also seems to be growing in Ukraine, especially furthering understanding of those that have exhibited neo-Nazi tendencies.
- The government must examine and address national concerns for the importance of a pan-Ukraine Orthodox Patriarch to minimize outside influences and re-establish Kyiv's religious supremacy as the birthplace of Orthodoxy.
- An emissary should be sent to Moscow for meetings with Patriarch Kirill on Ukrainian issues to see mutually understood depoliticizing of religious activities in Ukraine.
- An emissary should be sent to Turkey to meet with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople to discuss to discuss the direction of the Orthodox Churches and to work to better understand Orthodoxy's political influences.

UKRAINE MISSION PREMISE

I had been given two mandates. My mission, the purpose of my visit was very specific. I was asked to explore the impact of the March referendum in Crimea on the ability of Crimean Tatars and other minorities to vote in the early presidential election in Ukraine and how best to ensure information details were dispersed to Crimea.

I felt that it was important to investigate news stories of discrimination against minorities (Russian-speaking and Tatar) both in the Crimea and mainland Ukraine because of the large number of minority communities in both areas.

Additionally I felt it would be helpful to meet with religious leaders to determine if there was a role they could play, both in eastern Ukraine and nation-wide in easing tensions. In a situation where there was distrust of politicians of all political parties there remained the distinct possibility that the religious leaders, who have the trust of the population, could be a unifying force.

I began by meeting Metropolitan Onufry, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate or MP and Moscow Patriarchate Priest Maxim in Kherson, Muslim Iman Kazim (also in Kherson), and then with numerous political and community leaders which of course included Tatar leadership.

I also talked to Father Michael Kit of Kharkiv. Father Michael Kit is the former priest at St. Barbara's Cathedral in Edmonton and has been in Kharkiv for a number of years, serving as a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (MP). Father Michael was able to give insight into the relationship of church and society in Ukraine from his perspective in Kharkiv.

Father Michael Kit stated emphatically that the only ones interested in fermenting linguistic discord are the "politicians", for self-serving electoral purposes. He further stated that problems that had been reported in the Kharkiv area were caused by a very small radical group of outsiders.

Each religious and cultural leader I spoke with stated that there is no linguistic or ethnic discord in Ukraine, that there are no impediments to anyone speaking the language of their choice. However, they observed that language, particularly for Russian-speaking regions, had been made an issue by politicians. As such there is political discussion on whether the predominant minority language (Russian) should be supported officially in some regions with Ukrainian remaining the national language. Not necessarily official bilingualism as practiced in Canada, but an official recognition of regional differences.

I observed that the religious authorities in Ukraine, be they Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish or another, have a very strong connection with their faith communities, allowing them to be an influencing factor for politics and community stability.

The May 25 Election and Crimea

The Russian annexation of Crimea made campaigning and voting in the region problematic. As far as Russia was concerned, the Crimea was no longer part of Ukraine. Therefore, although Ukrainian expatriates are allowed to vote in presidential elections, and Ukraine has provisions for 114 polling stations in 75 foreign countries and regions, Russia would not allow polling stations to be set up in Crimea. Nor was permission given to compile lists of eligible Crimean voters who could then have left the area to vote outside the region.

Awareness

Russian media in Crimea were silent on advising citizens of the process of how to register and vote in the Ukrainian presidential election, but Ukrainian television and radio was still being received in the Crimea and provided necessary information. Also, media in Kherson area, just beyond the Crimean border, advertised the process by which Crimeans could cast their ballots.

I was told that the Tatar community was active in social media, but when I asked to observe what was posted, there appeared to be no comments on the election or information on how to register or vote. I suggested that someone should be providing that information in chat rooms and similar forums.

I met with Muslim Iman Kazim and Orthodox Priest Maxim stressing (urging) the necessity for information to be dispersed in the Crimea through their networks, which I believe they took notice or were already doing.

I also met with community Tatar leader businessman Ibragim Sureymanov, who has his own extensive community network in the Crimea and Ukraine, urging the same action be taken, to ensure potential voters were made aware of their rights.

Overall, I believe that Crimean residents were informed as to how they could take part in the electoral process. The barriers to do so were distance, travel cost, travel security and fear of revealing the purpose of travel at the border crossings.

Religion

The different Crimean religious groups associate with each other as can be seen in their cooperation in the annual ceremonies in Kherson in remembrance of the Victims of Totalitarianism at the memorial monument, which lists the names of many victims. Attending the ceremony was the mayor, and the local Member of Parliament, who spoke after the mayor. Also speaking at length was Tatar leader Ibragim Sureymanov. Religious leaders taking part included an Archbishop from Kyiv (who spoke in Ukrainian), Iman Kazim and Father Maxim.

I am told that when Orthodox churches were burned in the Crimea, the Muslim Mosques were opened for the Orthodox to use for their services.

However, throughout Ukraine, in town after town, city after city, there is a massive rebuilding and renovation of churches. The money for this construction is apparently coming from the politicians.

I visited one such old cathedral under renovation, and saw first-hand very costly work, from in-floor heating pipe networks to a brand new carillon bell set and massive chandeliers, easily several hundred thousand dollars of work at a time when so many are so poor. In this case the priest gives credit to where the money comes from - the local Party of Regions Member of Parliament!

I am told that vast sums of money have been channelled to church construction to get church support from the pulpit for the chosen candidate to be elected. This seems especially prevalent in Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate churches. While regular church attendance is low, almost all attend for special occasions: to baptize children, marriages, funerals, festivals such as Christmas and Easter. The church is an extremely important influence on the lives of all Ukrainians.

While it is well known that the Orthodox religious leaders do regularly involve themselves in elections, giving support to various candidates, they also have been involved in the ongoing strife, particularly in Odessa, where it was said that the Moscow Patriarchate priest lead an extremely provocative march of pro-Russian anti-EuroMaidan demonstrators just before (and probably inciting) the tragic death of some 50 persons in Odessa on May 2nd. Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk should be investigated to see if similar incidents of church involvement happened there.

Resistance – Intimidation

There were other factors affecting the voter turnout in the Crimea, beyond the Russian refusal in allowing registration and voting. There were armoured troop carriers with Russian soldiers in abundance, as well as many more numerous military checkpoints on the roads of Crimea.

The annual ceremonies in the Crimea for the Victims of Totalitarianism were marred by very low flying Russian military helicopters, presumably to intimidate those who were gathering for the service. The choppers were flying so low that people could readily read their identification numbers.

As well, there was intimidation at the newly established border crossings between Crimea and Ukraine. Those departing Crimea were asked the purpose of their visit to Ukraine, and if the response was “to register for voting” were harassed by the border guards and disparaged. There was also the implication that those leaving Crimea to register to vote might not be allowed to return.

Security- Financial

Financial considerations were perhaps the primary reason why most Crimeans did not register and vote. To have to travel, first to register then later to vote, placed a burden of both time and money that was beyond the means of many. Perhaps an online registration system would have been more effective so that a potential voter would only have had to cross the border once.

During the election period there seemed to be an organized campaign of intimidation taking place in the Crimea, including:

- Doors on Tatar houses being marked with crosses in the night (the Tatars are Muslim);
- Funding for Tatar education being cut off;
- Russian soldiers in specialized camouflaged uniforms, described by the locals as “little green men” were seemingly everywhere; and
- It was reported that three abducted Catholic priests were held and then forced out of Crimea.

It was also reported that Tartars should not travel by bus due to security issues and difficulties thought to happen at the border and travelling to the border. I was also told that a law had been put in place restricting the number of people allowed to travel together. It was suggested that they might consider travelling by train, which should be safer and would not be held at the border by traffic holdups.

Turnout

The voter turnout from the Crimea, with a population of approximately 1.8 million was expected to be very low due to the voters of the peninsula having been effectively disenfranchised by the Russian annexation. While Crimeans had the right to vote in the Ukrainian election, the majority felt intimidated or could not afford to travel to do so.

While voter turnout was slightly more than 60% nationwide (excluding Crimea where there were no polling stations) participation did vary widely according to region. In eastern Ukraine where there had been unrest, many voters chose to stay away from the polls, perhaps out of fear. For example, turnout in Odessa was 46%, in Luhansk 39% and in Donetsk only 15%.

LINGUISTIC MINORITY ISSUES

It has been mentioned before that our Canadian concept of linguistic duality, two official languages (French and English) recognized constitutionally is rather foreign to Ukrainians. Ukraine is a very diverse and multicultural country whose citizens, for the most part, do not see a need to provide additional constitutional protection for minority languages when there is not a problem now and minority communities co-exist without discourse. While Russian is the largest of the minority languages, Ukraine has many minorities numerically, some 130 nationalities, including Tatars, Hungarians, Georgians, Romanians, Belarusians, Germans, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Poles and Jews. I believe it is important to note that Russian-speaking Ukrainians, due to the history of their region, find it offensive to consider them as a minority. Ukraine has ample legislative protection for minorities against discrimination and seeks to involve minority communities fully in its society.

There will always be those who find anything or anyone different from their perception of themselves, such as visible minorities or homosexuals, to be targets for discrimination. In Ukraine, it is not a matter that they have no law; it is more a matter of the laws lacking enforcement. How a nation treats its minorities, whether ethnic, religious, linguistic, is a measure of its maturity as a democracy, and for example, both the United States and Canada have some shameful incidents in their history.

Being in EuroMaidan in December 2013 was important to me to see first-hand the different groups coming together, Ukrainian-speaking, Russian-speaking and Tatar, joining for a common cause. Having been in Ukraine for every election since the failed election of 2004, I felt optimism that future elections would encouragingly be supported across linguistic and cultural influences.

Most recently the media, inside and outside Ukraine, has been raising issues of linguistic concerns (mostly involving Russian-speakers in Ukraine) and ethnic discrimination problems. This was brought to my attention by Russian Orthodox religious leaders in Canada. The difficulty has been in discerning between truth and propaganda, and enquiring what actions are necessary to mitigate concerns.

Muslim Iman Kazim stated that, for the past 10 years, it has been very different, with Ukraine having had a very open policy that allows all religious beliefs and all languages. However minorities in the predominantly Russian-speaking Crimea are already seeing the collapse of their rights. Of note though is that the minority Ukrainian community and the Tatar community in the Crimea are working together for a common purpose. It was reported that since the Russian takeover there is an end to the Tatar language programs in the schools replaced with only Russian to be taught there. Presumably this would also apply to Ukrainian language instruction.

There are, of course, many other concerns in the Crimea. Encouragingly though, the Ukrainian government is reported to having announced that it will provide 10,000 resettlement home sites for Tatar refugees who have moved to western Ukraine.

In Kherson, as previously mentioned, I attended the annual remembrance ceremonies for the past victims of totalitarianism. Also attending were Muslim and Orthodox religious representatives with hundreds of others. On that occasion I had the opportunity to speak to Tatar community leader Ibragim Sureymanov, I related the obvious, that unfortunately totalitarianism continues today. He asked me if he should have optimism. I said that he must or we all have no hope.

The laws of Ukraine are inclusive of linguistic and ethnic acceptance and support. The debate in Ukraine whether to formally recognize the Russian language for regions (oblasts) that have a majority of Russian-speaking persons is of crucial importance for the future of the country, given the events that have taken place in 2014. There was no need for this formalization of regional recognition until the politicians made it necessary.

The equal rights of national minorities are guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine and the Law on National Minorities of Ukraine, which states that:

Article 1: *Ukraine guarantees citizens of the republic, irrespective of their national origin, equal political, social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms, supports the development of national self-identification and self-expression. All citizens of Ukraine are guaranteed protection of the State on an equal basis. In protecting the rights of people, who belong to national minorities, the State proceeds from the fact that they are an indivisible part of recognized human rights.*

In April 2014 the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities stated that:

Recent events have had no repercussions on the extent of schooling in minority languages or the possibility to use minority languages or regional languages in official contacts with authorities. While these events have created uncertainty and there is considerable fear among minority populations about possible military conflict following developments in Crimea, the Advisory Committee observed generally stable conditions and no sense of lawlessness. Most minority representatives reported that their daily life is continuing as before and that they have no specific concerns with regard to the enjoyment of their minority rights in the current context. While apprehensive about the overall situation in the country, they expressed their support for Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and conveyed their expectations in the new authorities to strengthen minority rights protection frameworks in line with "European values," in particular as regards respect for human and minority rights.

LETTER TO METROPOLITAN ONUFRY

The Most Reverend Metropolitan Onufry
Metropolitan of Chernovtsy and Bukovina
and Chair of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches
Kyiv, Lavra 15, Housing 70-a
01015 Ukraine

April 30, 2014

Your Eminence,

As a Canadian Member of Parliament with a keen interest in Ukraine who has visited your country on many occasions, I wish to very respectfully suggest to you an approach that would go far in relieving tensions in the present crisis facing Ukraine.

The church is the most trusted institution in Ukraine, more trusted than political or academic institutions. If the leaders of Ukraine's churches (and other religious groups) were to unite and make a joint proclamation of the Ukrainian embracement of linguistic and cultural diversity and inclusivity, it would go far in reducing tensions in that country.

Those tensions are said to stem partly from actions by the new government in Kyiv that were perceived to weaken or put at risk Russian-language protection. Many of those in the eastern, predominantly Russian-speaking, area of the country, who are proud Ukrainians, saw it as an erosion of their linguistic rights. It is these linguistic and cultural issues that religious leaders are best positioned to address, offering a non-partisan, cross-cultural approach.

In 2004 I was an election observer in Ukraine during the failed November Presidential election and remained in the country for the entire 10 days of the subsequent Orange Revolution. I witnessed clergy marching in the streets of Kyiv under the Orange banners of the Yushchenko supporters and the blue and white flags of the Yanukovych faction. Similarly, I have returned for every Presidential and parliamentarian election since and have seen like support. It was quite apparent that the clergy were indeed taking sides in favour of one presidential candidate or another and that the divide between "orange" and "blue and white" was frequently along linguistic and religious lines.

In all election campaigns since religious support for political parties was divided not simply according to positions on issues but also along linguistic lines. While in the past the churches of Ukraine have taken sides, that may no longer be the case. In December 2013 I spoke to a crowd estimated at half a million people in Kyiv's Independence Square as part of the Euromaidan protests. There I observed a unity I had not seen in Ukraine before - Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians and Ukrainian Crimean Tatars united across religious and cultural lines, coming together to

protest against corruption. There were numerous clergy present, but their role was pastoral, not political. The churches retain the respect of the people.

I have been extensively involved in national unity issues in Canada for 20 years and before entering political life had founded the Western Canada branch of the Special Committee For Canadian Unity (SCCU). As part of a SCCU 2013 Canada Day rally in Montreal I crafted a proclamation that I delivered to the assembled crowd, an affirmation of linguistic and cultural inclusivity, of unity, which perhaps could be adapted by the Ukrainian churches as a template for any proclamation or open letter they wish to make in Ukrainian and in Russian. It might read similarly as follows:

“We, the people of Ukraine, proclaim with pride that we are and wish to remain, with the aid of God, a people free and responsible for our destiny. Born of the encounter of the Ukrainian fact and the Russian fact on European soil, ancestral home of the Tatar population and enriched by the contribution of minority cultures throughout the four corners of Ukraine, we wish to live, beyond the frontiers of race, language and religion, a common adventure of economic and cultural sharing, in the respect of our diversity.”

I think something along those lines, emphasizing the historical linguistic and cultural diversity of Ukraine (coupled with the implied willingness on the part of the new government in Kyiv to legislate linguistic and cultural inclusivity), would help ease the tensions in this time of transition until the new president enacts legislation to acknowledge the diversity is crafted and passed. The delivery mechanism, if you like, would be churches throughout Ukraine.

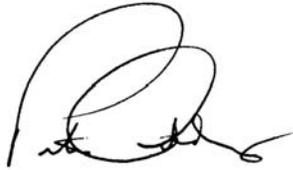
As my family are members of the Russo Orthodox Church, attending Edmonton’s St. Barbara’s Cathedral, I have discussed this at length with our priest, Father Sergey, and our Bishop, Bishop Job of Edmonton. Bishop Job’s parting comment to me was “Please help my Ukraine.” I then met with Archbishop Gabriel at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Montreal and Priest Viatcheslav Davidenko at Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church in Toronto and received from them their support to promote this initiative. It is they who suggested I contact you (and some of the others receiving copies of this letter).

I have also had meetings with Ambassador Vadym Prystaiko of Ukraine Igor Girenko of the Embassy of Russia, John Baird, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jason Kenney, Minister of Multiculturalism and Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada’s Ambassador for Religious Freedom. All concur that if the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations in Kyiv were to agree on a Ukrainian national message to be delivered through all churches in all regions of Ukraine, it would have great value.

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations could deliver this proclamation or message through the churches, encouraging the presidential candidates for the May 25 election to campaign on this inclusivity message to take to the parliament for legislation upon becoming president.

I thank you so very much for your consideration, and would be most pleased to discuss this with you should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Peter Goldring
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

cc:

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Multiculturalism
The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Dr. Andrew Bennett, Ambassador of Religious Freedom
Mr. Troy Lulashnyk, Canadian Ambassador to Ukraine
Mr. Vadym Prystaiko, Ukrainian Ambassador to Canada
Mr. Georigy Mamedov, Russian Ambassador to Canada
Mr. Mark Green, President of The International Republican Institute, Washington
The Right Reverend Sergey Kipriyanovich, Edmonton
The Right Reverend Bishop Job, Edmonton
The Right Reverend Archbishop Gabriel, Montreal
The Right Reverend Viatcheslav Davidenko, Toronto
The Right Reverend Vladimir Malchenko, Toronto
Archpriest Vsevolod, Synodal Department for Church and Society, Moscow
Right Reverend Michael Kit, Karkiv
Right Reverend John Shandra, Carpathian Mountains
Patriarch Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and of All-Russia and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow

MEETING WITH METROPOLITAN ONUFRY IN KYIV



At the behest of Reverend Sergey Kipriyanovich, Bishop Job (Edmonton), Archbishop Gabriel (Montreal), and Protopriest Vladimir Malechenko and Priest Viatcheslav Davidenko (Toronto), I arranged for a meeting with Metropolitan Onufry in Kyiv at the Lavra for May 9th. Ambassador Troy Lulashnyk kindly provided a driver and an interpreter and also accompanied me to the meeting.

Metropolitan Onufry is the Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox (Russian) Church, Moscow Patriarchy, of which 35% of Ukrainians are members, predominately in the eastern regions and the Crimea where the troubles have been. The Metropolitan stated that he had recently sent a pastoral message to the people, pleading for calm and reiterating that he did not believe that Ukrainians wanted to see their country separate.

He stated that some regions wanted autonomy from the central government, specifically that the regions (oblasts) wanted language and cultural constitutional reassurances and some confederation-style devolution of power such as for collection of taxes. These requests are not a call for total independence, but that position could be easily misconstrued as a demand for independence if not properly messaged.

The Metropolitan believes firmly that the Government of Ukraine must sit down and negotiate, to talk to regional governments (oblasts) in the east and south. He expressed concerns that certain elements of Ukraine's government were against having the Russian language fully recognized, even for regions (oblasts) that have a clear majority of Russian-speaking persons.

When asked if he would help spread the message to his people that the projected referendum vote on Sunday May 11th in Donetsk was illegal, he said that he could not interfere politically. But, when I pointed out past examples of the church being involved politically he hesitated, then said those were special circumstances where candidates were church supporters. The Metropolitan also stated possibly the obvious that he regularly is talking to the Bishop of Donetsk about the referendum. He did not seem to be overly concerned about the legitimacy nor the outcome, suggesting that he was comfortable that it would not lead to separation or a Russian invasion as had taken place in Crimea. He did though make it clear that he believed that the troubling concerns and violence would die down after the presidential election. At that point presidential candidate Poroshenko was leading in the polls and expected to possibly win the election in the first round.

Metropolitan Onufry also mentioned that Patriarch Kirill of Moscow also had sent out a message on May 3rd to help lessen regional tensions, which was three days after my letter to 19 notables, including the Patriarch and the Ambassador of Russia to Canada!

The English translation reads:

03.05.2014 16:40

STATEMENT OF PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA ON A NEW AGGRAVATION OF THE CIVIC CONFRONTATION IN UKRAINE

Blood is again shed in Ukraine. The clashes in the Donetsk Region and tragic events in Odessa have led to the death of tens of people and further destabilization of the situation in the country. Many are in despair and fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

In this hardest of times, my heart is with Ukraine, with each of her sons and daughters who are in pain, grief, anger and despair. I am praying that all the victims of the bloodshed may rest in peace, that the lives of the casualties may be saved and that the injured may recover as soon as possible. My ardent prayer is for the healing of the country and pacification of the enmity, so that blood may not be spilt again and violence may be stopped forever.

Responsibility for what is going on lies first of all with those who resort to violence instead of dialogue. Special concern is raised by the use of military hardware in a civic confrontation. The use of force is often provoked by commitment to political radicalism and denial of citizens' rights to express their convictions.

In the situation of today's Ukraine, only one political position cannot be declared the only possible and obligatory for all. It is pernicious to the country. It is my conviction that attempts to assert one's own point of view by force should be abandoned once and for all. I appeal to all the parties to restrain themselves from the use of arms and to settle all problems through negotiations. In a short-term perspective, Ukraine needs at least reconciliation, in a long-term – a lasting and inalienable peace.

Ukraine can be healed and can take the path of building a dignified life for her citizens only if it becomes a common home for people of various political beliefs who differ from one another in many things. There is no alternative to dialogue. It is necessary, while there is still a possibility for it, to hear one another and try not only to resolve today's contradictions but also to renew the commitment to Christian spiritual and moral values, which have formed the Ukrainian people and enriched them with wisdom and love of truth. I trust: precisely these values will help them today to find a way to peace and justice without which a dignified future of the country is unthinkable.

O God, one and great, preserve Rus'- Ukraine!

MEETING WITH FATHER MAXIM ORTHODOX PRIEST OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE - KHERSON



I met with Father Maxim on May 11th and gave him the background information to explain why I had desired to meet with him and other clergy, that I had been requested to do so by Orthodox leaders in Canada, who felt that there was something their colleagues in Ukraine could do to help alleviate tensions. No matter who I had talked to, the message was the same: They wanted me to help. They all urged me to meet leaders of Ukrainian Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate churches in Ukraine to express their concerns.

He confirmed to me that the concerns that had been expressed in my meetings to that time had been:

- That promises must be made to give the public more confidence that language and cultural rights would be assured by legislative review, to the greater satisfaction of all regions, be they languages of Ukrainian, Russian, Tartar, Romanian and others.
- That some autonomy be negotiated to allow dealing with specific oblast issues, including perhaps some devolution of taxation powers.
- That recent violent acts against minorities and religious factors, with particular emphasis on the EuroMaidan deaths and the Odessa deaths and others be thoroughly investigated to determine if excessive or criminal effort was entailed, and if so to bring those responsible to justice.
- That their issues be made certainties for action immediately following the election of the President, and that the proceedings have full public disclosure.



I thanked him for his comments and explained that my mission was to explore issues of concern that impacted the willingness and ability of people and minorities to vote in the presidential election and that I would be detailing these concerns to encourage them being addressed following the election.

I also asked Father Maxim if he could recommend specific individuals or groups in the Kherson area and Crimea that he felt I should be talking with to get a clearer picture of

the situation. He did not suggest others, but seemed to go on at length of his appreciation of my interest

In discussing the upcoming election I mentioned that Crimeans, in particular, needed to be informed that if they wished to vote, they needed to register in Kherson before May 20th in order to vote on the 25th. I asked if he had any suggestions how this message could be delivered into the Crimea and whether he had any relationships that would help? He really did not respond, but then he talked about his respect for the importance of our talks. When I left he presented me with an icon for me to take back to Canada in recognition of my visit.

MEETING WITH POROSHENKO PRESIDENTIAL PARTY - KHERSON

On May 11, in Kherson, I stopped at the local campaign office of Petro Poroshenko, said to be the frontrunner in the presidential race. There I explained my mission to determine ways to counter the barriers to informing Crimeans of their right to register before May 20th and right to vote May 25th.

I asked them if they had voter support contact lists. They said, only a few that they could email. I asked them if they could connect us with the local Mosque or Iman or Tartar cultural group, as they may be able to network their community to help get the message out to their Crimean community which they reported was some 400,000 persons. They seemed taken aback. It seemed they hadn't explored this direct religious approach and gave us the name of an important business person, also a Muslim elder, who we contacted immediately to meet the next day at 10:00 AM.



I also asked them for a private meeting with their candidate. This they could not do, due to time constraints, but invited me to a personal-invitation press conference being held later that afternoon by candidate Poroshenko, where we would be able to ask any questions we had. The press conference was attended by three or four television stations and dozens of other media. Technically, as an official observer, I was discouraged from conducting media interviews or getting directly involved in the election campaign, although, given the nature of my special mission status, there was a certain amount of leeway.

In order to explore the impact of the referendum of Crimea on the ability of Crimean Tatars and other minorities to vote in the early presidential election in Ukraine I thought it would be important to see how the leading candidate viewed the situation. Therefore I

wrote out a question and gave it to my interpreter to deliver in Russian, as her own personal question, which she did perfectly.

My question was as follows:

Mr. Poroshenko, could you comment on whether you believe that the people of the Crimea are fully informed and have the freedom to access, to cross over the border to register before May 20th and then vote on May 25th?

Mr. Poroshenko replied:

This is a very important question. In Chungara, they have made precincts for people to come to vote, which is in the Kuslov region. They are trying everything to inform the people. There will be a ministry set up after the election to be in charge of Crimean Affairs.

He said the Ministry will also take care of people in Ukraine, who have stayed in Crimea. He also stated that he had had meetings with a Minister from Turkey discussing the Crimean question. They agreed on effective and co-ordinated work for the protection of the Crimean Tartar.

None of the other media at the press conference touched anywhere on the Crimea. The questioners were fixated on the violence in Ukraine and the referendum in Donetsk. While he did give assurances to thoroughly investigate the circumstances, Poroshenko also offered amnesty to the people who had done wrong, provided they had not shed blood.

He came down hard on Russia for their involvement in Donetsk and fomenting trouble by allowing the infiltration of young Russian troublemakers into Ukraine and providing vehicles and arms. He emphasized that he would do everything he could to make Russia regret those actions.

He closed the press conference with more encouraging words. He commented that people in Kherson region were very united evidenced by so many cars and buildings with Ukrainian flags. He stated that people should not use words such as west or east when describing Ukraine, that the country should stand united not divided.

To summarize this message:

- It is important to thoroughly investigate communications efforts to advise Crimeans of registry points and deadlines for voting
- The internet chat lines from Ukraine should be engaged.
- Muslim and Tatar cultural groups and religious leaders should be visited and asked for their advice to help to get the message out to Crimeans.

- Orthodox religious leaders should be visited and asked for their advice to help to ensure that their membership in the Crimea are advised and that they know that they are perceived to be very much a political influence to be communicated regularly with. .
- The Turkish government or others from Turkey should be approached and engaged to help get the message to the Tartar Muslims in the Crimea through community connections that they have.

MEETING AT CRIMEA BORDER CROSSING WITH THE MILITARY

On May 12th we drove to the border some two hours away from Kherson on bone-jarring roads that, while paved, could be equated to corrugated log roads of old. I exaggerate but not by much.

Along the way were increasingly larger sandbagged bunkers. Approximately five kilometres from the border, the fortifications were substantial, complete with several tanks dug in and barrels pointing south down the road.



At the border, which my interpreter referred to as “Checkpoint Charlie,” we approached a soldier who then brought us to his Lieutenant. After discussions about whether there were any problems with people crossing (they said not), he received security clearance by phone, then allowed us to tour the fortification.

The fortifications were extensive. Many trenches had been recently dug, both for shooting from and to trap vehicles. Several Ukrainian wheeled Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs) with one-inch turret cannon were dug in to turret level. Several other camouflaged emplacements were present, probably obscuring heavy tank locations. Shoulder rocket launchers were leaning against walls in immediate readiness. There were estimated 100-150 soldiers present at the border and in the barrack tents with military vehicles coming and going.

We thanked the Lieutenant for his courtesy and said that we may be returning to follow-up on border access questions closer to election day. While the Russians had seized the Crimea without a shot being fired and no resistance from the Ukrainian military, it appeared that at this location the military were prepared to draw the line in the sand and resist any incursions.

MEETING WITH MUSLIM IMAM KAZIM



With the help of presidential candidate Poroshenko's campaign office, I contacted Muslim Iman Kazim and met with him on May 12, and asked him several questions in order to increase my understanding of the situation.

He related that he has not seen language policy concerns and that everyone can use the language of their choice. He related however, that politicians had been using language policy concerns for political purposes, as wedge issues.

He went on to state that the recent troubles were created from the outside, from Russia, and inside by Russian encouraged trouble makers. He also said that many other countries interfered by expressing their views and trying to compete to solve the problems. He said that many things had been declared by others but not carried through, and some of those encouraged the development of fascism or extremism. He was referring to western countries that ideologically are more in common with western Ukraine than the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern and southern regions and who have been postulating Ukrainianization linguistically – one country, one language - as encouraged by the Svoboda Party and Right Sektor. He noted that some politicians use religion for the lowest of purposes and religious extremists such as the ones often found in Muslim communities around the world are manipulated to serve a political agenda. He maintained that in Ukraine, the Muslim community shares a better relationship with the general populace than in most countries.

When asked about the political heirs of World War II Ukrainian leader Stepan Bandera, considered by many to be fascist, he stated quite clearly that they were not considered to be fascist or extreme but conservative in his mind. Iman Kazim went on to state that the biggest problem was the media - that the media paints a picture the way they want and mostly unfairly.

Kazim was very courteous and engaging. We talked for one-and-a-half to two hours about everything from politics (of course) to his community. As we were about to depart he returned to his mosque and came out with several children's religious comic-style magazines. I later saw him at the Memorial Service at the Monument to Totalitarianism, where he appeared with Orthodox religious leaders and senior members of the Tatar community.

MEETING WITH TATAR CULTURAL COMMUNITY

Also on May 12th we met with Tatar businessman Mr. Ibragim Sureymanov, who, when questioned of impediments to Crimeans crossing to register and vote in the election, enumerated the reasons:



1. Fear and security - potential voters were concerned that there will be roadblocks and interference.
2. Financial cost - He estimated that the two trips across the border, the first to register, the second to vote, would cost each voter 300 Hyrvnia on average, or about \$30 Canadian
3. Psychological - the events of the past few months in the region have taken their toll on people's emotional health, making it less likely they would make the effort to vote.
4. De-motivated - Ukraine's government had for all intents and purposes abandoned them during the recent crisis.

He explained that the government had not created conditions to allow people to vote easily. Security is a prime concern, as is transportation costs. To drive to register, to drive to return to vote, averages some 600 kilometres for most persons. With the price of gas/transportation being prohibitive for most people - some have estimated that the cost to do so would be approximately 300 Hyrvnia or \$30.00 Canadian, which is prohibitive to poorer people.

The other issue that many, while wanting to remain as Ukrainians, feel betrayed by the total lack of Kyiv government involvement in stopping the invasion. If their government would not stand up for them, then they have resigned themselves to this fate with Russia, hoping for the best. What other choice do they have?

There are widespread concerns in the Tatar community that what happened to Member of Parliament Mustafa Dzhemilev could happen to them. Dzhemilev, a Tartar leader, tried to return to the Crimea on a flight from Moscow and was stopped by customs and sent back to Kyiv. He took a car to the border area of Chungar where he was met by 4,000 Tatars waiting to welcome him on the other side of the border. Soldiers fired into the air, refused to allow his entry into Crimea, and those Tatars that did cross into Ukraine to talk to him were fined 1,000 Hyrvnia.

Ibragim stated the obvious - that one cannot expect ordinary people to risk their security to travel to vote when Kyiv would not defend them when they had the opportunity. He

agreed though that religious groups and individuals are stronger than the federal level elected representatives and much more trusted.

The Tatars see Crimea now as a place of racial and cultural intolerance. Houses of Muslim Tatars are marked with crosses. Ibragim stated as an example that a policeman came to a Tatar's house, asked him to sell the house to him, and when the Tatar refused, he was beaten.

He said that following the annexation Crimeans were told they had to become Russian or write a statement before April 18th stating that they wished not to, in which case they would then become foreigners with a right to stay for only 90 days, then they must leave Crimea. Those without Russian citizenship cannot work, cannot access healthcare or hospitals. Ibragim's sister is a teacher of Tatars and has been notified that all programs for Tatars are cancelled - everything must now be taught in Russian.

I suggested to him that if security concerns are a strong issue to deter people from voting in the presidential election that perhaps he could work to have his Muslim Tatar community join with the Orthodox community on transportation to the polls, thus greatly lessening one particular minority to target or to harass. He said that he would investigate the possibility. I also in turn reported his enumerated concerns to Kyiv.

At our second meeting, on May 13th, Ibragim related that he could not have a telephone conversation with the representatives of Mazhilis in Crimea - that the SBU, the Security Service, were tapping the phones. He said that even Facebook messages were being monitored. He contacted Mr. Dzhemilev, who was in Ankara, Turkey, and would discuss issue the next day when he arrived in Kyiv.

Ibragim suggested that I should explore whether legislation could be quickly expedited in the Verkhovna Rada, special provisions to allow Crimeans to register by internet, something presently not allowed.

He noted again that people were required to travel up to 600 kilometres. to register, return to vote, and then return home which is very costly. Also, Russian soldiers could hold up cars and buses for extensive time at the borders, turn people away or not allow them back in. Internet registration would reduce the potential problems by 50%. Unfortunately it was not possible to enact such a change at that late of a date.

At the close of the meeting he invited me to a rally being planned in the Crimea and in Kherson on May 18th intended to commemorate the deportation of Tatars from the Crimea by the Soviet Union in 1944.

MEETING AT CRIMEA BORDER - GEMICHESK DISTRICT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

On May 14 we travelled from Kherson to the District Election Commission Menichesk Gemichesk, some five hours away, the farthest border crossing area from Kherson, which would be processing those Crimeans that chose the eastern-most crossing from the Crimea to register to vote. They had received many calls from groups in the Crimea to arrange buses but had concerns as to how to conceal the purpose of their visit to register. A Commission representative told me that people were aware of the requirements, but that the security concerns and practicality cost-wise to cross the border were inhibitors. She says that the Tatar community is particularly well-organized and informed, but that common people, Orthodox, not so. She suggested there were 2.1 million people in the region with Orthodox Ukrainians numbering 800,000 and Tatars 400,000.



We then travelled to the border to view entrenchments. Just past the beginning of the isthmus, there were serious fortifications - LAV-type vehicles dug in, a large military camp of 100-200 people and many sand-bagged entrenchments pointed down the highway towards the border. There were also many more smaller, sandbagged, fortifications for soldiers facing the waterfront to counter invasion from the sea.

The border check point was some 30-40 kilometres south of this main fortification zone (main military point) but still did have soldiers on guard. I did not see any visible armament positions, other than basic sandbagged protection points as seen throughout the area I had been in.

We thanked the officer at the border, wished him well, and travelled back to the first community, Chungar, which is some five kilometres from the border, between it and the large military encampment.

The Head of the **Chungar Administration, Tatiana Biletska**, just epitomized the wonderful nature of many memorable people that I have met in my life. Her optimism situated between army camps is commendable. While discussing issues over coffee and chocolates, she wanted to know about me, and about my life, which I related my business work prior to becoming a Member of Parliament and my political involvement to support Canadian unity in Canada, and my family, children and grandchildren, to which she talked of her life and her family and grandchildren.



Then we discussed the issues at hand. She related that the Russians took more than just the border; they took the bridge at the border and 500-700 metres past the bridge on Ukraine's mainland soil. She then went on to explain that there used to be a tram that served several stops in the Crimea which crossed the now border area going to several cities in this part of Ukraine. The electric tram is normally comprised of 8-10 cars on regular rail and can carry possibly 500 or more persons. This apparently has been stopped. She went on to say that the regular train though from the Crimea is still running - straight to Moscow across Ukraine with many stops in Ukraine.

My thought on this was, if security of person was a concern for potential voters and, as she stated, traffic delay at the border for 1-1 ½ hours was a concern, then taking the train would greatly reduce the crossing time, and, allay fears for security simply because trains have police and cannot be stopped or interfered with as easily as can buses.

Later that evening, when we returned to Kherson, I was supposed to be connected by telephone with Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemeliiev when he arrived in Kyiv. Unfortunately, this didn't happen. I wanted to relate to Mr. Dzhemeliiev, who I had met previously in Ottawa, that there were options to be considered by his community. I had previously discussed the issue with Ibragim Sureymanov of working collaboratively with both the Muslims and the Orthodox in the Crimea to travel together to register and vote, but now, wished to suggest that they could possibly travel by tram for extra security.

Also, perhaps suggestions could have been made in diplomatic non-threatening fashion to the owners of the train systems, suggesting that greater assurances of non-disruption of future services would be met by free passage for those that wish to register and vote.

When Mr Dzhemeliiev visited Ottawa in 2011, I chaired a committee meeting of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group, where he was the invited guest. His comments at that time were prophetic. He spoke of his fears of Russian aggression, such as had happened in Georgia.

OSCE DISCUSSION

On May 15th I spoke with OSCE Representative Natali Grant, who I was told by others to be engaged in examining the religious influence on the politics of Ukraine and was referred to her because of the work I was doing. Of course I have been doing this also for several years so wanted to lend information and determine if she had other ideas or thoughts. She was very polite but immediately said that she could not talk to me. She said she had been told not to talk to other observers, as the information she was to report had to be her own. I said to her that if I had information helpful to the cause, she could simply relate it to being reported by others, But, she was insistent that we could not discuss the issue. I thanked her and hung up. It is regretful that we could not have had a free exchange of information.

As noted in the photo, new Ukrainian Orthodox churches of the Moscow Patriarchate are being built (or in some cases renovated) throughout Ukraine, but particularly in Russian-speaking regions. The people are very poor and have great needs, but somehow huge sums of money are found for church construction. It is thought that money is funnelled to church leaders in return for electoral support from the pulpit to the Moscow-friendly Party of Regions.



MEETING WITH TYMOSHENKO PARTY – KHERSON

On May 15th I also met with Nelli Molulenko of presidential candidate Yulia Tymoshenko's Kherson campaign office to discuss the campaign and the issues. She said that since President Yanukovich's abrupt departure from the country many more corrupt leaders had also been removed, including in Kherson where a Tymoshenko supporter replaced the former Party of Regions mayor.

She feels that while regional governors are appointed, it would be better if they were instead chosen in regional elections.



We talked about the Crimea, where she has said that in the last presidential election Tymoshenko had substantial support. We also discussed Crimean autonomy (which was limited prior to the annexation by Russia, but Crimea did have its own Parliament). Nelli was also very concerned with the violence and deaths in Odessa and other regions. She was supportive of the idea that the issues be thoroughly investigated and that those responsible be brought to justice.

When Yulia Tymoshenko was brought from prison on to the stage at EuroMaidan in a wheelchair, it was expected to draw great sympathy, empathy and fire up the crowd to give resounding support. It did not. She is recognized, certainly, as a firebrand, but also as a failed politician who could not carry through on her promises.

She also tried to fire up support by attacking Russians and by declaring that she would ask for the complete withdrawal of the Black Sea fleet from Crimea, which under the circumstances was a completely unnecessarily provocative paper tiger challenge to the Russians.

MEETING WITH PARTY OF REGIONS - KHERSON



Also on May 15th I had a discussion with a Party of Regions representative, Mr. Vasily Ryleev, who was somewhat hesitant at first to meet. We began our meeting with a photographer shooting many pictures of us, probably for proof of my presence or demeanor. He became more relaxed and very accommodating though, and related that a Round Table discussion had taken place the previous day (which I already had knowledge of), with former President

Kuchma. Our discussions were then directed by me around the nature of autonomy that is mentioned so often also in reference particularly to the Crimea's status with Ukraine. I asked what he thought that it meant in the current context - devolution of some federal powers or absolute separation?

Mr. Ryleev, who is an affable person, related that the eastern regions wanted devolution of some powers such as Germany's states have, United States have and, as I explained, Canada's provinces have. He underscored **wanted** because it is now in the past tense, he feels, in terms of probabilities. He felt that to be most unfortunate.

We discussed alternative possible initiatives, which is when he related to me that the 1999 referendum which, albeit somewhat contested, did give the Rada authority to proceed with a second chamber and certain other provisions that never were

implemented. The original agreement or referendum agreement by the people was to establish a second Chamber for the 27 Oblasts of some 54 persons with the discussion of whether to be elected or appointed to be determined. The Rada was to be dropped from 400 plus members to 300 plus members. He then stated that the Donetsk and Luhansk region leaders of the newly created Republics have already prepared the first copy of their Constitution.

He also stated that his Member of Parliament had been actively working on the 1999 provisions and other constitutional issues, to which I replied that I have familiarity with constitution issues and wanted to meet with him. He immediately made a call to his office and related this, also giving me the phone number to follow up with. He stated that while they do have a government of the region and a council of the region, formalized devolution of powers and responsibilities to the regions would address many concerns.

I think that we must engage all opinions to try to understand Ukraine. Ukraine is deeply rooted with socialist mentality being confronted by the western world's materialistic and progressive attitudes compounded by a very strong maternalistic Crimea and eastern region attachment to Mother Russia's control centre of many Ukrainians - their religion, and Moscow's Putin and Patriarch Kirill.



Putin's incursion into Crimea and mainland Ukraine was made possible by both the weakness of Kyiv and by the strength of the attachment to and presence of Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians with the religious Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate majority in the Crimea that welcomed the move to Russia with some select covert Russian military prompting.

The reasons given for doing so are many and various, but centre on Russia's perceived threat to its national security. Ultra-nationalism has been growing in Europe, in France, Germany, Romania, Greece and now Ukraine. The neo-Nazi heirs of Nazi Stepan Bandera, the Svoboda Party, even have 37 Members of Parliament in Kyiv. The Right Sektor, once an almost unknown group, grew in prominence in January and February and now has its political party and presidential candidate, all calling for a "one Ukraine, one language." This Ukrainianization policy fosters the linguistic supremacy of west Ukraine to the detriment of the east, while championing Ukraine's future entry into NATO and threatening to Ukrainianize the Crimea. This was not to be a comfortable future for predominantly Russian-speaking Crimeans, with suggestions that violence could occur in the Crimea where Russia's fleet is based. Even the chance that the Crimea might become part of NATO would be too much to bear. With these prospects of NATO membership, of far right political violence, and with the weakness of Ukraine,

Russia acted to protect their military interests to have a buffer zone between NATO and their Crimean base and never fired a shot in doing so.

Mr. Ryleev stated that the situation in the eastern part of Ukraine could be defused if acted upon quickly, if all parties were to talk, meet and discuss. He is disappointed that the Round Table meeting did not include the rebels; suggesting that if the government in Kyiv could not control them then it should be talking to them, to see if there is a common purpose for the betterment of all.

Mr. Ryleev stated that he was encouraged by the openness of our dialogue and would do what he could to help and continue by encouraging his Member of Parliament and I to meet and talk, which we would do for several hours on May 24th .

MEETING WITH COMMITTEE OF VOTERS (OPORA) - KHERSON



On May 16, 2014, I met with the Committee of Voters which is funded by U.S. Aid. They are the oldest such organization in Ukraine, founded in 1994. They were originally doing election monitoring of the voting but have been expanded to work all year to observe the Members of Parliament to see if they fulfil their election promises.

I asked them about the 2000 referendum which they said was flawed. But three questions were agreed upon by narrow margins:

- To reduce MP's in the Rada from 400 to 300
- To establish a second chamber (Senate)
- To remove immunity from Members of Parliament

None of these initiatives, approved by people by referendum, came to pass.

While the methodology of devolution or autonomy is ill-defined, there is a building desire which they imply must be quickly defined.

Asked of the impact or influence of the church in Ukraine, they insisted strongly that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (MP) was very involved in the invasion of Crimea and trouble in Eastern Ukraine. They stated that it was by utilizing religious collaboration to motivate the Russian-speaking religious population that the Russians were able to accomplish the task of a seemingly welcomed takeover.

The Committee of Voters firmly believe that the religious influence of the Moscow Patriarchate adherents in the regions has become the primary mechanism that the Russian Federation is utilizing to recapture or rebuild its Soviet-era federation. It began in the Crimea and continues today in the eastern regions under the religious influence of the Moscow Patriarch. They say that the substantiation of this is that some priests were supporting the radicals, one in particular with radical language of his own, fomenting further discord.

Also, in keeping with my mission, they stated that there is in Ukrainian law provision to provide for precincts to be set up for registering and voting in other countries. Russia refused to allow this to be set up in the Crimea. They said that in the last presidential election, Yulia Tymoshenko drew several hundred thousand votes from the Crimea in favour of her version of federalism. They say that the expectations of voter turnout representing the Crimea this time will unfortunately be possibly a few thousand due to:

- Russia's unwillingness to establish Crimean precincts
- Concerns for security
- Cost to travel to Ukraine to register before the election **and** then once again to vote.

MEETING WITH HOLA PRYSTAN MAYOR NEGRA

I had been told of this progressive town and its mayor by my interpreter. The community has been built by people coming together to such a state that they now are a prime centre of some nine festivals a year where everyone participates, all funded by the people, very impressive for a town of 17,000 persons. For example, they have festivals for school graduation, Christmas, watermelon festival, sending off young men and women to military duty, Veterans Day and more.



As well as this, the facilities for holding the festivals are beautiful - a large stoned-paved waterfront with extensive walkways, park-like setting with picnic benches and very significant monuments every 50 feet.

The Sports Palace is said to be only one of two that have been built in all of Ukraine since independence, and is first-class. It features a hall for the numerous medals and awards presented to the athletes of all ages. The main gym area is impressive, for basketball, soccer, or any other imaginable sports. The upper level has a professional

level boxing ring and all other training equipment for boxing and martial art sports. I commented to Mayor Negra that I believe that boxing (and martial arts) is excellent for young people. It instills pride, self-confidence, self-control and character, more so than many other sports.

Also in this great facility, all funded by the community, is a full scale exercise room with professional equipment. For use of this room a small fee is charged, unlike the rest of the facilities which are there for everyone to enjoy free of charge.

As if this was not by itself been a monumental task to initiate and see to its fruition, Mayor Negra also commissioned a substantial museum with attached theatre. While the Museum has many artifacts and pieces of artwork, it also is a culture and arts centre where artisans train the youth on many practices such as pottery, painting, and arts and crafts.



I was so impressed that a Mayor and townspeople could accomplish so much with so little. Mayor Anatoliy Negra and the town Hola Prystan are indeed a sterling example of a fantastic community that works together and plays together, and enjoys the bounty of life as one big family, an example for all of Ukraine and indeed Canada and the world.

I truly am hopeful that my wife and I will return with our interpreter to visit Hola Prystan, to thank the mayor and the community for honouring me with friendship.

DISTRICT ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS PHONE CALLS



On May 17th I spoke on the phone with various District Electoral Commissions (DECS) to try to determine the number of Crimeans expected to vote.

DEC #18 stated that they had 35 Crimeans registered but many more were expected that day or the next.

Member of Parliament Mustafa Dzhemilev, a representative of the National Assembly of Crimean Tatars, stated that the Crimea had

a lot of new roadblocks and checkpoints, more than usual. The capital Sevastopol had numerous armoured troop carriers. The build up by the Russians was substantial and intended for public control.

He said people had decided not to travel by bus together to register or vote for fear of being targeted. Those crossing the border are being asked the purpose of their visit and are being scowled at and generally harassed. When asked if the people of Crimea have been informed by public media, radio or television about the voting procedure, Mr. Dzhamil said absolutely not; they have had to find out about registering and voting on their own.

He said on Russian television, the eastern and south east part of Ukraine is shown to be part of Russia. They show the pictures of the war in 1944 when the Soviet army cleared the Crimea of what they claimed were German fascists – the Tatar population.

Russian television in Kherson that I saw continually portrays an anti-U.S., anti-West attitude. The Kaiser Report, a regular television program on RTTV, had reports of a deep dark secret in Hawaii that the United States government doesn't want people to know about, demonstrators that state, "You took our land!" Mark Carney is equated to being a fascist dictator, a market-fascist who had killed the Canadian economy and now is killing Great Britain's economy.

Among other "news" stories that I saw was one telling of 40 men from a neo-Nazi group who tried to take over the largest nuclear power facility in Europe, in Ukraine, supposedly, to protect it from pro-Russian rebels in the Donetsk region. The Russian show-and-tell broadcasts always contained a little bit of truth but concluded with their distinctly anti-West attitude. However, if they were not Ukrainian military professionals but were indeed EuroMaidan extremists, this should be cause for great concern if Kyiv is not in control of its own loyal faction, let alone the ultra-nationalist extremist element.

DEC #16 reported only a very few registered. They state that the procedure is onerous and the biggest impediment is that it is difficult and risky to travel twice to the registry and voting station.

DEC # 11 or (2) reported only 3 registered, expecting more.

DEC # 15 reported also only 3 registered.

We heard from others of a very concerning report that claimed that the Rada had banned the Communist Party. On May 16th the Communist Party leader, after conducting a television interview, was chased by people supposedly identified as EuroMaidan supporters, and by a car that was identified by Ukrainian and Eurounion flags. The thugs then threw Molotov cocktails, breaking the front window. The question was how many battlefronts did Kyiv want to participate in? What did the Communist Party do to deserve this? Why the violence? Were right-wing extremists involved as

Russia has stated? I was later to determine that the Communist Party had been accused of certain criminal charges, but had not been banned.

Also of concern were the comments of some about what did happen after President Yanukovich had fled from his office. We certainly heard of governors in regions being replaced by new, government-friendly people, but apparently, it was reported that this was wholesale across the country. Just imagine the destabilizing effect of firing governors, mayors, heads of police security, and prominent people across society, replacing them with political appointees. The Governor of Kherson was replaced. The mayor of Kherson was replaced by a Tymoshenko supporter. It was not only the President who was removed. It was hundreds if not thousands of others summarily removed, forced to resign, some allegedly at gunpoint.

Interestingly, Mayor Negra of the town of Hola Prystan, who was a member of the Party of Regions, was not removed and replaced, due to the sheer will power of the residents of his town who recognized his tremendous commitment to their community.

I felt that it was imperative that we have meetings with all involved, as I particularly detailed the meeting with the Party of Regions. To this end, I tried to arrange a meeting with Party of Regions' people: the former Governor, the former Mayor, the present Member of Parliament of Kherson. I wished to discuss the Crimea and effect of the annexation, to discuss the political situation, to gain their perspective and to gain their foresight and opinion

EUROPEAN UNION TRADE DISCUSSION

On May 18th I met briefly with the Deputy Head of a mission from the Kingdom of the Netherlands Gerrie Wilems and a member of their delegation Mark Hellyer, a director of CTA Economic and Export Analysts Ltd., who are travelling Ukraine to promote the benefits of Ukraine attaining European Union Trade arrangements as Canada has done.

I explained a discussion that I previously had with some Ukrainians, that they doubted that their industry could develop to European standards that easily and hence why make a deal. My response to that negativity was to state that elevating standards to world levels is important with or without working with the European Union, but that it would come sooner with European Union assistance and guidance. Obviously, I told them that while their your mission to Ukraine is to help them attain their goals, it is unfortunate that with all this mission's optimism, the present security circumstances were preventing them from having these discussions and meetings in Donetsk as they had planned. The issue about who Ukraine trades with was not the point. The point was that Ukraine wants to trade with Russia, but for Ukraine to trade with the rest of the

world, certain international standards must be met. These efforts by the mission from the European Union could help.

TRANSFER OF POWER

I have to detail some concerns for how the transfer of power in the Presidential office took place. In Kherson I was informed, almost all Party of Regions members in senior positions, Governors, Mayors, Heads of Police, were fired and replaced by political support of the interim government. In some areas throughout Ukraine, notably in social media coverage, Volyn, Chernivsti, Right Sektor groups with red and black flags forced these leaders to resign. Some resisted. Videos clearly showing the mobs threatening violence unless the person voluntarily resigned is reminiscent of extremist actions. One video showed the prime bully, surrounded by a gang of thugs, stating “you sign or there will be bloodshed.”



This apparently occurred across the country, with the most violent burning or torching the Party of Regions offices in western Ukraine. Imagine a country in which a large segment of the political, security, and management leaders are deposed, all at the same time! Simply replacing them with friendly party appointees does not address the loyalties and political structural confidence of their employees.

Clearly what had purportedly been begun as a protest of a President’s direction has been taken over by the far right element pushing for only Ukrainian to be spoken in Ukraine. This stirred Russian-speaking sentiments against this affront, with the Moscow’s Patriarch’s acquiescence and sometime support (and supported also by Russian President Putin). The wholesale removal of all authority, not just the President, had to have destabilized the entire country.

VICTIMS OF TOTALITARIANISM

On May 18th I was invited to attend the annual Remembrance Ceremony by the Tatar community at the Monument of the Victims of Totalitarianism. The gathering was of several hundred people including Iman Kazim, Priest Maxim, Bishop from Kyiv, Mayor

of Kherson, Member of Parliament of Kherson and other dignitaries and spokespersons. The event was solemn particularly so as it is very apparent totalitarianism is alive and well and remains a very real threat. This is evidenced by Russia's invasion, capitalizing on the mistakes of others, then engaging propaganda, linguistic subterfuge and religious institutions to take the Crimea.



It worked so well that Russians are salivating over repeating the process for a takeover of eastern Ukraine. Why not? The media has already forgotten the Crimea. They will forget the eastern Ukraine too just as easily. People at this Memorial Service were very worried, for good cause.

One lady gave an impassioned speech. She related that she had just talked to a family friend in Crimea who stated that at their Remembrance gathering that Russian helicopters were everywhere, flying so low

that they could read the serial numbers intending to intimidate them.

I met with Ibragim Sureymanov, an elder with the Tatar community who I have met with several times now, after the Service. He asked, plaintively, "is there optimism?" I said to him, "we must have optimism - without optimism there is little hope!"

I thanked him for his time that he spent with us. I said to him that in order for us to help, we simply must know of all the difficulties and problems. He said that at any time I wished to call him, he would be there to try to help. Ibragim, as a very significant elder of the Tatar community, was one of the prominent speakers at the event. I can feel his pain of concern for his people.

MEETING WITH COMMITTEE OF VOTERS (OPORA) - KYIV

At a May 21st briefing, the OPORA Election Monitoring Group mentioned that the Communist Party was soon to be outlawed because of criminal charges. I asked the presenter to explain that nature of the charges, to guesstimate on the probability of conviction. Would it only outlaw the Party or would it remove, charge or sentence the current Members of Parliament of the Communist Party in the Rada? She explained that they have collected much evidence against the Party and members supporting the terrorists and of them calling for the government to be forcefully changed which would be treasonous.

Apparently prosecutors have never confronted them before because of parliamentary immunity, but Member of Parliament Deputy Speaker Kolichuck and particularly Member of Parliament Olynk on January 16, 2014, in a contrived voting process, approved what she calls dictatorial legislation against the Constitution. The Communist Party is only supported by five per cent of Ukrainians, but with MPs causing problems and provoking violence, it was felt to be important to bring them to justice.



It is also expected that there will also be an early Parliamentary election in which it is expected that the Communist party, if not banned by that time, will receive very much lower support.

We also discussed the Right Sektor. They stated that yes, they claim to have an army and proudly portray themselves as a militia with armbands and red and black flags, however they really only number some 200 militaristic members. From my observations I believe that they were seriously underestimating this group.

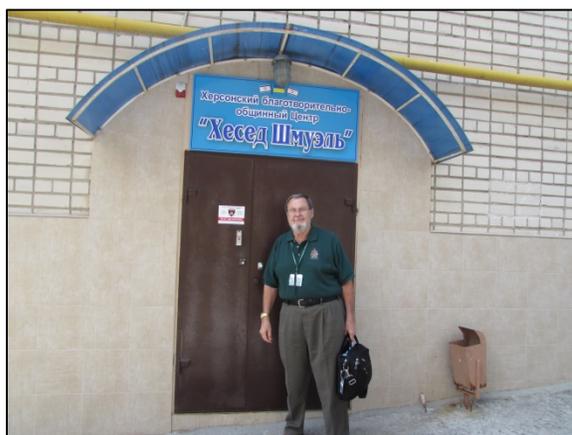
The other issue raised was that Russia had some 800 observers arrive at Ukraine's border for election monitoring, if you can believe the gall. Of course, they were being stopped from entering, to determine if they were terrorists, Russian soldiers or whatever.

OPORA has 180 long-term observers in Ukraine and 2000 short-term observers.

MEETING WITH JEWISH CULTURAL COMMUNITY

On May 23rd I visited the Jewish Community Charity Organization. The Director was very welcoming, showed us his Museum of Artifacts, beautiful pieces of silver for Hanukah celebrations and then the stark horror of relics and pictures from the death camps.

He was explaining that they attended to concerns of some 2,000 elderly in need in this region and 7,000 impoverished families and children also in need of assistance. He



said that the region had some 500 persons who had gone through the Holocaust and survived in the death camps.

Then he was interrupted by a phone call, left the room, came back, immediately calling me to follow him to his computer. There he pulled up a video of what was just happening in Kherson not far from us. The Right Sektor, replete with military fatigues, balaclavas, weapons, red and black flag colours of the Nazi symbolism were out en masse, 50-60 strong, sending a message to at least intimidate, if not to attack, a business owned by a mayoral candidate Vladlen Mirin. (They had done this also in the last mayoral election against him.) Mirin is a prominent, well-liked business person who is also Jewish.



The Jewish Centre, where I was so cordially invited, was now beside itself. The Director tried to draw our conversation away from the issue, but he himself kept coming back to it. He then took me to another room to talk, with two other people from the Centre, to discuss issues. They said that they had recently attended a seminar in Odessa, put on by an Israeli sociologist, that taught them how to deal with and overcome stress in war conditions, not only those elderly, but also those much younger, who are having difficulty coping with today's stressful concerns in Ukraine.

They also related that the present circumstances have been difficult because even members of families have differing opinions - they are so interrelated as Ukrainian-Russian-Crimean, that even families are at odds.

They say that the mass media is so distorted by Russian propaganda and ill-informed people, that the public does not understand why it is that way. They can see the problems. Why can the media not?

When asked, "does the Right Sektor frighten people?", everyone in the room answered "for sure." They said that the Right Sektor proclaimed that they would put things in order. Also they said that the "Self-Defence" citizen organization joined the Right Sektor in late February or early March. Asked if the flag (black and red) scared them they answered yes, it's reminiscent and intended to be so of Hitler's Nazis.

I was told that as late as last year, Right Sektor youth group members were on Facebook and social media many times praising Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's Nazi movement, foretelling an ominous future.

We then left the Jewish Community Centre, which itself is fortified with a heavy steel door entry, electrically controlled from inside to a guard posted who only then allows entry through a second door. This is a charity, not a bank!

We drove to the business location of the Right Sektor demonstration. My interpreter was nervous, and said so. But I said that we would be careful; we were not going to confront anyone. However the Right Sektor and police were gone before we arrived.

To investigate what happened, my interpreter went inside, talked to management, and we were invited in to hear their story. He (the manager) said that this happened in the last election for Mayor. This time, though there were 45 men from Right Sektor, with baseball bats, sticks with spikes, and the red and black flags.

His workers came out to build barricades of skids as a defence line to confront the Right Sektor. Video taken by employees from inside and not available to the media, but obtained by myself, clearly shows the unbelievable aggression by the Right Sektor, a pretty scary far right and militaristic vigilante group. While on the surface one would assume that this is a gross discrimination/intimidation act against a Jewish person running for mayor, this is Ukraine, where little is of the obvious. Others said that the group was assisting the police to serve legal notice on the firm owned by the Jewish candidate, but they did not produce legal papers. If that is the way they do business here they really play hard ball. The police were denied entry to the building, even with the Right Sektor aggressive assistance, because lawyers were present stating that they would need a warrant to enter, which they did not have. So then they all went away.

Some people have said that the Right Sektor is a mythical group. OPORA said that they thought that maybe they had only 200 members. Well, 45-50 were in uniform under the red and black flag in Kherson! They also are registered as a political party and had a candidate for President, although his support was very low - some 200-300,000 voted for him. Because of the growth of this group the numbers of supporters are significant and should be monitored for lawfulness.

MEETING WITH SLAVIC CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

On May 23rd we met with Dimitri, a young man who previously had worked with the Slavic Cultural Association, an organization that was committed to engaging Slavs, Russians, Belarus and Ukrainians aged 15-35 for cultural association and friendship, through summer camps and special events. His organization lost its funding after the change of government and so has collapsed.

He felt that without this type of social friendship of bringing groups together, the unity of Ukraine itself is at risk. He cites as his reason for saying this that the Prime Minister of Hungary had stated that he would invite the Trans Carpathian Region of Ukraine to join

Hungary because of their 250,000 Hungarian ethnic population and some 1,000,000 Rusians (not to be confused with Russian) population, and would give them some autonomy (to be later defined). Dimitri also speculated that the same could happen in the region of Ukraine bordering Poland.



He also stated that linguistic issues were not a problem in the past, but have risen to prominence recently. He asked, if the Russians can give the legislated and constitutional impression that the Crimea now has official languages in Ukrainian, Russian and even Tatar, why can Ukraine's Constitution not be amended to at least accept Russian as the second official language in the regions?

He also related that in Canada we have two official languages, autonomy for our states (provinces) and a second chamber system which he supports for Ukraine. This, of course, as I mentioned before, had received support in a referendum in 2000.

He went on to say that there were 3 parts to the referendum of 2000:

- 1 – to reduce the number of MPs in the Rada
- 2 – to remove their immunity from the law
- 3 – to establish a second chamber; a Senate of two members from each Oblast elected or appointed

He then went on with his civil control concerns, that he has great concern for what happened in Odessa where many were killed, that it was done by Right Sektor radicals, Kharkiv 'ultras.' He said to look at the YouTube videos. He also stated that the Head of the Odessa Police had declared to the media that this was organized by Kyiv's Head of National Security, Mr. Parubiy, who was appointed at the end of February or the beginning of March. Mr. Parubiy was also in control of events and the sniper shootings from the top of the buildings in EuroMaidan. He suggested to look up Mr. Parubiy's biography, and says that we would find that he has been anti-Russian and speaks of Ukraine for Ukrainians.

Dimitri said that the government represented by members of the Svoboda Party are ultra-right, known even in Germany. They have been talked about in the German Parliament and that German Chancellor Angela Merkel herself has suggested that the Kyiv Government is run by Neo-Nazis. Dimitri and I spoke at length on other issues of optimism, Ukraine's inherent wealth if there is political cohesiveness. Dimitri also spoke of his invitation (they are very polite) to visit with the Secret Service of Ukraine for discussions. He says that some people so invited never go home. That's why this segment does not include his last name - Dimitri is afraid.

BACKGROUND: PAN SLAVISM

Pan-Slavism was a 19th century movement which had as its goal the unification of all Slavic peoples across national borders and gained popularity as a counter to German expansion in eastern Europe. In order to be successful Pan-Slavism would require the Russification of the Slavic countries, as Russia is the largest of the Slavic regions.

In Ukraine the notion of Pan-Slavism has an historical context and is resisted by the majority of the Ukrainian-speaking population. The Imperial Russian and later Soviet government used a body of laws, decrees and other actions to strengthen Russian national, political and linguistic positions in Ukraine. While Ukraine has a large percentage of its population for whom Russian is their mother tongue, in the post-Soviet era Ukrainian is the only official language.

In 2012 Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich introduced a bill recognizing Russian as a “regional language” that could be officially used in the predominantly Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine in schools, courts and other government institutions. While the bill was supported by Ukrainians in the eastern and southern regions of the country, the legislation triggered protests in Kyiv, as opposition party representatives (primarily from the western and central regions) argued that it would further divide the Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking areas of the country and make Russian a de-facto official language.

While government policy was to use only Ukrainian in official communication, the Russian language is widely used on television and radio, with Russian-language periodicals enjoying a high circulation all over the country.

In the education sector the decision as to whether or not Russian will be on the curriculum in private secondary schools is up to the individual institution. The Ukrainian language is a required course in all Russian-language schools.

Since Ukraine once again became an independent state, in 1991, there has been a systematic decline in the number of Russian-teaching schools. The percentage of such institutions is now lower than the proportion of Russophones, but still higher than the proportion of ethnic Russians.

The legal system has allowed the use of Russian in the courts (on mutual consent of both parties) since January 1, 2010, while business affairs are conducted primarily in Russian.

In the media, only 3.4% of songs played on radio are in the Ukrainian language, compared to 60% in Russian. In the same way, on television, only 28% of programming is in Ukrainian, even on state-owned channels. 60% of newspapers, 84% of journals and 87% of books are published in Russian.

According to official data from the 2001 census, 14,273,000 Ukrainians listed Russian as their mother tongue, which is 29.3% of the total population. Ethnic Russians make up 56% of that group. The Russian-speaking population in Ukraine is the largest minority language group in Europe that has not been accorded official status.

A number of eastern cities and regions have declared Russian to be a regional language, starting with Kharkiv in 2006. These decisions have been controversial, with some being overturned by the courts (such as in Kherson) and others upheld (such as in Donetsk).













MEETING WITH PARTY OF REGIONS MP VLADIMIR SALDO

On May 24th we met with Member of Parliament Vladimir Saldo and his assistant over coffee. Vladimir is very popular in Kherson, as he had previously served three terms as Mayor. He expressed interest in the form of representative government of the Czech Republic and Hungary, with their second chamber for the regions, but believed that Ukraine has a form of this regional representation now through directly electing 225 members and the other 225 being chosen from party lists.



I asked him about the relationship of the Right Sektor and Svoboda. He said that he believes that the two groups are not officially connected. I told him that when I visited with the Jewish Community on May 23rd that they said they are afraid of the Right Sektor and the right-leaning groups.

I asked: “Do they have a reason to be afraid?” “Yes,” he said, and went on to talk about their nationalistic character. He said that at first at EuroMaidan the Right Sektor was not a presence, only described as self-defence persons working peacefully with the Svoboda party. Later, in January and February, they rose to be identifiable as the most active resisters to the riot police and snipers, creating a name for themselves. He went on to say that of all who were shot by snipers, no Right Sektor member was shot or hurt.

He believes that the people in charge of investigating the shooting should not only determine who did the shooting but who paid them to shoot. He said that the doctors, who examined the wounds of the EuroMaidan protesters and the police who were shot, found them to be very similar, seemingly by the same shooters.

Odessa

Vladimir then went on to talk about the Odessa tragedy. He said that some days before the event Mr. Vidro Pashintiki, head of administration, visited Odessa and that the tragic event that followed there was well planned. Vladimir said that some 2,000 persons travelled on two trains and some 15 buses from Kyiv to attend a football game between Odessa and Kharkiv, that is why people thought they were from Kharkiv. However, he said that people from Odessa have different, identifiable cultural characteristics than those from Kyiv. He also said that they arrived en-masse with weapons, shields and body armor – for a football game!



He claimed that the anti-Maidan group was peacefully protesting, without weapons, when the pro-Maidan group with the Right Sektor and self-defence persons attacked them, forcing them into the labour union building. He again emphasized that they had no weapons. He said that the pro-EuroMaidan group threw Molotov cocktails, primarily into the first and second floors, driving those inside up to the fourth and fifth floors. Those that opened windows for air were shot.

Official reports state that most died of asphyxiation, but shortly afterward a talk show host discussed a new version of events, claiming that people were poisoned with chloroform and that Kyiv was covering up the involvement of the Right Sektor and self-defence, pro-EuroMaidan groups. Asphyxiation is most likely.

Furthermore, he stated that there is no official list of the names of those who died, just numbers – 46, then 38, while some Odessa citizens say that 127 died. The numbers of wounded have not been announced at all. He said that among the dead were 15 Jewish people. Also, when people did attempt to flee the building they were beaten by waiting pro-EuroMaidan persons.

Donetsk



I asked Vladimir if Donetsk would have declared separation if they had some regional rights:

- To elect their regional head of government instead of that person being appointed by Kyiv;
- Official recognition of the Russian language in the region in addition to Ukrainian; and
- Some devolution of power, possibly such as taxation authority, to the region.

He said no, that it would have been very difficult to foment the discord that has been propagated in the region by locals and Russian influence if they had had these rights. He said that even under the prevailing circumstances, the very long lines of people voting in the referendum were not voting for separation but voting to be heard, being annoyed that they are being ignored by the central government and by Kyiv's ban on all

Russian television in the region. He said that even in the Crimea, all Ukrainian television channels were still being broadcast.

He said the actions of the new government in Kyiv on February 23 (and the Svoboda Party) was what inflamed the situation. The attempted cancellation of the August 10, 2012 law, which was based on the European Charter of Languages, allowing official minority languages if 10% of the local population warranted and wanted it, was a senseless thing to do. It also bypassed proper procedure; it was not on the Order Paper for the day and passed 228-126. He also said that the acting president, to calm down the situation, refused to sign the bill. Communicating that the law was not cancelled was poorly conducted, allowing Russian propaganda to take advantage of the situation.

He also said that in Luhansk and Donetsk the Kyiv government appointed oligarchs as governors, appointees the people did not trust due to prior experience with them. He said that in Russia they also appoint oligarchs, but these persons contribute greatly to their communities and are trusted because of this.

MEETING WITH THE SVOBODA PARTY - KHERSON

On May 24th I met with Oleh Howrilko of the Svoboda Party, a right-leaning party with 37 Members of Parliament: 12 elected and 25 selected from Party lists. Their three-finger logo on their campaign posters depicts the Ukrainian trident.

Oleh said that in the last parliamentary election 2,150,000 supported his party nationally, or 10.45% of total voters. I asked him, if the Svoboda presidential candidate was elected, what would he change or focus on in his government? He replied that they would work against corruption, remove the oligarchs from power and work to increase the number of Ukrainians considered “middle class” from 4% to 60%.

He said that Svoboda is the party of the middle class and also does not want linguistic representation, such as in some European models with the Russian language being given official status in some regions of Ukraine. He sees that as unwanted and very dangerous, saying that other languages are wanted, but only Ukrainian should be the official language. That is why Svoboda was opposed to the language law passed on August 10, 2012, the repeal of which triggered serious disruption in the eastern regions and which



is now in limbo. He said that he used to live in Crimea, where Ukrainian-speakers were 24% of the population, but where of 600 schools only 7 were primarily Ukrainian language and of 300 newspapers only one was in Ukrainian.

I asked him for his opinion on what happened in Odessa on May 2nd, to which he explained that the first floor in particular of the labour building was attacked by the Right Sektor and pro-EuroMaidan demonstrators, with numerous Molotov cocktails being thrown into first and second floor windows (and out of them also) along with mutual exchanges of gunfire, both rubber and real bullets. All exits and the main entry were blockaded, and then the entry was set on fire. The heavy wooden door and frame were fully engulfed and coming apart by the time the fire department finally arrived.

The doors to the roof were said to be locked and numerous persons with red armbands were seen on the roof. The red arm bands were worn by the Communists, Stalinist Russia supporters, along with Red flags with Stalinist symbols. He said that many bodies were found on the third, fourth and fifth floors, where there was no fire. He however further stated that he was informed that one person had three bullet holes in his head, suggesting sniper fire, and one pregnant woman was strangled with electrical wire. He said that it was very important to have foreign investigators involved.

Donetsk

Reports say that Russian Secret and Security Service personnel were in the city before the crisis, forming the groups of pro-Russian supporters that included some Chechen terrorist elements. Oleh says the Svoboda Party believes the Ukrainian government's response in the area has been weak and that negotiating with the separatists would be a mistake, that the Russians would only understand a show of strength.

When asked about Svoboda's relationship with the Right Sektor, Oleh said that from the beginning of the EuroMaidan protests the Right Sektor was supportive of Svoboda's wish for non-confrontational engagement. The group was low-key and not particularly organized, but starting in January they grew much more militant and became recognized as heroes for combatting government forces and even standing up to the snipers. Because of this enhanced status their leadership decided to capitalize on the situation, taking from Svoboda its policies and principles and registering Right Sektor as a separate political entity, which will take votes from Svoboda's presidential candidate. Oleh was unclear of how Right Sektor was being funded.

The Right Sektor used EuroMaidan to promote themselves over Svoboda, the groups that they began working with. Oleh said that at the EuroMaidan 18 members of Svoboda were killed, but only one member of Right Sektor was said to be killed, and that death has not been confirmed.

Odessa

Oleh cautioned me that the Vice-Head of the Odessa Police was a separatist (anti-EuroMaidan) who took part in riots on the side of the separatist faction which had tents set up in the square. The separatists were hiding from behind the shields and backs of the police “protecting” them, shooting from behind their shields and throwing Molotov cocktails.

The Svoboda Party flag is blue and gold, but others in the Party have adopted the red and black colours of the Ukrainian Resistance Army (URA) of 1943-53 which fought the Soviets (initially with Nazi German allegiance). When the Nazis were defeated the URA, with some British and American support, fought a guerilla war against the Soviets under the leadership of Stepan Bandera until the KGB assassinated him in 1959. The “ultra” football “fan” groups often use the red and black symbolism, on flags and armbands as does the Right Sektor to



indicate support for the ultra-right anti-Semitic philosophy. The present leader of Svoboda (Freedom) Party, Oleh Tyahnybok, was kicked out of Our Ukraine Movement in 2004 for his speeches railing against Muscovites and Jews.

I asked who set the labour building on fire on May 2nd. Oleh said that the entrance was heavily barricaded with wooden skids. The skids and the wooden doors were attacked with Molotov cocktails, as were the first floor windows able to be reached by those throwing the incendiaries. He said second storey windows were not broken, but when I visited the site I observed that they clearly had been. He went on to say that there were two men on the roof who must have been fanatics.

Oleh went on to say very emphatically that there was an order made in the Svoboda Party not to use sticks and stones in peaceful demonstrations and not to beat soldiers. He said that for his Party and for the Ukrainian people, life is the paramount of all values, above everything else. Therefore Svoboda ordered its members not to do harm.

In closing he stated that the plan to block the roof access was not by Ukrainians. He said that it would serve Russian President Putin’s purposes of destabilization, not those of Svoboda’s “fatherland.” People died not of the flames but of gas asphyxiation.

My impression of him was that he was believable, honest and sincere – but that he did not have first-hand observation of the events he described. Although we had ideological differences, he was trying to help in passing on the information he had been given.

BACKGROUND: ULTRA-NATIONALIST PARTIES IN EUROPE

Over the last several years, an increasing presence of nationalist parties has surfaced in many European countries. The popularity of radical ideas espoused and promoted by nationalist parties is alarming throughout Europe. Parliaments of some European countries have small yet growing, loud, ultra-nationalist parties; some of which are openly neo-Nazi. The growing support and power these parties have gained bring to memory dark chapters of European history better left unvisited. Reasons for the rise of nationalist radical voices vary depending on the country. Ultra-nationalist parties often fixate on ethnic and linguistic issues. They emphasize differences and advocate for the preservation of their respective nations from the dangers resulting from those differences.



In **Greece**, the Golden Dawn, a far right political party, has surged in the last two elections to win nearly 7% of the overall popular vote. The party is overtly neo-Nazi; it has adopted Nazi symbols and rhetoric. Academic sources classify the Golden Dawn as racist, homophobic, and xenophobic. The party is very anti-Semitic. The party's symbol is strikingly similar to a swastika, and leaders of the party are Holocaust deniers that have made frequent comments glorifying fascist WWII leaders. Moreover, Golden Dawn is explicitly racist in advocating for a nation of one race. Many of the party members in parliament are currently in jail, including Nikolaos Michaloliakos, the party leader. The charge sheet includes murder, extortion, and involvement in the disappearance of up to 100 immigrants. In addition, Golden Dawn supporters have been involved in numerous anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant crimes; they have also had violent clashes with far left

demonstrators. Muslim immigrants, the Roma community, and the Jewish community are among the most targeted groups by the propagandist Golden Dawn. Although the party does not hold enough seats in the Greek parliament to be a serious contender for power, it is alarming that such radical views can garner nearly half million votes.

In nearby **Hungary**, the ultra-nationalist party Jobbik holds much more political power than its Greek counterpart. Jobbik came third in the 2014 elections with over one million votes, receiving a little over 20% of the overall popular vote. Like Golden Dawn, Jobbik has been described as fascist, neo-fascist, Neo-Nazi, extremist, racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, and homophobic. Despite rejecting these claims, party members have made outrageously anti-Semitic comments in the past. In November 2012, the party's deputy

parliamentary leader, Márton Gyöngyösi, stated "I think such a conflict makes it timely to tally up people of Jewish ancestry who live here, especially in the Hungarian Parliament and the Hungarian government, who, indeed, pose a national security risk to Hungary." Prominent members of the party have also referred to the Holocaust as "Holoscam" among other incendiary anti-Semitic rhetoric. Jobbik, like almost all other European nationalist parties is adamantly opposed to the European Union and advocate for protectionist economy.

In countries like **Poland** and **Ukraine**, nationalist parties tend to also be anti-Communist while retaining racist and anti-Semitic attitudes. In Ukraine, the Svoboda Party has a strong stand against Russian influence over Ukraine. Svoboda advocates sole dependence on Ukrainian language, challenging Russian-speaking Ukrainians who demand their linguistic rights be recognized. Once again, allegations of xenophobia, homophobia, and anti-Semitism are present here. An advisor for the party once referred to the Holocaust as



“a period of light in history.” Growing in power, 37 MPs, members of Svoboda now hold important positions in the Ukrainian government. Over 2.1 million votes were cast for the party in 2012 and the support for them is growing. Very recently, supporters of the Svoboda Party, organized as the Right Sektor, broke away from Svoboda and put forward their leader as a presidential candidate. The Right Sektor marches in military formations, wearing black uniforms, under a red and black flag. The Russians have cited the growing ultra-nationalist party as an excuse to meddle with Ukrainian land, citing the fighting of “fascism” as their objective.

In most European countries, nationalist parties perform better in the European Parliament elections than domestic elections. Perhaps the best example of this is the Front National Party in **France** which came first winning, nearly 25% of the national vote. Domestically, the party is very weak and only has two seats in the National Assembly. The Front National in France is economically protectionist, socially conservative, and against Muslim immigration. Despite allegations of anti-Semitic views, the party has been slowly shifting away from its perceived Jew-hating image. The current leader of Front National, Marine Le Pen, has been actively attempting to gain the support of the Jewish community in France. Le Pen has publically distanced herself from anti-Semitic comments made by her father, who led the party until 2010. While support for the Front National shows an escalation of anti-EU attitudes among the French, it does not carry neo-Nazi or fascist connotations as nationalist parties of Eastern Europe do.

Nationalist parties in western Europe are significantly different than those of eastern Europe. Nationalism in western Europe is much less radical; unlike eastern Europe, it is not reminiscent of WWII themes at all. Instead, it fixates on fighting the growing power

of the European Union, and immigration. The Party for Freedom in the **Netherlands**, for example, believes in economic conservatism, advocating decentralizing power, less taxes, less regulations, and less government spending. In addition to that, the party is opposed to Islamic immigration to the Netherlands. Leaders of the Party worry that the influx of the Muslim immigrant population poses a threat to Dutch values. The Party for Freedom is very skeptical of the European Union, demanding Netherlands' withdrawal to secure more autonomy. Voter support for the Party of Freedom peaked in 2010 when it came third in the parliamentary elections; the party lost some of its seats in 2012 yet retained its position as the third party receiving nearly one million votes. Contrary to anti-Semitic nationalist parties of Eastern Europe, the Party for Freedom is a strong proponent of Israel.

In **Great Britain**, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) is another example of the variation within the nationalist movement in Europe. It advocates for libertarian values, economic freedom, and withdrawal from the European Union. UKIP also wants immigration to be more restricted, mainly to curb immigration from Muslim and poor countries. Despite having no members in the British House of Commons, UKIP managed to receive more votes than any other party in the elections for the European parliament. Similar to Dutch nationalists, no ties are found here to neo-Nazism or anti-Semitism.

In conclusion, Europe has been experiencing a surge in support for nationalist parties. These parties are very diverse and can be radically different from one another. Some Eastern European countries such as **Ukraine**, **Hungary**, and others have ultra-nationalist parties that fixate on linguistic and ethnic issues. Common themes for Eastern European ultra-nationalists include advocating for socialist economic systems, anti-Semitism, and hostility towards immigrants. In Ukraine, because there is this cultural divide, the west advocates for free markets and uni-linguistic policy the east of Ukraine advocates for access to Russian markets and Russian language acceptability. Western Europe, nationalists tend to advocate for free market economics, more restrictive immigration policies, and the dismantlement of the European Union. In general, with the exception of Hungary and Greece to a lesser extent, nationalist parties have very little power and presence in Europe. However, it is important to keep a close watch on possible future changes in the European political landscape.

ELECTION VOTING DAY - KHERSON

On May 25th we arrived at the first poll at 7:15 a.m. to open it with the polling station workers.

At 10 a.m. I had arranged to meet Member of Parliament Vladimir Saldo to observe his polling station, get pictures and do media with him. When leaving he stated that a polling station had been firebombed earlier that morning, at 1 a.m., with a Molotov

cocktail, and led us by car to the location, where much more media was and where we also met with the mayor.

Initially the present mayor of Kherson, who was recently appointed after the removal of the Party of Regions appointee and who is a member of Tymoshenko's party, was very friendly. He was not so friendly when I mentioned that the local Party of Regions MP was there. He said he was glad to have missed Saldo's earlier visit.



The Molotov cocktail thrown at the entrance blew out the windows and blackened the walls, ceiling and metal of the polling station. Workers worked all night to clean up the damage and painted the concrete ceiling so that when voters arrived they would not feel intimidated. This polling station was very large, with three polls of some 2,000 eligible voters each. Most who entered did not realize that it had been bombed.



On the way to the bombing location we stopped at a very large cathedral that, during the Soviet era, had been converted into a sports facility and was run down. We were introduced to Father Aleksey, who proudly showed us around the renovated altar area and the areas under renovation. Member of Parliament Vladimir Saldo is on the committee raising funds for the restoration, and has contributed funding for the bell carillon and massive chandelier lights. Father Aleksey, is an Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate priest and has known Metropolitan Onufry since childhood.



I observed and recorded two of the three polls and proceeded to a total of 13 for the day, before closing in a rural location, one hour out of Kherson. I accompanied the poll electoral workers to the District Electoral Commission, recording the final turnover of ballots and entering into the computer, a process which lasted until 3 a.m.



While there were minor glitches, nothing major, other than the firebombing attempt to intimidate voters. There were also no reports of Right Sektor militants in the Kherson region, maybe because people here cannot vote if masked and carrying weapons!

A common sense with all people that I talked to was that everyone was so tired of the country's troubles and wanted for this election to be conclusive so that the President could get on with the business of leading Ukraine out of their difficulties and onwards to a peaceful, prosperous future.

MEETING WITH POLISH CULTURAL COMMUNITY

On May 26th we met with leader Rozaliya Liprinska of the Polish Cultural Community, who talked about the work that they do for the elderly, children, and that they also offer Polish language instruction so that members of the Polish-Ukrainian community of 300 persons are able to speak the language should they ever work in Poland in the future. To help them, they brought in a Polish teacher to the area. They believe that it is good to keep your culture and language, but it is also good for future business with Europe.



While I was there, they proudly played a stirring Polish song their community has produced in support of EuroMaidan with video taken in Kyiv at Independence Square.

They believe that the Ukrainian state language should be Ukrainian, and that the Ukrainian language will not affect other minority languages. All minority groups are together on language, in agreement that Ukrainian be the national language.

When asked who is behind the violence in Odessa, she said provocateurs. Svoboda, Russian provocateurs and that police were not vigilant.

She said that 3,000 Ukrainians faced, 300 Communists with red flags, and that Russian flags appeared on buildings.

Also a self-defence group, who are citizen militia, she said, came to Rozaliya to ask her to join as leader of the Polish community.

She said that she believes they are paid by Russia. She said that many of them had a Taganrog accent in Russian, from inside Russia. They asked where the rail station was, so they were not from Kherson.

She talked of the stereotypes, of eastern Ukrainians viewing western Ukrainians as fascists versus western Ukrainians viewing eastern Ukrainians as communists. East versus west.

One month ago military from western Ukraine arrived in Kherson and had a flat tire. They would not ask for help for from the locals in Kherson for fear of trouble with Russian-speaking persons. They said a replacement tire would come in three days. The Auto-Maidan group, which was a motorized version of EuroMaidan supporters, asked them what the problem was, and immediately got them a new tire.

Rozaliya expressed that politicians should speak and work together with all minorities and regions to better understand their concerns. She said that there are 114 nationalities represented in Ukraine, as well as many religious faiths, including Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, Jews and Lutherans.

MEETING WITH ROMA CULTURAL COMMUNITY – KHERSON

On May 27th I met with Yuri Ivanenko, who is head of the Philharmonic Society and the international non-governmental cultural organization of Roma for Russia, Ukraine, Greece, Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey, Israel and Poland. The Council of Roma has been founded in Ukraine.

He is :

- 1) Head of the Roma community
- 2) Coordinator of all minorities
- 3) Head of the Philharmonic Society

He says there are 47 Roma community organizations in Ukraine and that the program to support the Roma has existed for 10 years in Europe. The official membership is more than 200,000, but the total Roma population in Ukraine might be 300-350,000.

Not all Roma people are engaged in Ukraine. The Trans-Carpathian region has an estimated 50,000 Roma. In Ukraine the Roma community communicates by telephone, email, Skype and “gypsy mail.” In Kherson there are 5,000 Roma.

He said that in the education fields, primary, secondary and higher education, there is commonly discrimination against and segregation of the Roma. Many jokes are commonly told about the Roma, He feels the education system needs to do more than teach majority and minority cultures; there is a need to teach about the Roma so that they respect each other more.



When asked what he would like to see, Yuri said his motto is, “if a Roma makes a person change their mind about Roma, it is a job well done.”

I mentioned that 350,000 people of one group are a lot of votes, and asked if politicians have paid attention.

Official statistics in 1970 listed 42,000 Roma in Ukraine. Those numbers have not been officially updated in more than 40 years. He stated that in April 2013, a Roma strategy was drawn up by the European Union to assist, but Ukraine included no Roma representatives in the study. When asked if he had mentioned this to the OSCE, he said yes.

When asked if his community had concerns for language laws, he said there should be only one state language in the country. Every language now is commonly used unhindered every day. This is commonly felt, that language is not the problem, it is, however, made to be by the politicians. He stated that if he did not have an interpreter then he would communicate with me by pictures, drawings, expressions so that I would understand.

Since the independence of Ukraine, the government has been supportive and tolerant of all minority groups. He said that the Roma language is only oral, not written. He then presented me with a book of Roma language poetry to be given to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, written phonetically as there is no written Roma language. He expressed his heartfelt appreciation of a Canadian taking the time to talk with his community and others.

I asked if the community ever worked together to support a particular politician. He said that Poroshenko was strongly supported. I asked if President's Yanukovich or his party people came to talk to the Roma community. He replied no, not anyone. He went on to say that his daughter, a dentist, cannot find a job, partly because of discrimination and partly because there are few jobs. His son finished secondary school, but the Crimean University has been closed and he cannot afford to go to another university.

He also had some concerns with Svoboda and the Right Sektor, but said that “the country needs something necessary to show strength, cut the finger off to save the hand!”

When asked about religious affiliation, he said the Roma in Crimea are Muslim and Ukrainian Orthodox.

The Roma community hosts a Friendship of Nations event every year.

MEETING WITH GERMAN CULTURAL COMMUNITY - KHERSON

I met with German Ukrainian Community leader Lidiya Zimmer on May 27th. The German-Ukrainian community represents 30,000 persons and has been organized for 15 years, serving 1,400 people in Kherson, but with 350 permanent associations across Ukraine. They are helped once per year as a charity, with help from the Red Cross. They in turn help the elderly, children with language education, cultural activities and social work.



She proudly showed me pictures of the local cemetery for German-Ukrainians that once had been badly neglected. Her community came together, raised their own funds, and today the cemetery is a splendid, respectful resting place for those in their community who have passed on.

On August 28, 2013 they observed the 10th anniversary of the recognition of the victims of totalitarianism, in memory of the three million Germans deported to Siberia, Kazakhstan and the Ural Mountains by Stalin in September 1941. On the day of deportation, men were separated from women and children in railroad box cars. Fewer than half returned to Ukraine.

MEETING WITH RUSSIAN CULTURAL COMMUNITY - KHERSON

On May 27th we met with Tatiana Kuzmich, an educator and the leader of the Russian community. She had recently submitted a thesis titled "To Develop Social Competency Among Children by Using Material on Slavic Culture." She claimed that all her members are not Russian nationals, but mostly those Ukrainians that have strong attachments to Russia for reasons that I was about to learn.

First, though, she asked me if I had studied Russian classical literature to which I said “no”, that my high school did not delve into the subject nor did the Royal Canadian Air Force.



My rather trite retort aside, she continued by saying that Russian classical literature is all about spiritual and moralistic rights and wrongs of society and forms the basis of the Russian peoples’ outlook on life. She presented me with a book, in Russian, of course, by Nicolai Gogol, well-known in Russian classical literature, and encouraged me to find a way to read it to understand better the Russian mentality, perspective, and their depth of soul. Obviously this educator wished for me to become more informed – and I intend to further my education by reading an English translation of Gogol’s tales.

She indicated that her community was of course Orthodox, (Moscow Patriarchate), to which I stated that so was I. She followed up by saying that the spirituality professed is not simply religious but from the soul, but that the community sense of morality does come from both the Orthodox faith and from the Russian classical literature that reinforces these values in a non-ecclesiastic manner. She says that if one is a student of Russian classical literature, then one understands the Russian soul.

I then asked her directly what she believed to be behind the current problems in Ukraine. She says that the U.S. wants to be master of the world, but quickly added that many many Americans are good people but they are led by those that want domination. Russia does not want NATO on its border with Ukraine. I returned to her that it seems that both USA and the Soviet Union were trying to out dominate each other until the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence of many countries. So dominance is in-bred for the USA, but how does this dominance manifest itself into being problematic for her as a Ukrainian and as a Russian speaker and representative of the Russian supporting community?

She related that the concerns were on several levels – religious, educational and social.

Religion

She says that Ukraine has become a missionary target country for several other religions, most notably evangelical Protestantism. I told her that I noticed the Oral Roberts-style American evangelism being on Ukraine television with translations, something that I have never seen in previous visits to Ukraine. She emphasized that her culture has been established for over 1000 years compared to USA’s 200 years.

The Orthodox faith is predicated on scriptures, moral and ethical values; the Moscow Patriarch is quite insistent on the importance of maintaining these values of the basic premise of marriage being only a man and a woman, with the hopefulness of procreation, and for homosexual rights to being particularly identified with simply general rights for everyone regardless of sex or sexual identity. The west, she believes, has gone too far in gender identity, going far beyond equality for all giving special identity for some.



Education

She says that in the 1990's, teachers were considered as saints, highly recognized and respected. Students were taught subjects geared to make them think. Since then, teaching and subjects have been reduced to encouraging a community of consumers.

A forum held in Germany discussed this shift in methodology of education towards the western USA direction. In 2002, a German-created project to investigate various countries' educational systems' effectiveness and concluded that the former Soviet system gave the best results. Tatiana also said that Germany's education system reflects these better results of today's Russia, along with Scotland and China.

Tatiana wrote a some 200-page thesis on the prospect of introducing the Slavic culture as curriculum in Ukraine's education system, which won an award. She gave me a copy, in Russian, which I forwarded to Natalie Mychajlyszyn, International Affairs and Defence Analyst with the Library of Parliament fo read and advise and advise if it has merit for our purposes of discussion.

Socially

They have no linguistic concerns as long as they can converse in the language of their choice with their community. They do have concerns that the new religious organizations will somehow impact or affect their long held spiritual and community understanding and are very concerned about the shift in education methodology.

Without a sense of respect for teachers, the educational institution will downgrade student results and bring an element of youth discord, disinterest and rebellion into their homes and community that they have not seen before and will have difficulty accepting and dealing with.

We ran out of time, so I asked Tatiana if we could continue our conversation on May 29th to which she agreed. Obvious to me was her genuinely wanting to speak to me, to talk of her community's concerns. We were to meet her again after my visit to Odessa.

Tatiana began our May 29th meeting by saying that she had written out and practiced the points that she wanted to say, but first she presented me with a book of Russian fairy tales that she signed with best wishes for me to give to Prime Minister Harper, as a symbol of future cooperation. It was a gift from her heart.

She believes though that the crisis situation has come to a deadlock with no way out. She believes that Ukraine needs Canada to help. After all, we have two languages and a federal system that represents regions. She believes that Canada could explain to Kyiv that there is no danger, no real risk to some modest decentralization of power as our federal system, the US system and many other nations have. Such a system could recognize other languages (such as Russian) in certain oblasts (regions) as required.

- 1) Most important is that, by officially recognizing the Russian language in regions whose population is the majority (Kherson Oblast 80% for example), it would help protect and preserve both the Ukrainian and Russian languages by both being taught properly.

Some, though, do not want official or state (oblast) language equality or institution. She as a teacher knows full well and relates the discrimination in the



education system. Now, as the statistics show that of 63 schools in Kherson only 12 teach in Russian, while 80% of Kherson's population is Russian-speaking. Fifty-one schools don't teach Russian at all during regular school hours. After-hours language teaching is not funded by the regular school budget but by special budget funding that is felt even more to be at risk with the new government in Kyiv. She feels that in education the process of Ukrainianization limits the teaching and use of the Russian language.

- 2) Schools that teach in Russian devote 80% of their efforts to Russian literature and 20% to international literature. In Ukrainian taught schools the composition is the opposite, with 80% of emphasis on international literature and 20% on Russian literature. She feels that because of the importance historically of Russia, particularly in the eastern and southern regions, the literature should more fully be 50% Russian and 50% Ukrainian and others. She says that Belarus has successfully developed this model.

So many children speak Russian at home and on the streets, but are taught only in Ukrainian in the schools, meaning they have Russian the street language but are not being taught the correct pronunciation and correct writing skills. She says it distorts both languages unnecessarily.

If they were to have distinct language duality in the regions and support by the education system, then both languages would have technical support to retain their linguistic purity much better than now, minimizing slang and colloquialisms.

Ukraine has but 23 years of independence for its education system. Before 2011 a contest was developed by the Ministry of Education to encourage student proficiency. This included proficiency in many and all subjects and courses of education, including language proficiency. Students were chosen as winners for the city level, then for the regional level (oblast) but Russian language proficiency was stopped at the regional level and not taken to the Olympics of Scholastic Achievement, the nationals, in Kyiv. In 2011 Russian-language students were included. This year this national contest was supposed to be held in Donetsk, but was held in March in a village just outside Kyiv and given little notice. This contest was sponsored by Russia and the top prizes were a trip of 10 days to Russia.

Tatiana went on to discuss other issues of concern and sensitivity. She says that her community finds it offensive when they are considered to be a minority; that Russia founded the fortress in Kherson in 1792, and, as said before, in the region, the oblast, Russian-speakers are fully 80% of the people. Other regions reflect the same language makeup.

Relationships between Russia and Ukraine are different than relations between Poland and Russia because Russians settled the area and then, she says, there is a different affinity between the Slavic nations, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine that is inseparable. She says that the challenge is to engage western Ukraine socially with eastern Ukraine as western Ukraine historically had few Russian-speaking persons. However they must be lead to understand that a large part of the eastern region's culture is the Russian language, and in fairness as Ukrainians it should be respected and instilled in law in the regions where the great majority live. Also the parliament (Rada) of Ukraine should consider conducting its affairs in two languages to demonstrate respect for this reality.

She feels that in spite of the difficulty, there is a need to demonstrate this call for linguistic inclusivity to the government in power, to legitimize it for the regions.

Europe, North America and others all have adopted progressive legislation to support prominent linguistic differences. Furthermore, there simply must be a return to normalizing of relationships, because she says that if Russia joins with China in a combined economic partnership, China, the manufacturer to the world and Russia powering them both with energy resources, who can stop the two of them from dominating the world?

Crimea

As for the Crimea, she said that there were legitimate concerns that Russia had for the growing neo-Nazi movements in western Europe and Ukraine, because they could impact the people of the Crimea who share Russian values and possibly affect the security of Russian bases there. Additionally, the movement in the EuroMaidan was growing more and more militant with far right groups such as Right Sektor and Svoboda, who were pushing the government of Ukraine not just towards the European Union but also, most disturbingly for the Russians, towards becoming a NATO country. It was absolutely unacceptable to have the Russian fleet and bases to be located in a NATO country, particularly a NATO country being influenced by extremists with red and black flags and black military-style uniforms. Also, the large Russian-speaking population is very concerned if the current Kyiv government were to continue the anti-Russian Ukrainianization assimilation policy. Also, she stated emphatically that all Ukrainian TV channels are received in Crimea. The Crimea for 300 years was Russian or Soviet Union except for 24 years.

Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate



When asked if the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, supports Russia and Putin, she said of course they do, they work in tandem together, Putin and Kirill. Moscow Patriarch Kirill visited Ukraine for the first time in 2010 and gave a speech stating that the time will come when the Slavic world will communicate on an equal basis with Europe. She went on to say that it is necessary to work with the children, teach them their roots and soul of their Slavic culture and literature.

To this end she has authored a paper presented and tested by students for which she was awarded a degree “candidate” of pedagogical science, which we would refer to as a doctorate of philosophy and presented me with a copy to translate and read. The title of the paper (book) is *To Develop Social Competency Among Children by Using Material of the Slavic Culture*.

The way forward, she says, is to unite cultures across borders, not nations. Her ship of friendship thesis was trial run and proved to have good results. Tatiana, as leader of the Russian community, has had her ‘invitation’ to be interviewed by state secret service. She said that Ukraine’s secret police are very polite and invite people to visit their office for questioning and interrogation, but that some never return home afterwards. She also commented that at the elections of the Council of Europe several members had spoken out against current European policy and were supportive of Russia’s Putin.

MEETING WITH GERMAN LUTHERAN CULTURAL COMMUNITY - ODESSA

Late evening on May 27th I received a phone call from my interpreter who said that she was warned that a visit to Odessa could be life-threatening. I said we would meet in the morning. Much earlier, when talking to the German cultural group she had been told that there were demonstration participants connected with the German Lutheran Church in Odessa who wanted to talk directly with me about the recent tragedy.

On the walk to the car she handed me a letter that stated “do not give expression when you read this:

- We are being watched and followed
- They know what we are doing
- Your room has a camera in it
- Your life is in danger if we go to Odessa
- Give me this letter back for destruction”

She was visibly nervous. I asked her if she was refusing to go to Odessa. She said no, that she would do her job as I wished. Our driver also was a different driver for the day. She said we should not discuss our business in front of him, that he was probably with the secret service.



In Odessa we visited the German Lutheran Church and cultural centre with Victoria Brandt of the German community in Odessa, which represents some 1,500 persons in that region, teaching German language to their children and attending to the concerns of the elderly, the poor and promoting German culture.

She invited Alexander and Anton, who had taken part in the Odessa demonstration that resulted in some 40-50 killed on May 2, 2014, in to join the talk. They began by describing how it all began:

“There were two relatively peaceful demonstrations in the square with camps set up. One was anti-EuroMaidan, pro-Russian, with Communist sympathizers, with Russian funding, red flags with Kalashnikov guns on them, Russian flags, flags with Stalin and even Czarist flags. They were calling for an independent Ukraine, but with economic and social union with Russia. Their numbers were said to be some 400, and had five or six very large military tents for long-term protest. The police never asked them to move on or take down the tents.”

The other camp was pro-EuroMaidan, for a future with Europe and the West. This group had flags as well. Ukrainian, of course, and the black and red flags of the Right Sektor - apparently a historical flag, but more interpreted today as far right, as in the EuroMaidan

in Kyiv. This group that was connected with the right-leaning Svoboda Party are considered the heroes of the EuroMaidan for their stand against snipers, and just recently attained party status before the election. The EuroMaidan supporters' camp in Odessa's port was shut down by police and not allowed to continue. Issues escalated with sporadic attacks by each group. The anti-Maidan group was said to have attacked officers of the Self-Defence Group, who are citizens who have come together to try and stop violence but also are with the pro-EuroMaidan group.

With the issues in other parts of Ukraine escalating into outright rebellion, the churches of Odessa decided to act to calm Odessa events to help preserve peace. They met together and decided that they would march and hold a common service under the theme "We all live under one God," a message of conciliation and peace to be supported by all the area's religious leadership. There was only one dissenter, the priest of the Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate) Church.



These churches were refused permission to publicly march or hold a public service, and quietly held their mission of peaceful coexistence behind the doors of the Lutheran Church of Odessa. But the Orthodox Moscow religious leaders held their own "approved" march, included the anti-EuroMaidan protestors, with shouts and speeches of supporting Russia!



It is not simply coincidental that this occurred days before the tragic death of 50 people. The Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate, by doing this, is said to have incited what followed and should be investigated, and if deemed to have done so, should be held responsible for the tragedy that followed. It is imperative that a full understanding of religious influences must be made to understand the politics of Ukraine and the Slavic people.

May 2nd 2014, began with a planned "peaceful" March, which is popular to do to hype football games – Kharkiv and Odessa were to play that day. The march though was to separate the two "Maidan" factions by some two streets between as they marched in parallel. In spite of careful planning and police, this was a recipe for a disaster to occur. It spun out of control as the numbers became unmanageable by the police and the riot control police.

It is important to view all videos and photos to see the violent nature of the confrontation that went on for some eight hours and await a full investigation. Apparently European

authorities are engaged with Ukrainian authorities on this investigation. Alexander and Anton report no significant number of outsiders were involved in the riots, while other sources, such as Party of Regions Member of Parliament Vladimir Saldo said that a trainload of far right so-called “soccer fans,” armed with vests, spiked poles, weapons and shields came from Kyiv, not Kharkiv. Investigators should be able to determine if a trainload of “fans” came from Kyiv.

The groups confronted each other, separated by the riot police with shields to protect the anti-EuroMaidan, pro-Russian group because they were a smaller number. The mob went around police lines, and the first person was killed, at approximately 4-4:30 p.m., was pro-EuroMaidan.

The anti-Maidan, pro-Russian group declared loudly “the police are ours” because many of them (50) had the same red arm bands identifying them as to their support, making it very clear that they were working together. The two groups confronted with 40-50 police making a “turtle formation” of shields, facing the opposing EuroMaidan supporters and a second row of shields held over the heads of both rows to protect the police. However it wasn’t very good protection from Molotov cocktails flying everywhere. People were video recording the event from balconies, clearly showing the pro-Russia group hiding behind the police shield that from time to time allowed them to go through to attack or throw Molotov cocktails.

Between 5 and 6 p.m. the second pro-EuroMaidan person was killed. The anti-Maidan group was pushed to the trade centre, which they tried to occupy, but were blocked by an alpha formation of police. They then tried to defend themselves on an unfinished parking lot.

The pro-EuroMaidan mob then moved to the tent camp of the anti-Maidan group and burned it to the ground - because if they were not allowed a demonstration camp, then neither should the anti-Maidan Russian supporters. The anti-Maidan group, now reduced to a core number of some 200, because about 200 fled when the violence began, broke into, entered and barricaded the labour union building at approximately 8 p.m.

The building has four entrances, front, sides and back, is five storeys, and they said had 50 pro-Russians on the roof. They say that Russian propaganda of pictures of people



burnt by Molotov cocktails on head and arms has not been proven. Also, propaganda of rape and burning people is said to be not factual. No body has been found, no relations or friends claim that a woman is missing or has been assaulted and killed! Projecting the pro-Ukrainian, pro-EuroMaidan as extreme and violent, even cannibalistic, as is claimed in Russian media, is wildly exaggerated. Alexander and Anton said that the pro-EuroMaidan people who threw Molotov cocktails into the building could not reach the fourth floor. After 9 p.m. most died. One was a cleaning lady.

Some, maybe 50%, of the pro-Euromaidan outside the building allowed people to leave peacefully, but some beat the ones who tried to leave. Some moved a stage to the side of the building to help the anti-Maidan pro-Russians escape from the second and third-floor windows. Most who died were on the fourth and fifth floors. Pictures that I took of the building show that all fourth and fifth floor windows are intact.

They say that the fire department had two reasons why they did not arrive until it was too late:

- Their fire engine was taken away earlier that day!
- They should not work when there is violence and shooting.

They arrived 38 minutes after being called. The fire station was two minutes away. An investigation is now underway and is said to involve some respected journalists, as well, as European investigators, who are important to ensure transparency of the investigation.

Forty-eight people died: eight from jumping, thirty-two from smoke inhalation and eight from being shot.

Both Alexander and Anton were participants in the pro-EuroMaidan faction, and Alexander was shot in the chest with a rubber bullet (fortunately) but the mark and bruise was still there almost a month later. They both stated that both sides had shields, clubs, spiked poles Molotov cocktails, guns with rubber bullets, firearms, hand guns and rifles.

It is important to understand what inflames passion and emotion, triggering violent anger, as well as what can be done to minimize and negate it. We can and must understand better the sociological thrust behind this violence, to help others and to help us to understand each other better. I thanked Alexander, Victoria and Anton for their important input.

CONCLUSIONS

The Government of Ukraine was faced with a difficult situation following the annexation of Crimea by Russia as it endeavoured to provide opportunities to vote in the May 25th, 2014 presidential election to all its citizens. Given that there was only a two month period between the annexation and voting day, it can be argued that the government did all it could to ensure that voters in Crimea who wished to cast a ballot were able to do so.

However, given Russian intransigence in refusing to allow polling stations in Crimea, it would seem that Ukraine could have explored other options to allow people to register and vote, options that did not include the difficult and expensive border crossing.

One possibility would have been to use the voters' list from the 2010 election and allow people to update their information online. Admittedly, there could be some concerns about the reliability of data collected in this fashion, but it could also be argued that an imperfect voters' list is better than none. Some form of internet voting could have been attempted, however the obvious drawback is ensuring that those who cast ballots are actually who they say they are. Perhaps with more time this issue could have been solved.

For many minority groups in Ukraine, there has been an increasing unease that is growing into fear about some of the directions they see their society taking. While groups like Right Sektor and political parties like Svoboda have limited support at this time, there is a genuine concern that their influence is growing. In such situations perceptions are important. Russia's annexation of Crimea was accomplished without a shot being fired, largely because the Ukrainian military was not firmly ordered by the government to see Crimea remain part of Ukraine.

To repair the relationship with its minorities, it would be beneficial if the Government of Ukraine would recognize and legislate (perhaps even constitutionally) protections for minority language rights. All those I spoke with were in agreement that there has not been a language issue in the past, but all were extremely concerned about the future because it had been made an issue by politicians in Ukraine (and also in Russia). While linguistic inclusivity has been the practice, there are growing movements demanding Ukrainianization for forced assimilation that people have become aware of and which are resisted in certain reasons.

Religious leaders still have the opportunity to play a key role in returning peace and stability to Ukraine, but that is only possible if they all work together. It was disturbing to hear reports that some clergy were openly taking sides in what should have been a political dispute as some clergy have regularly taken sides in past elections and in the present unrest.

While Onufry, the Metropolitan of Kyiv, seems ambivalent, there are strong suggestions from the regions that, at the very least, the priests operate independently of the church, encouraging the radicals. It is also suggested that the Moscow Patriarch, Kirill condones and maybe even encourages support for the Russian-leaning radicals. Various reports

describe Patriarch Kirill. His message of May 3, 2014, was rather cryptic and seemed to say that there were two political positions to be considered in Ukraine.

There must be follow-up to meet with other principals of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations in Kyiv to sense the particular interests and concerns of their members and explore possibilities for reconciliation of the different Orthodox churches of Ukraine into one single organization.

A visit to Kharkiv on the same premise as detailed in this report would be helpful, as it has been a centre of strife, but less so now. Kharkiv, of course, is a university city of some 14 universities and also the home of the Reverend Michael Kit who I am sure would be very helpful.

There must be a meeting and dialogue with national and local police leaders to determine their protocol for responding to disturbances and riots of small to large scale. Is the leadership ideologically driven, party driven, or internationally recognized performance driven?

There must also be a dialogue with Patriarch Kirill to determine his views and advice on the way forward, and to introduce him to western inquisitiveness about the Moscow Patriarchate, a church which influences not just Ukraine and Russia but also in the United States and Canada. A visit to Moscow is required to do so.

The Police

It appears that because of the perceived ineptness of the Government of Ukraine to act immediately on the invasion that there is a growing discontent and a marshalling (if you will) of vigilante-style community protection groups of ordinary citizens sort of deputized into community security control.

They have seemingly evolved into a near nation-wide organization that is said to be aligned with the Right Sektor, although not yet established as a fact. The people of Ukraine are disillusioned by the lack of police presence to stabilize events before they get out of control to the level that the riot police have to be called.

Even the riot police, with shields, in Odessa barricaded themselves “turtle” style with a solid line of shields forward and the policemen behind with shields raised overhead, capping the front vertical shield. A good defence against rocks, but then the Russian-speaking Communist anti-Maidan supporters behind were considered protected by the police and then they allowed the anti-Maidan Russian supporters to come forward through their lines by opening their shield line to shoot guns and throw Molotov cocktails and other objects

This is not rumour. This is captured by pictures in the Odessa section of this report. The police, the pro-Russia group, the anti-Maidan group shouted, “the police are our’s.” It was reported that some 30 police actually wore the plain red armband that identified the anti-Euromaidan, pro-Russian demonstrators.

In the past, during the Orange Revolution, there were no police anywhere, except for a few that joined the protest. It was the same in EuroMaidan when I was there in December.

In Odessa, and I understand in other parts of Ukraine too, for the police not to come on in force with strength and to call for military help if necessary to try to prevent a tragedy as happened in Odessa on May 2, 2014, is unconscionable. This and other tragedies could have been averted or at least greatly mitigated if Ukraine's police, riot police and military was truly on the job and under government control, which it is supposed to be.

What I saw of policing in Ukraine was a presence at Independence Square during the Orange Revolution, not a presence at EuroMaidan in December, and from pictures and accounts, not in Odessa, stopping the tragedy. However, I saw a lot of police presence on the way from Kherson to Kyiv. Three stops, three 100 hryvnia cash payments for the driver to continue. Twice supposedly for speeding, and once for an extra seat chair over the specified seat number allowed in the van.

In a perfect society I suppose we would not need rules; a society where the police rely on graft to supplement their paychecks and shy away from major conflicts, is in trouble.

MEETINGS WITH UKRAINE EMBASSY

April 3, 2014

I, along with Senator Anne Cools, met with Ukraine's Ambassador, Vadym Prystaiko to discuss linguistic and cultural inclusivity, and the ability of the Church to disseminate this message to help diffuse the tension and violence in Ukraine.



I told the Ambassador that my previous meetings with leaders of the Russian-Orthodox and Ukrainian-Orthodox churches had resulted in a mutual desire to help Ukraine. The churches in fact could be the best agency to promote linguistic and cultural inclusivity to the citizens of Ukraine, because they were separated from the government's reach and could disseminate a proclamation of inclusivity for political candidates from Ukraine's citizens.

Ambassador Prystaiko informed me of Ukraine's previous efforts to codify language rights, most notably the law on regional languages and its recent repeal. The law was to

provide support for minority languages that had more than 10 per cent usage by the population in Ukraine's regions. The problem with the law, the Ambassador explained, was that it required that almost 20 languages be supported. This law was repealed by the new government, particularly at the instigation of the Svoboda Party, to deny the language needs of the regional populations; some took this as offensive and threatening to the Russian language.

To ease tensions with linguistic and cultural inclusivity, Ambassador Prystaiko noted that it was important to not unnecessarily alienate Russian-speaking Ukrainians. While he believes that the Russian language is not oppressed, it is important to create a simple solution that all sides can agree on. He said he was also weary of people who have prejudged the situation before they come to Ukraine because some western governments and individuals have already "picked their sides."

June 2, 2014

Upon my return from Ukraine I met once again with Ukrainian Ambassador Vladym Prystaiko. I updated him about my month-long mission, where I met with various religious leaders and some community leaders. We discussed the influence the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow-Patriarchate) has in Ukraine. Ambassador Prystaiko commented most notably on their suspected large role in importing alcohol, tobacco and cars as well as their recent dominating influence in Crimea.

I informed the Ambassador about my findings in Odessa where it was reported by Lutherans that Orthodox Moscow-Patriarchate clergy marched with communist separatists chanting loudly pro-Russian slogans, inciting the pro-Euromaidan followers to violence that, within days, led to 50 people dying in the labour union building.

We had a follow up discussion on Ukraine's recent language law repeals. Ambassador Prystaiko informed me that since parliament repealed the regional language law, around five drafts for a new and clarified law have been made by MPs.

I discussed the importance of teaching culture and linguistics in Ukraine's schools, with a focus on the Russian language in oblasts where the majority are Russian-speaking. While in Ukraine some told me that it is very important to incorporate Russian literature into the school curriculum. The Ambassador made the distinction between teaching Russian culture and linguistics versus teaching every course in Russian. He explained that the idea of Pan-Slavic teaching goes beyond just Russian and that it must include many other languages. He also noted that out of the 400 schools in Crimea, only four were taught in Ukrainian.

In addition, we discussed recent developments relating to NATO, Ukraine and Russia. The question was raised whether Russia reacted in Crimea to protect its bases, fearing that Ukraine would join NATO - in which case the Crimea bases would then be in a NATO country or ordered out. With a strong representation in the Rada (Parliament) of 37 Svoboda MPs, very much anti-Russian, pro-NATO, and presidential candidate Tymoshenko possibly succeeding to win the election by calling for the complete

withdrawal of Russia's Black Sea fleet from the Crimea, could this have been considered threatening to Russian security? The Ambassador also noted that Russia is well protected and has its own version of the North Atlantic Agreement signed with other countries such as China and should not feel threatened by NATO.

Ambassador Prystaiko then commented that Ukraine's military needed many things to help them, and had received from Germany and Poland basic items such as body armour and field housing, but that much more is needed and he was hoping that Canada would help. I passed this on to the Parliamentary Secretary for National Defence, James Bezan, just days later, and also mentioned it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in a meeting on June 16. He had not heard of the request but had his staff look into it immediately.

MEETING WITH RUSSIAN EMBASSY

April 4, 2014

Along with Senator Anne Cools I met with Igor Girenko, head of the Embassy's bilateral section.

We discussed the possibility of an open letter from the churches in Ukraine that would state the citizens' desire for linguistic and cultural inclusivity for all Ukrainians. Mr. Girenko was supportive of the idea and agreed that the Moscow Patriarch would be a channel to reach Mr. Putin.

Mr. Girenko also noted a hope for fair and democratic elections in Ukraine. He understood that there would be criticisms of some of Russia's actions, but noted that hearing the same unfair clichés was not helpful to anybody.

With a lot of Ukrainian and North American investment in Russia, Mr. Girenko stated his hope for a positive continuation of business, despite recent sanctions.



June 4th, 2014



I met with Minister-Counselor Petr Plikhn at the Russian Embassy.

Mr. Plikhn informed me that Russia had proposed a draft resolution to the UN Security Council for “humanitarian charity” for persons in the areas affected by conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The draft resolution was tabled to the Security Council on June 3rd. Mr. Plikhn also noted that he feels the best way to help citizens in areas of conflict involves stopping the military escalation in Ukraine. He believes Ukraine’s military presence is creating the opposite effect of what Kyiv wants, which is peace and stability.

He also feels that including people in local communities and politics in discussions for peace is necessary.

Mr. Plikhin also pointed out that minority groups in Russia, like the Jewish community, are concerned for their families in Ukraine. He said that these groups have been making efforts to assist their communities in Ukraine through fundraising and awareness campaigns. Specifically for the Jewish community, Mr. Plikhin has said that the Right Sektor group rings bells of past terror that all Jews felt during the Second World War. He notes that groups like the Right Sektor are small, but could easily poison the political system.

Escalating violence, Mr. Plikhin believes, could also be caused from the increase of Russian and Ukrainian nationalism. He is concerned that this can cause citizens to act out in extreme ways. This, he said, was evident and of a growing concern in Crimea.

In terms of linguistic inclusivity, Mr. Plikhin believes that there needs to be an adequate replacement for Ukraine’s scrapped language laws. He noted that Russian-speakers have the feeling of being left out, which could also be a trigger for action. Increased powers to local authorities, he says, could be ways to help establish more rights and identity for Russians in Ukraine.

However, to truly negotiate linguistic inclusivity, Mr. Plikhin feels that communication between East and West Ukraine to bridge the cultural and linguistic divide and stereotypes is the most important first step toward a solution.

I informed Mr. Plikhin about my meetings in Ukraine with various religious and community leaders. I mentioned that there was concern over the close ties between the Moscow-Patriarch and the Russian Government. Mr. Plikhin stated that the church decides their own actions, not the Russian Government, however, he noted that some priests might be acting on their own and not listening to what the leaders have advised. He said the church should only be focused on community support.

Mr. Plikhin and I also discussed Russian and Ukrainian border concerns. Mr. Plikhin informed me that the Russian border teams are in contact frequently with Ukrainian border teams. However, some borders are harder to patrol as they cut through villages, making half the village one nationality and the other have another nationality. Typically, he said, these areas are less managed which means that the flow of people to and from the border is not always controlled.

Mr. Plikhin stressed that the violence in Ukraine must be stopped at least to allow the general population to flee via secure corridors. He said that they had proposed a resolution to that effect to the United Nations Security Council.

June 12, 2014

I met with Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov at a farewell reception given in his honour. He spent some ten minutes with me, expressing his concerns, stressing that, from Russia's perspective, it was important for linguistic inclusivity in regions where the majority are Russian-speaking. He also stressed that a safe-passage corridor must be provided for private citizens to escape the violence.

MEETING WITH GOPAC

On June 17, 2014 I met with Akaash Maharaj, the Executive Director of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) Global Secretariat and Jeane Pierre Chabot, the Program Advisor for GOPAC.

We discussed my month-long mission in Ukraine and in particular, my many meetings with various religious leaders and heads of Churches.



I shared with them the idea that an open letter from the churches could still be a viable framework for peace and reconciliation, however, these religious bodies need to be approached and given the opportunity to start an open dialogue.

While my project is different from the projects that GOPAC is working on, we were able to find common ground in the need for continued discussions between Russia and Ukraine, east and west Ukraine, as well as including the church and grassroots leaders in formal communications. Mr. Maharaj was interested in the contacts I made in the Ukrainian and Russian Embassies as well as the heads of churches in Canada and

Ukraine, and I offered to assist him with any introductions that would be of help to him and his team.

Mr. Maharaj expressed an interest in using his parliamentary contacts in Turkey to facilitate a meeting with the Patriarch of Constantinople, the titular head of all Orthodox churches, who might be persuaded to use his offices in bridging the gap between the churches and clergy of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Moscow Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. He also felt that GOPC members in both Russia and Ukraine could be helpful in facilitating such a dialogue.

He suggested that at the Presidential level there is sometimes a reluctance to change

From our meeting, we were both able to point out the balance of trust that citizens have in their churches, and the influence that Russian President Putin has within the Moscow Patriarchate. Further follow up in Ukraine and Russia is needed to meet these leaders and to see first-hand their willingness to communicate with one another.

There was concern over the idea that Putin wants to use religion and the the Moscow Patriarchate as a tool to return Russia and the surrounding countries to the days of Imperial Russia, but it remains unclear as to how much influence the Russian President has on the Church, however certainly there is some and it is serving Putin well.

Mr. Maharaj agreed that in Ukraine (and in Russia) church leaders are viewed as being far less corrupt than politicians, which would allow religious leaders to serve as brokers between different factions for the social good. A religious leader bestowed a new church would consider the act a blessing not corruption and would feel genuinely that it would be perfectly okay to favour the politician with attention from the pulpit.

CANEOM PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE EARLY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE, 25 MAY 2014



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 25 May Early Presidential Election has been held and in the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian territory has met international democratic standards.
Notwithstanding, the troubling violence in Luhansk and Donetsk, and the illegal annexation of sovereign Ukrainian territory in Crimea the election is a clear and unambiguous reflection of the democratic will of the Ukrainian people.
- The 25 May Early Presidential election in Ukraine took place in every region of the country except occupied Crimea
- The illegal occupation and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation in effect disenfranchised over 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens and deprived them of the right to vote for their President;
- Excepting Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where the violent actions of militants and unwarranted intrusions and destabilization by the Russian Federation disturbed both the campaign and the administration of the election, the overall campaign was relatively calm and free of violations;
- The disenfranchisement of voters in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, as well as citizens of Ukraine living in the occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, is not the result of actions taken by Ukraine's governing authorities, nor its election administration. Rather, the disenfranchisement of voters in these regions of Ukraine is the result of illegal invasion, the intimidation causing fear and annexation by a foreign power, or the violence caused by armed militants acting outside the boundaries of law;
- The electoral, legal framework underwent several amendments over the course of the election period to strengthen its compliance with international standards and democratic principles. These changes balance the protection of voting rights and the integrity of voting processes in a difficult security environment.
- In general, the Central Election Commission organized Early Presidential Elections in a professional, non-partisan manner, and within prescribed legal deadlines despite a shortened election timeframe and disruptive actions by militant groups in some parts of the country. Where the commissions were operational, district and precinct election commissions were observed to fulfill their legal responsibilities. The most frequently cited challenge conveyed at these levels related to turnover of DEC and PEC commissioners, which was attributed to insufficient and geographically uneven nominations by presidential candidates and low compensation for heavy workloads. Improvements to the quality, scope and accessibility of PEC training nonetheless mitigated risks of commissioner inexperience.

- Attempts by militant groups to sabotage the Early Presidential Election in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts slowed, and blocked, the formation of DEC and PECs, the transfer of voter lists and other procedures in those oblasts. Alleged violations reported to have occurred in these oblasts by militant groups prior to Election Day included: threats, physical assaults of DEC commissioners, destruction of DEC materials, and shutdowns of DEC premises. The CANEOM Mission visited several PEC premises that had been shut down by armed militants in the Donetsk Oblast. It condemns in the harshest possible terms the use of violence and intimidation by these militant groups, which violated basic democratic and human rights, and underlines that these actions and their consequences were not representative of election processes conducted in the territory of Ukraine.
- The pre-election period as observed by CANEOM observers was largely free of violations, and observers noted a low number of complaints in the election process;
- The misuse of administrative resources was almost completely absent from the election process;
- Excepting the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, where voting did not take place due to the continued illegal occupation of sovereign Ukrainian territory by the Russian Federation, and Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where the violent and condemnable actions of militants significantly disrupted voting and disenfranchised many citizens, CANEOM observed a calm, orderly and transparent opening process, voting process and close and count in the vast majority of cases.
- Delays were caused in tabulation of results by a breakdown of the CEC server.

1. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The 2014 Early Presidential Elections¹ in Ukraine are taking place against the backdrop of the deepest political crisis facing the country since its independence. Two strong forces are at play in Ukraine – one is the people of Ukraine, who are actively engaged in the long and difficult process of building a democratic, free society which benefits its citizens. The other is the Russian Federation, which has invaded and annexed sovereign Ukrainian territory in Crimea and is destabilizing the state and society, directly threatening the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

What began in November 2013 as peaceful protests against President Viktor Yanukovich’s refusal to sign an *Association Agreement* and a *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement* with the European Union spiraled quickly into state-sanctioned action and subsequent violence against those protestors, which culminated on February 18-20 with government forces using deadly force against its own people – resulting in the deaths of some 100 individuals. The violence wrought by the Yanukovich regime led to the abandonment of the President by the ruling majority in Parliament, and Yanukovich fled Kyiv on 21 February.

In accord with the Constitution, Parliament appointed Speaker Oleksandr Turchynov as acting president, and confirmed a new Cabinet of Ministers and Prime Minister on 27 February. Early presidential elections were designated for 25 May. Then, on 28 February movements of Russian Federation troops began in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. A referendum was held in Crimea on 16 March, with the

¹ Presidential elections were scheduled for 2015.

presence of Russian armed forces, which was deemed illegitimate and illegal by an overwhelming majority of nation states. The Russian Federation illegally annexed Crimea.

The last two months have seen rising violence in eastern oblasts, particularly Donetsk and Luhansk, where there is evidence of unwarranted and illegal intrusion of foreign involvement in fomenting unrest. In addition, there is evidence of violence, supported by local separatists, extremists and criminal elements.

Ukrainian military and law enforcement units continue an active anti-terrorist operation in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which has had uneven success. Sporadic, and at times, heavy fighting between Ukrainian units and pro-Russian militants has unfortunately become a common occurrence in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

2. ELECTION SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Ukraine uses a two-round countrywide district system for presidential elections. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first round of voting, a run-off is held between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes.

The legal framework that governs presidential elections in Ukraine is comprised of the Constitution of Ukraine, *Law on Election of the President of Ukraine*, *Law on the Central Election Commission (CEC)* and *Law on the State Voter Register*, as well as provisions of the *Code of Administrative Adjudication*, the *Code of Administrative Offenses*, *Criminal Code* and CEC resolutions that are adopted during elections to clarify administrative procedures.

In March 2014, the Verkhovna Rada amended several key components of this legislative framework. The Presidential Election Law was amended to provide greater consistency and clarity to procedures for the revision of voter lists, printing of ballots and delivery, voting, and tabulation of results.

The new law also strengthens the administration of presidential elections by allowing registered candidates to nominate one member for each election commission and prohibits revisions to voter lists on Election Day. This stands to reduce administrative burdens as well as the susceptibility to fraud by eliminating the possibility of the same voter voting at multiple polling stations.

The new law increases transparency of presidential elections by allowing for accreditation of observers from domestic non-governmental organizations and requires online publication of resolutions adopted by election commissions at the national and district levels.

Experts have raised concerns about additional pressure being placed on the CEC to prepare district and precinct election commissioners under amended procedures and condensed timelines. Collaboration between the CEC and expert groups has resulted in notable improvements to the scope and quality of election commissioner training, as well as greater use of online tools to inform voters about election processes.

On April 15, the Verkhovna Rada passed the *Law on Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Order on the Temporary Occupied Territory of Ukraine*. It established that the Early Presidential Election could not be held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Districts 1-10) and the City of Sevastopol (Districts 224-225). It also set out procedures for voting by residents of those territories, as well as persons that became internally displaced following their illegal occupation by the Russian Federation.

On May 15, the Verkhovna Rada enacted amendments to the *Law on Presidential Elections* to strengthen security measures to protect voters and the integrity of voting processes in response to the seizure of government buildings, as well as intimidation and incidents of violence against election commissioners

by militia groups in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. These amendments strengthened the protection of district election commission (DEC) premises and empowered the CEC to change their location outside of their respective constituency.

Under these amendments, the CEC can also request the Security Service of Ukraine to accompany the transportation of ballots and other materials between precinct and district election commissions. Further amendments to the Presidential Election Law on May 20 clarified that ballots would be considered unused and destroyed if they could not be transported between the CEC, district and precinct election commissions.

On May 6, the *Law on Presidential Elections* was amended to reduce the minimum number of members required to form an election commission at the polling station level.² This allowed for a majority of precinct election commissions to form within legal deadlines.³

The revisions to Ukraine's presidential election law strengthen compliance with international standards and democratic principles. The legislation was complimented by frequent CEC resolutions that provided for protection of voting rights and secure access of voters to polling stations.

3. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

23 citizens of Ukraine registered as candidates for the 2014 Early Presidential elections. 2 candidates withdrew before the 2 May withdrawal deadline, leaving 21 candidates on the ballot. After the deadline passed, 4 candidates announced that they were withdrawing from the campaign; because they withdrew after the deadline, their names remained on the ballot.⁴

A series of national debates (three candidates per debate) were organized on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the two weeks prior to the election and Friday 23 May. They were held on First National Television, the state-run TV channel.

CANEOM observers met with candidates and representatives of campaigns at both at the national and regional levels. By and large, observers reported that candidates and their representatives were satisfied with the work of the Central Election Commission and had few concerns with the overall administration of the election.

Candidates and their representatives noted some concerns with proper access to media, referring several times to the fact that they found it difficult to gain access to the larger television networks.

The campaign period as observed by CANEOM observers was notable as well for the lack of misuse of administrative resources. Only sporadic and isolated incidents, for example – the attendance of a candidate's rally by an oblast governor during working hours – were reported by CANEOM observers.

Candidates and their representatives raised serious concerns over the safety and security of both their commission members and campaign staff in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where armed militants in several locations have sought to sabotage and undermine the electoral process.

² CEC Resolutions № 460 and 461 cancelled the registration of presidential candidates Natalia Korolevska and Oleh Tsariiov based on receipt of their written applications to withdraw before the legal deadline of May 2.

³ As part of amendments to the Presidential Election Law on May 20, the Verkhovna Rada also entitled DEC members to increase the number of PEC members to 18 persons if it helped facilitate the administration of Election Day procedures. This marked the third amendment in three months to address the size of precinct election commissions, which runs contrary to international standards.

⁴ Candidates Korolevska and Tsariiov withdrew prior to the May 2 deadline. Shkiryak, Klymenko, Symonenko, Shushko announced that they are withdrawing their candidacy after the 2 May deadline.

Campaigning focused largely on candidates meetings and rallies, billboards, television, radio and print advertising, and the distribution of leaflets. Observers reported no problems at candidates' rallies. There were limited reports of damaged campaign billboards in some regions.⁵

During the campaign period observed by CANEOM long-term observers, it was more restrained and subdued than usual. The main issues of focus of the campaign were the issues of national security; national unity; geostrategic course and the status of the Russian language. Traditional campaign issues, such as the economy, jobs, the provision of health services and education appeared as secondary issues.

4. CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION SECURITY

The Ministry of Internal Affairs informed CANEOM that almost 99,000 law enforcement officers would provide security on election day. Mobile groups were made available to provide additional security as necessary, and almost 29,000 officers from various services⁶ were used to patrol streets on election day.⁷

In the vast majority of the territory of Ukraine, except in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and the occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, CANEOM observers reported that the security situation during the campaign period was satisfactory. There were limited reports of concerns from law enforcement officials that redeployment of their personnel into eastern regions of the country would cause difficulties in providing security in their home region.⁸ These concerns turned out to be unfounded.

In parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, however, the security of both the campaign and the administration of the election process was seriously undermined by the presence and intrusion of armed militants who attempted in several cities and regions to sabotage and disrupt the election process. As of April 30 there were 3,352,382 registered voters in Donetsk and 1,797,379 in Luhansk. The violence in these regions, as well as intimidation and abductions of election officials, journalists and civilians by armed militants raises concerns about the access of the right to vote of approximately 14.1% of the Ukrainian electorate.

CANEOM stresses, however, that this potential disenfranchisement of voters in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, as well as citizens of Ukraine living in the occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, is the result not of actions taken either by Ukraine's governing authorities, nor its election administration. Rather, the disenfranchisement of voters in these regions of Ukraine is the result of illegal invasion and annexation by a foreign power, or the violence caused by armed militants acting outside the boundaries of law.⁹

⁵ Zhytomyr, Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia

⁶ In order to provide adequate security the State Border Service, Ministry of Emergency Situations and Tax Police and civilian patrols were engaged to assist.

⁷ Meeting with Andriy Chaliy, Head of Department of Mass Events, Ministry of Internal Affairs, 23 May

⁸ Raised by the deputy chief of police in Khmelnytsk in a meeting with CANEOM LTOs. Similar issues were raised in Lviv.

⁹ On 24 May the General Prosecutor of Ukraine reported that to date, 83 criminal proceedings have been opened related to impeding the election process in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

5. RIGHT TO VOTE OF CITIZENS FROM TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND RIGHT TO VOTE OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

As of 30 April, 2014, 1,531,366 citizens of Ukraine were registered to vote in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and 308,913 in the city of Sevastopol. Because of the Russian Federation's invasion and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, polling stations were not opened in Crimea, and Ukrainian citizens had to leave the republic to vote.

The Ministry of Social Policy reported to CANEOM observers that 8666 residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea have registered¹⁰ with the Ministry as internally displaced persons to mainland Ukraine.¹¹ Amendments to the Law on Presidential Elections simplified the procedure for changing the place of voting for Ukrainian citizens registered in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Crimean residents needed only to provide their passport showing that they were registered in Crimea to temporarily change their voting address.

4,451 citizens registered to vote in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and 1,587 citizens registered in Sevastopol city registered to vote outside of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The vast majority of these are internally displaced persons;¹² according to estimates, very few residents of temporarily occupied territory registered to vote, as the procedure necessitated leaving Crimea to register by 19 May, returning home, and then returning to mainland Ukraine to cast a ballot on 25 May.

In addition to the obvious intimidation by occupying authorities and the possibility that citizens may not be allowed to return to occupied territory after registering and/or voting, the cost of travel (two round trips) was cited as a prohibitive reason for the low number of Crimean residents who registered to vote on mainland Ukraine.

6. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Presidential elections in Ukraine are administered at three levels. The Central Election Commission (CEC) is the permanent legal body that presides over the preparation and conduct of elections, the formation of District Election Commissions (DECs) which in their turn establish Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). Ukraine is divided into 225 electoral districts. The CEC formed 213 DECs for the Early Presidential Elections after determining that election procedures could not be administered on the territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. 32,235 PECs were formed across these election districts for the Early Presidential Elections.

The CEC is composed of 15 members appointed by Ukraine's Parliament on the nomination of the President. The CEC organized the Early Presidential Elections in a non-partisan manner, and within prescribed legal deadlines despite a shortened election timeframe and disruptive actions by militant groups in some parts of the country. CANEOM observed improvements in the provision of training to DEC members through the CEC in partnership with legal experts and civil society organizations.¹³

¹⁰ Ukrainian citizens who receive social payments (pensions, etc), are registered as residing in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and who fled Crimea must register in their place of internal displacement with the Ministry of Social Policy in order to continue receiving social payments.

¹¹ Meeting with Minister of Social Policy Lyudmyla Denisova, 23 May 2014

¹² 1,483 registered in Kyiv city; 763 in Mykolaiv; 442 in Kyiv oblast

¹³ The CEC partnered with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in training DEC Chairs, Deputies and Secretaries and certifying them to train PEC commissioners in each election district. This involved: 119 trainings for DEC members, 216 trainings for PEC members, and 211 trainings for PEC members conducted by DEC

District Election Commissions (DECs) are administrative bodies responsible for the formation, proper functioning and establishment of voting results of Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). On April 14, the CEC formed 213 out of 225 DECs. This excluded twelve districts under illegal occupation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and City of Sevastopol.

Attempts by militant groups to sabotage the Early Presidential Election in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts slowed, and blocked the formation of DECs and PECs, the transfer of voter lists and other procedures in those oblasts. Alleged violations that have been reported in these oblasts by militant groups include: threats, physical assaults and even kidnappings of DEC commissioners, destruction of DEC materials, and shutdowns of DEC premises. The CANEOM Mission visited several PEC premises that had been shut down by armed militants in the Donetsk Oblast.¹⁴ An overall climate of intimidation of citizens and officials was created.

Where operational, DECs have broadly been observed to function satisfactorily in terms of providing technical assistance and training to PECs, meeting prescribed legal deadlines for the transmission of preliminary voter lists and invitation cards, and coordinating with local law enforcement bodies in preparation for elections.¹⁵

The most frequently cited challenge conveyed to CANEOM observers by DEC Members related to the replacement of DEC and PEC commissioners. As of May 21, the CEC replaced more than 1800 DEC commissioners. This turnover was spread evenly across the country and was attributed to insufficient compensation for heavy workloads and corresponding legal responsibilities. The impracticality of having DEC commissioners who resided in other districts was mentioned as a common cause of their resignation.

By the deadline for PEC formation, nominations for PEC commissioners were not received in sufficient numbers or evenly distributed from presidential candidates to meet minimal legal requirements in many election precincts. The Vekhovna Rada amended the Presidential Election Law and reduced the minimum size of PECs from 12 to 9 commissioners. DECs did not receive guidance on how to fill these positions, which have also been subject to high turnover rates.

Improvements to the quality, scope and accessibility of PEC training was expected to mitigate risks from commission inexperience. Training sessions observed by the CANEOM Mission were diverse in practical and theoretical content, and accompanied by comprehensive briefing materials.

Shortages of computers and other material resources were another area of concern for commissioners at the district and precinct levels, which the CEC acknowledged and attributed to the unexpected shortening of the election cycle.

Transfer of Preliminary Voter Lists

members. The CEC also collaborated with IFES to produce video tutorials on election procedures and with OSCE/ODIHR to produce written training materials and manuals for DEC and PEC members. The CEC also produced two public service announcements to mobilize voter turnout that ran on public television stations starting on the week of May 15.

¹⁴ CANEOM observers confirmed the presence of armed militant groups and that some DECs and PECs were not operational in Krasnogorovka (PECs 140711, 140317) Mariinka (PECs 140309, 140310) and Donetsk City (DECs 42, 43) in the Donetsk oblast.

¹⁵ Without exception and despite burdensome work schedules, DEC commissioners were also reported to accommodate questions from CANEOM observers and invite them to trainings and meetings.

The transfer of preliminary voter's lists was delayed by the CEC in fear that separatist groups would use it for the so-called referenda which occurred on May 11, in parts of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts.¹⁶ As of May 22, only 17% of PECs in Luhansk Oblast and 31% of PECs in Donetsk Oblast had received voter lists. Legal deadlines for the transfer of preliminary voter lists and invitation cards to PECs in other oblasts have been fulfilled.

7. VOTER REGISTRATION

State Voter Register

All citizens of Ukraine who have reached the age of 18 on Election Day have the right to vote. The State Voter Register (SVR) is an automated information system that maintains the personal information of voters, under the management of 27 Registration Administration Bodies (RABs) and 756 Register Maintenance Bodies (RMBs). The database of the register is updated each month based on information provided by relevant authorities.

Voter lists are extracted from the SVR and prepared for polling stations by RMBs no later than 8 days before an election. They are transmitted to polling stations along with invitation cards containing the name and registered address of voters for that election precinct, as well as the location and opening hours of the PEC premises.

Temporary Change of Voting Address

Amendments to the Presidential Election Law prohibit revisions to voter lists at precinct polling stations with a court order on Election Day. The amendments do provide voters with the right to temporarily change their place of voting without changing their registered address.¹⁷ If a voter cannot be present at his or her registered election address on Election Day, the voter is now entitled to apply for a temporary change of place of voting. In this application, the voter must provide evidence for the reason of the temporary change. An exception to these requirements was made to facilitate voting by citizens whose registered address of residence is in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and City of Sevastopol. These voters only need to present a national passport to apply for a temporary change of voting address.¹⁸

8. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Relatively few complaints and appeals were filed throughout the election period. Public attention was focused on tensions in Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts.

Legal Framework

¹⁶ May 8 was the initial legal deadline for transfers of preliminary voter lists to PECs. At that time, the deadline was met in all but 19 PECs outside Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts. Amendments to the Law on the Election of the President on May 15 subsequently moved the deadline for these transfers to May 16.

¹⁷ Article 35-1 of the Law on presidential election. Revisions can only be made also in cases of inaccuracies in the name or address of a voter as a result of visual or automated control errors as described in Part 1 of Article 20 of the Law of Ukraine "On the State Voter Register."

¹⁸ Section 2 of paragraph 2.5 of the CEC resolution "On the Procedure of Temporary Change of the Voting Place of a Voter without Changing his/her Election Address" № 893 of 13.09.2012 with amendments from 22.09.2012, 09.04.2014 and 15.05.2014

Election-related complaints can be filed with administrative courts and election commissions. Recent amendments to the legal framework for presidential elections in Ukraine have failed to strengthen mechanisms for enforcement of sanctions for violations

9. ELECTION COMMISSIONS

Central Election Commission

Despite a shortened election timeline and the challenge of administering parallel local elections in numerous districts, the CEC adopted hundreds of resolutions since February 25 to clarify legal provisions. In several cases, CEC resolutions have created new procedures to protect the safety of voters and enhance the integrity of voting procedures in the context of military tensions in and around Luhansk and Donetsk.

District Election Commissions

Recent amendments to the Presidential Election Law require DEC resolutions to be published on the CEC website immediately after adoption. As of May 20, the CEC website contained more than 2000 decisions received from 213 DECs. The main issues raised in DEC resolutions related to changes to the composition of PECs, registration of domestic election observers, changes to the addresses of DEC premises, and arrangements with local law enforcement bodies to ensure the security of PEC premises, commissioners and voters.

ADMINISTRATIVE COURTS

According to the Code of Administrative Adjudication, administrative courts have precedence over election commissions in consideration of election-related disputes. They can refer cases involving revisions to voter lists, and complaints about decisions, actions or the inactivity of PECs to local courts.

Relatively few complaints were filed to election commissions over this election period, leaving administrative courts with few appeals to consider. Most issues raised by appellants related to the overall legitimacy of the Early Presidential Election and some media activities.

Cases on Challenges to the Calling of the Early Presidential Election

Four cases challenged the constitutional basis upon which the Verkhovna Rada called the Early Presidential Election. Applicants raised issues in connection to the termination of powers of outgoing President Viktor Yanukovich by the Verkhovna Rada, following his flight on February 22. The administrative courts dismissed the cases.

Cases Regarding the Distribution of Management Positions in DECs

Candidate Anatoliy Hrytsenko challenged the redistribution of management in some DECs by the CEC (Resolution 468; 02.05.2014) following the withdrawal of candidates Natalia Korolevska and Oleh Tsariov. The court dismissed the case after the CEC provided written evidence that its redistribution provided for compliance with the proportionality principle that guarantees assignment of executive positions on DECs in proportion to each candidate's total number of commission nominations.

10. THE IMMEDIATE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD (MAY 22-24)

From May 22-24, CANEOM observers in all oblasts except Crimea monitored the delivery of ballots and other election materials to polling stations and assessed the preparedness of election commissioners. CANEOM observers visited more than 1150 polling stations during this immediate pre-election period.

Observers' overall assessment of preparations of PECs was good or very good in 96% of cases. They were generally granted cooperation from PEC members and access to election materials. Nearly 90% of visited polling stations were open and operational. Very few instances of campaign materials or activities were reported inside of polling stations or within their vicinity. 860 of 871 PECs (98.74%) visited by CANEOM observers had not received any complaints over the course of the election.

54% of PECs visited by CANEOM observers underwent membership changes in the week before the election – a concerning trend that was observed throughout the election period. PEC members were nonetheless evaluated to be confident, knowledgeable, and balanced in terms of training and experience. In Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk and Poltava, observers noted a pattern of resignations by PEC members nominated through Petro Symonenko who ceased his campaign for the presidency on May 16, but no cases in which PECs were unable to form quorum.

CANEOM observers did not experience any tensions or unrest in the vicinity of polling stations. The only exceptions were the oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk where armed militants created an atmosphere of terror.

11. VOTING DAY

THE OPENING OF POLLS

CANEOM observers were present at the opening of 75 polling stations. Overall, observers deemed the conduct of the opening procedure to be Very Good or Good in 98.7% of cases. Observers also noted that procedures were followed in 95.8% of cases and the PECs understanding of procedures was Very Good or Good in 94.7% of cases.

Observers reported only 1 case of tension or/and unrest outside of polling stations. All necessary election materials were present in all but 2 cases. 86% of polling stations opened on time at 8:00 a.m., and all polling stations visited were open by 8:30.

In an overwhelming majority of cases, observers reported no problems or irregularities with opening procedure. The seal tape on the safe or metal strongbox was intact, ballots were intact and ballot boxes were properly sealed.¹⁹

¹⁹ The procedural irregularity noted most often was that the # of ballots received was not entered in the vote count protocol during the opening procedure in 15 of 75 cases.

THE VOTING PERIOD

CANEOM deployed 69 teams of two observers in 23 oblasts to assess and monitor the voting in the early presidential elections including circumstances inside and outside polling stations, registration of voters and voting procedures.

In all phases of the voting process, ballot boxes were visible and accessible by observers; ballot boxes were sealed properly (in 98% of cases) and all the necessary materials were presented (in 98% of cases) underlining the high degree of transparency of the elections.²⁰

98% of CANEOM observers evaluated the overall conduct of polling stations as Good or Very Good. Typically, CANEOM observers did not experience any tension or unrest near polling stations. Observers were granted necessary cooperation from the PEC members. Moreover, almost every polling station had candidate or party observers, and half had either international or domestic observers. All polling stations visited were operational.

CIRCUMSTANCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE POLLING STATIONS

Normally, ballot boxes were sealed properly and all necessary materials were present at polling stations allowing voters to get full information to select a candidate to vote for in a democratic way. CANEOM observers frequently commented on long lines and lack of necessary space. It is important to note that with high voter turnout in the vast majority of Ukraine came long lines; the desire of the Ukrainian people to successfully exercise their franchise is a reflection of their commitment to move Ukraine forward.

VOTING PROCEDURE

CANEOM observers observed that most PECs operated according to prescribed legal procedures and regulations. Usually, voters were not added to Voters Lists on Election Day, which is prohibited by the law. Furthermore, PECs did not deny the right to vote for inappropriate reasons. On every PEC voters without ID were not permitted to vote.

However, CANEOM observers identified isolated problems and irregularities across Ukraine, the most common of which were technical errors on voting lists. There were isolated instances of people being turned away because their names were not on the list or were misspelled.

Observers noted that PECs always checked the voter IDs and signed the ballot counterfoil. Moreover, as a rule, voters signed the voter list as well as the ballot counterfoils. In the vast majority of cases, CANEOM observers did not identify any attempts to influence voters in favor candidates.

²⁰ The only exceptions are PEC# 510984 and PEC# 511117 (Odessa), PEC# 480095 (Mykolaiv), PEC# 231000 (Zaporizhia) where ballot boxes were not sealed properly and PEC# 350296²⁰ (Kirovohrad) where not all election materials were present.

12. THE CLOSING OF POLLS AND VOTE COUNT

Data was received for 60 out of 69 precinct polling stations visited by CANEOM observers to monitor the closing procedures and counting of ballots. As with earlier phases of Election Day, the overall impression of observers was overwhelmingly positive.

Polling stations closed on time and followed appropriate procedures for the tabulation of ballots. In all cases, the numbers of voters who received ballots and numbers of unused ballots was equal to numbers of ballots received by the visited PECs.²¹

All ballots were pre-stamped, and the PECs were consistent and transparent in determining invalid ballots, generally because more than one candidate was marked or there was no marking at all. In some cases, the tabulation of results from parallel presidential and mayoral elections resulted in lengthy proceedings, for example in Odessa city polling station 511168, DEC136.

THE TABULATION OF RESULTS

CANEOM observers assessed and monitored the handover of ballots from PECs to DEC, including the transfer of election materials, processing the PEC data, reporting on situation in the DEC. In 93% of cases, CANEOM observers judged the handover process of results and election materials to be Good or Very Good.

A significant problem which caused delay in tabulation and handovers was the breakdown of the CEC server for data transfer from DEC to the CEC. This problem caused significant delays in submission and tabulation of results. Likely because of these delays, observers noted higher stress and tension than was noted throughout election day - during the tabulation process, and issues with overcrowding were observed in 37.5% of observed DEC.

ABOUT THE CANEOM MISSION

At the invitation of the Ukrainian government, the Government of Canada organized a large independent international election observer mission to monitor Ukraine's 2014 Early Presidential elections.

The Canadian Election Observation Missions (CANEOM) Mission to the 2014 Early Presidential Election in Ukraine is being led by Senator Raynell Andreychuk and former Ontario Premier Mike Harris.

Thirty-nine long-term observers (LTOs) arrived in Ukraine on 6 May. They underwent two days of training, and were deployed to the regions of Ukraine on 9 May. 104 short-term observers arrived in Ukraine on 19 May. They also undertook two days of training, and were deployed to the regions on 22 May. CANEOM has teams of observers in 23 oblasts of Ukraine²² and Kyiv city.

²¹ In only one PEC in Cherkassy Oblast did observers note a significant violation involving commission members pre-signing protocols before entering results.

²² Cherkassy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovs'k, Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Khmelnytskyj, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Luhansk, L'viv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, Rivne, Sumy, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Volyn, Zaporizhia, Zhytomyr.

CANEOM is organized by the Forum of Federations. CUSO International and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress have partnered with CANEOM to provide support to the observation mission for Ukraine's 2014 early presidential election.

The mission is funded by the Government of Canada. It is managed by an independent team of non-governmental professionals. CANEOM's core team members for this mission have experience monitoring elections in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mali, Mongolia and Ukraine.

MISSION OBSERVATION STANDARDS

The mission's objectives are to observe, record and report on the electoral exercise, and to aggregate findings into a final report on whether the election results may be deemed to reflect the genuine democratic expression of the Ukrainian people.

Members of CANEOM's core team for this mission have experience monitoring elections in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mali, Mongolia and Ukraine, with additional democratic development experience in an even greater range of countries.

CANEOM will assess Ukraine's electoral process in accordance with international standards, commitments and obligations for genuine democratic elections, including the OSCE's Copenhagen Declaration of 1990 and other international human rights obligations. CANEOM subscribes to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observers and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers that was commemorated at the United Nations on October 27, 2005, and endorsed by 42 intergovernmental and international organizations.

In all of our mission's activities, CANEOM pledges to adhere to all domestic laws, and to respect the core election observation principles of impartiality and non-interference.

CONCLUSION

The 25 May Early Presidential Election has been held and on the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian territory have met international democratic standards. Notwithstanding the troubling violence in Luhansk and Donetsk, and the illegal annexation of sovereign Ukrainian territory in Crimea the election is a clear and unambiguous reflection of the democratic will of the Ukrainian people. Improvements in the electoral law, a generally level playing field for all contestants, the general absence of abuse of administrative resources and relative lack of electoral violations combined with the inspiring commitment of the Ukrainian people to exercise their franchise lead CANEOM to conclude that this election not only meets international democratic standards but have the potential to become a major milestone on Ukraine's long and difficult path to democracy.

*** The English version of this report is the only official version ***

- Introduction
- Immigration History
- Socio-Cultural
- Oral History
- Kids' Stuff
- Multimedia
- Bibliography
- Acknowledgements

Multimedia

Multimedia >Maps >Changing Borders of Ukraine

The following maps represent the changing borders of Ukraine throughout its' history. The maps trace the early period of Kievan Rus in the 11th century, the Cossack period in the 1600s, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Soviet Ukraine after World War Two. These maps can be found in a book entitled "Ukraine: A Historical Atlas" by Paul Robert Magocsi (1987).

(Click on the links to view larger images.)

3D Pictures

Pictures

Video

Artifacts

Maps



Austo Hungarian Empire



Cossack State After 1649



Kievan Rus in the 11th century



Minority Populations in the 19th century



Soviet Ukraine Post WW2



Ukrainian Land 1914-1919

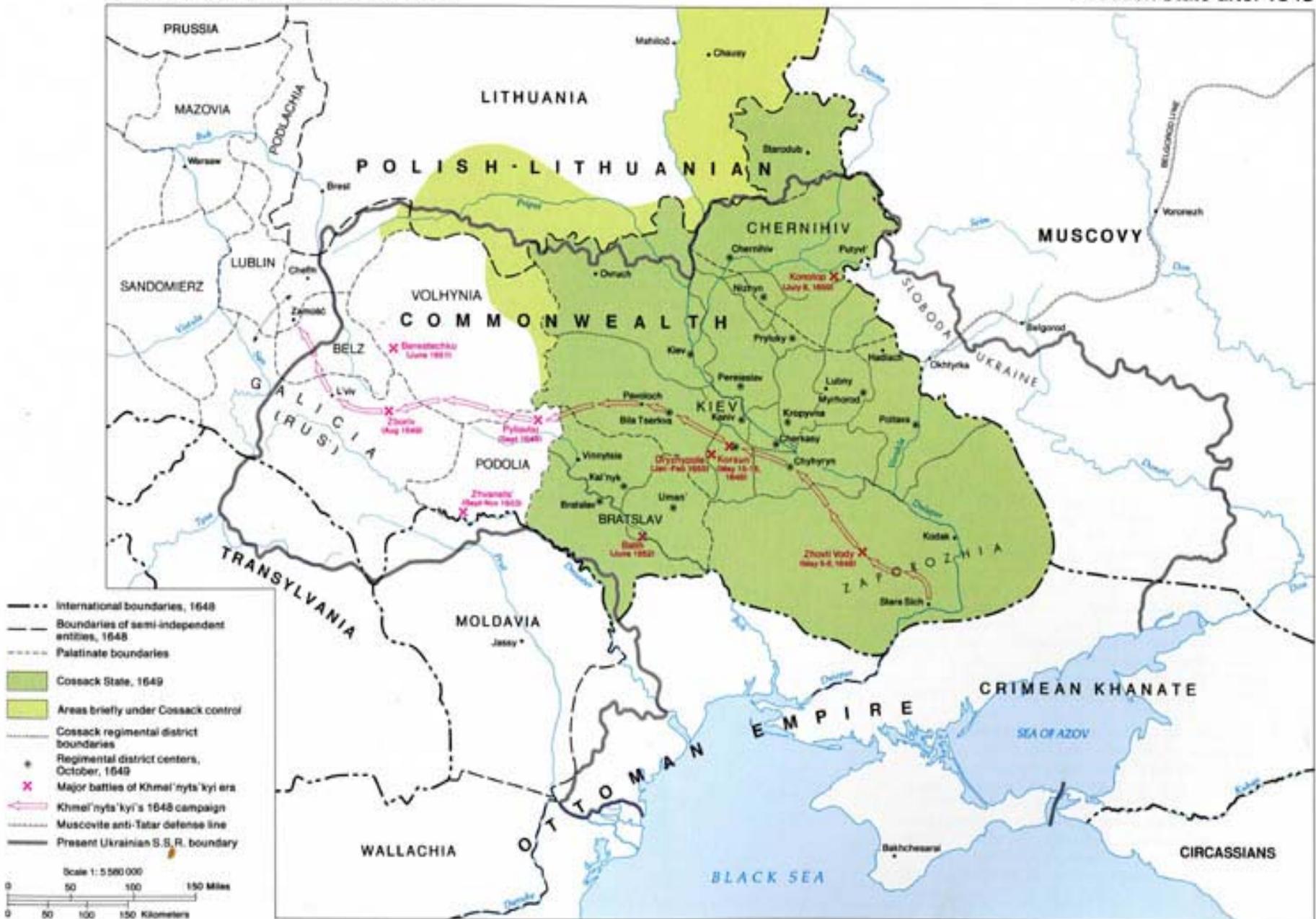


Ukrainian Lands After 1569

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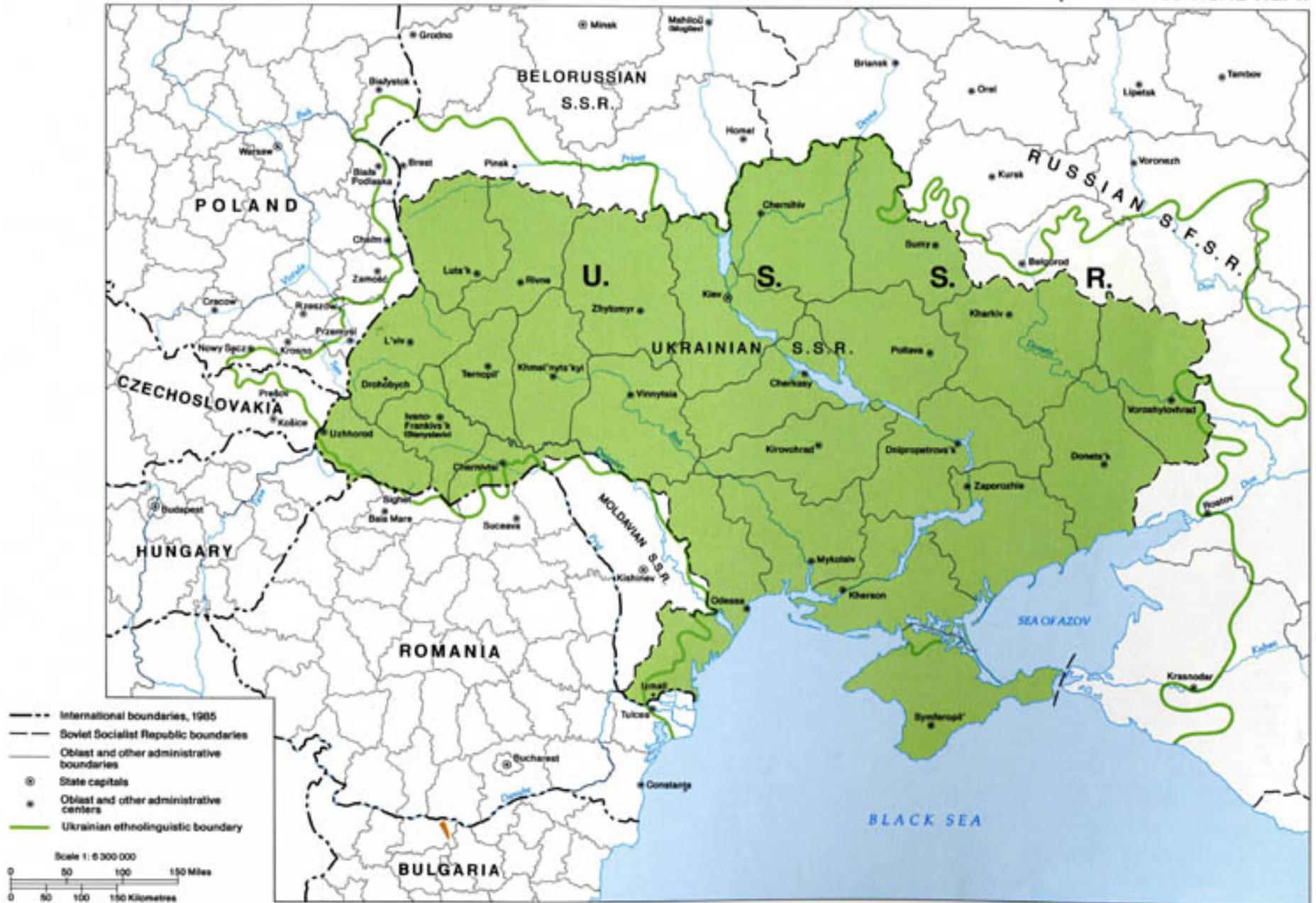


HISTORICAL ATLAS OF UKRAINE

Minority populations in 19th century Ukraine









MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

As the crisis in Ukraine continues with the world seemingly at a loss to find a political solution, Peter Goldring suggests the best hope for a lasting solution could be to turn for help to the institution most respected by the citizens of Ukraine: the church.

Americans have a constitutional separation of Church and State that is for all intents and purposes unique. In most countries (including Canada where the head of state, the Queen, is also the titular head of the Anglican Church) the line between the religious and the secular is far less strictly drawn.

This is definitely true in Ukraine, where for 70 years the Christian church, primarily Orthodox and Catholic survived despite persecution under the rule of the atheistic Soviet Union. Communist efforts to eradicate religious belief failed in Ukraine as they did in other Soviet territories, and with independence in 1991 religion once again came to the forefront of Ukrainian public life. In an era where

citizens increasingly distrust their politicians, religious leaders are still respected and seen as authorities in society, as those who can be trusted to put the good of society as a whole ahead of self-interest. This becomes important given the turmoil that has gripped Ukraine since the Euromaidan protests began in November 2013.

The 2010 presidential election had left Ukraine a fractured society, as the two final candidates had fairly evenly split the vote, with the winner, Viktor Yanukovich

receiving most of his support from the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern areas of Ukraine, while Yulia Tymoshenko had benefitted from the votes of the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking populace in the western part of the country. After three years of the Yanukovich presidency however, concerns about corruption, repressive laws and the erosion of

democracy were shared by millions of Ukrainians of all linguistic backgrounds. The Euromaidan protests brought together Rus-



Religious symbols were prominently displayed during marches that were part of the 2004 Orange Revolution. The people of Ukraine trust religious leaders far more than politicians.



sian-speakers and Ukrainian-speakers, uniting them in the desire for peaceful change. When the president responded with more repressive laws, and followed that up with violence and sniper-shooting murders, he was deposed in a popular uprising and fled the country as a wanted man for Russia. Which in theory should have ended the crisis, however the situation degenerated when the new government of Ukraine was sworn in.

Among its first acts the new government repealed recently passed legislation that specifically targeted those who had been taking part in the Euromaidan protests. Unfortunately, in their zeal to roll back the clock and remove all traces of Yanukovich, the decision was made to remove Russian-language protections that had been previously enacted. As the new government was composed almost entirely of Ukrainian speakers from the western part of the country, this was cause for some concern in the east, leading Russian president Vladimir Putin to invade and annex the Russian-speaking Crimea area of Ukraine, to “protect” Russian interests.

At this point there appears to be an impasse between Russia, Ukraine and the West, and there is speculation that Putin will not stop at Crimea. Options for intervention

short of armed conflict are limited. Political leaders acknowledge the problem, but are uncertain what can be done to address it. However, there is one group that has respect across linguistic and ethnic lines in both Russia and Ukraine that could be used to help defuse the current tensions: the religious authorities.

The church is the most trusted institution in Ukraine, far more trusted than political or academic institutions. Political pronouncements by church leaders carry far more weight than similar statements would in Canada.

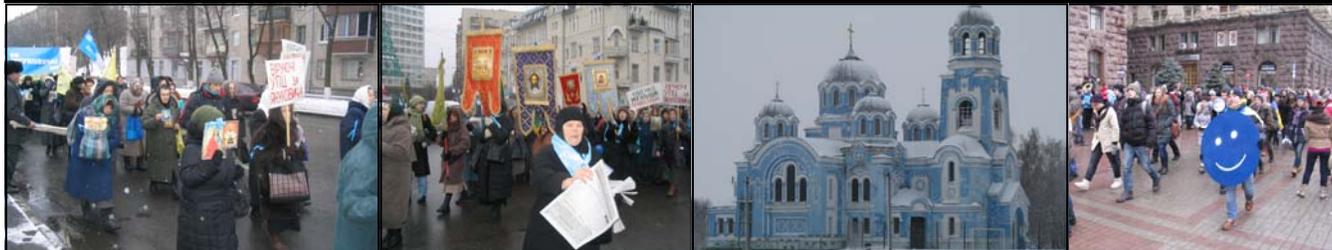
In 2004 I was an election observer in Ukraine during the failed November Presidential election and remained in the country for the entire 10 days of the subsequent Orange Revolution. I witnessed clergy marching in the

streets of Kyiv under the Orange banners of the Yushchenko supporters and the blue and white flags of the Yanukovich faction. It was quite apparent that the clergy were indeed taking sides in favour of one presidential candidate or another and that the divide between “orange” and “blue and white” was frequently along linguistic and religious lines.

In the 2010 Presidential campaign, the three traditional Orthodox churches in



Mr. Goldring met with Archbishop Gabriel (centre) of Montreal's St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral and and Father William Milinow, of Ottawa to discuss religion in Ukraine.



Ukraine, Ukrainian Orthodox (Kyiv Patriarchate), Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and Ukrainian (Russian) Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate), appear to have chosen sides, with only the Moscow Patriarchate (Russian) Orthodox supporting the president, Viktor Yanukovich, and his party. Religious support for political parties was divided not according to positions on issues but along linguistic lines. That understandably lead supporters of one side or another to question the clergy of the church on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

According to 2006 figures, in Ukraine 50.4% of the religious population are deemed to be part of the Kyiv Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church while 26.1% look to the Moscow Patriarchate (the Russian Orthodox Church).

Other groups include the Ukrainian Greek Catholic (8%), Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox (7.2%), Roman Catholic (2.2%), Protestant (2.2%), Jewish (0.6%), and others (3.2%).

Both Ukraine's Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for separation of Church and State, allowing churches to establish places of worship and train clergy. Each region of Ukraine has a department responsible for registering religious groups and moni-

toring their activities as all religious organizations must register with the Committee for Religious Affairs and with local governments. This separation is not absolute, as there are government restrictions placed on foreign religious workers and organizations and it fell to the government to deal with the issue of restitution to the churches for property seized from them during the Soviet era. In both Russia and Ukraine people distrust

their government, but they still have faith in their religious authorities. Recently the two main Orthodox Christian groups, the Russian and Ukrainian churches, have been working together. The new government should engage them, with the other religious groups in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, to consult all Ukrainians, asking

what they want in terms of linguistic and cultural inclusivity for the future of Ukraine.

The Kyiv-based Ukrainian and Moscow-based (Russian) Orthodox churches in Ukraine have set an example of working together during the crisis, presenting a united front across linguistic and cultural lines and condemning violence and corruption. It is time to empower and deploy them to the regions, to promote linguistic inclusivity and allay fears.



When he visited Euromaidan in Kyiv in December 2013, Mr. Goldring noted the presence of Ukrainian-speakers, Russian-speakers and Crimean Tatars.

In the past the churches of Ukraine have taken sides, supporting one political party or another, a stance that was detrimental to society. That may no longer be the case. In December 2013 I spoke to a crowd estimated at half a million people in Kyiv's Independence Square as part of the Euro-aidan protests. In the Square I observed a unity I had not seen in Ukraine before – Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians and Ukrainian Crimean Tatars united across religious and cultural lines, coming together to protest against corruption. There were numerous clergy present, but their role was pastoral, not political.

The recent Russian takeover of Ukraine's Crimean region, supposedly to

protect Russian-speakers, raises many concerns that Vladimir Putin may yet attempt to seize more of Ukraine's territory. However, he is reputed to be a very religious man. If the All-Ukrainian Council, which includes the (Russian) Orthodox Church, messages collectively and clearly that Ukrainians are united in their wish for regional, cultural and linguistic inclusivity, perhaps Patriarch Kirill of Moscow can speak to President Putin to allay his concerns and bring about calm in all regions of Ukraine. Additionally, by doing so now, before the upcoming elections, the candidates will be able to reinforce these linguistic and cultural inclusivity objectives during the campaign.

Update: To date Mr. Goldring has advised this approach for consideration meeting with considerable interest from the Ambassador of Ukraine, Bishop Job of Edmonton's Russo-Orthodox Church, Archbishop Gabriel, Russian Orthodox Archbishop of Montreal, the Russian Embassy and Andrew Bennett, Canada's Ambassador for Religious Freedom.

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This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Q1: Do you think that the United Nations should act immediately with peace keepers in the Crimea?

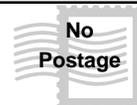
Yes No

Q2: Should elected members of Canada's Parliament help in the process of monitoring elections abroad?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Postal Code: _____
Telephone: _____



Peter Goldring
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

KYIV RELIGIOUS LEADERS CAN INTERVENE IN UKRAINE'S CRISIS

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

As the crisis in Ukraine continues, Peter Goldring suggests the best hope for a lasting solution could be to turn for help to the institution most respected by the citizens of Ukraine: the church and the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations based in Kyiv.

Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, there appears to be an impasse between Russia, Ukraine and the West, and there is speculation that President Putin would be willing to consider annexing more of Ukraine. Options for intervention short of armed conflict are limited. Political leaders acknowledge the problem, but are uncertain what can be done to address it. However, there is one group that traditionally has respect across linguistic and ethnic lines in both Russia and Ukraine that could speak out to help defuse the current tensions: the religious authorities.

The church is the most trusted institution in Ukraine, far more trusted than political or academic institutions. Political pronouncements by church leaders carry far more weight than similar statements would in Canada. If the leaders of Ukraine's churches (and other religious groups) were to unite and make a joint declaration of the need for legislating linguistic and cultural inclusivity for significant cultural groups in Ukraine.

The tensions in Ukraine flow from changes that the new government in Kyiv made that weakened Russian-language protection in the country. Many of those in the eastern, predominantly Russian-speaking, areas of the country were concerned by what they perceived as an erosion of their rights. Proudly Ukrainian, they still feel an affinity with Russia due to their common language. It is these lin-

guistic and cultural issues that religious leaders are best positioned to address, offering a non-partisan, cross-cultural ap-



Mr. Goldring met in Edmonton with His Grace Job, Bishop of Kashira, Father Sergey Kiprivanovich of Edmonton's St. Barbara's Cathedral and Roman Lopushinsky, president of St. Barbara's.



proach.

I have been extensively involved in national unity issues in Canada for 20 years. As part of a 2013 Canada Day rally in Montreal I crafted a statement, an affirmation of unity, which perhaps could be adapted by the Ukrainian churches as a template for any statement or open letter they wish to make in Ukrainian and in Russian. It might read as follows:

“We, the people of Ukraine, proclaim with pride that we are and wish to remain, with the aid of God, a people free and responsible for our destiny. Born of the encounter of the Ukrainian fact and the Russian fact on European soil, ancestral home of the Tatar population and enriched by the contribution of minority cultures throughout the four corners of Ukraine, we wish to live, beyond the frontiers of race, language and religion, a common adventure of economic and cultural sharing, in the respect of our diversity.”

I think something along those lines, emphasizing the historical linguistic and cultural diversity of Ukraine (coupled with the willingness on the part of the new government in Kyiv to legislate linguistic and cultural inclusivity), would help ease the tensions in this

time of transition until new legislation to acknowledge the diversity is crafted and passed.

I have discussed this at length with Bishop Job of Edmonton’s Russian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal’s St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ambassador Vadym Prystaiko of Ukraine and Igor Girenko of the Embassy of Russia,

as well as Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada’s Ambassador for Religious Freedom and Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird. All concur that if the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations in Kyiv were to agree on a Ukrainian national message taken across and through Ukraine would have great value. It is also possible that the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in Moscow

could present to President Putin and possibly give him an exit mechanism to choose détente.

Seventy years of Communist efforts to eradicate religious belief failed in Ukraine and with independence in 1991 religion once again came to the forefront of Ukrainian public life. In an era where citizens increasingly distrust their politicians, religious leaders are still respected and seen as authori-



Religious symbols were prominently displayed during marches that were part of the 2004 Orange Revolution. The people of Ukraine trust religious leaders far more than politicians.



ties in society, as those who can be trusted to put the good of society as a whole ahead of self-interest. This is important given the turmoil that has gripped Ukraine in recent months.

The 2010 presidential election left Ukraine a fractured society, as the two final candidates had fairly evenly split the vote, with the winner, Viktor Yanukovich receiving most of his support from the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern areas of Ukraine, while Yulia Tymoshenko had benefitted from the votes of the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking populace in the western part of the country. After three years however, concerns about corruption, repressive laws and the erosion of democracy were shared by millions of Ukrainians of all linguistic backgrounds. The Euromaidan protests that began in November 2013 brought together Russian-speakers and Ukrainian-speakers, uniting them in the desire for peaceful change.

However, among its first acts, when the new government repealed recently passed legislation that specifically targeted those who had been taking part in the Euromaidan protests it also attempted to remove Russian-language protections that had been previ-

ously enacted. As the new government was composed almost entirely of Ukrainian speakers from the western part of the country, this was cause for some concern in the east, leading Russian president Vladimir Putin to enter the Russian-speaking Crimea area of Ukraine, to “protect” Russian interests.

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Mr. Goldring met with Archbishop Gabriel (centre) of Montreal's St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral and Father William Milinow, of Ottawa to discuss religion in Ukraine.

longer be the case. In December 2013 I spoke to a crowd estimated at half a million people in Kyiv's Independence Square as part of the Euromaidan protests. There I observed a unity I had not seen in Ukraine before - Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians and Ukrainian Crimean Tatars united across religious and cultural lines, coming together to protest against corruption. There were numerous clergy present, but their role was pastoral, not political. In both Russia and Ukraine people still have faith in their religious authorities. Recently the two main Orthodox Christian groups, the Russian and Ukrainian churches, have been working together. The new government

should engage them, with the other religious groups in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, to consult all Ukrainians, asking what they want in terms of linguistic and cultural inclusivity for the future of Ukraine. Then the religious leaders should take this instruction from the people to the presidential candidates. This should be done immediately so that the presidential candidates for the May 25 election will have the opportunity to reinforce this inclusivity message to take to the parliament upon becoming president.

The time for the religious leaders to act is now. Let them listen to the people then speak with a united voice.

Update: After consulting with Orthodox religious leaders in Canada, Mr. Goldring has now been in contact with their counterparts in Ukraine.

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Your Opinion Matters...

Q1: While religion and politics should be separate, do you feel that religions in Ukraine can play a role in diffusing the crisis?

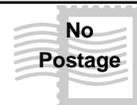
Yes No

Q2: Do you think Canadian religious authorities could also play a role in helping diffuse the crisis in Ukraine and to mediate a linguistic and cultural inclusivity resolution?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Postal Code: _____
Telephone: _____



Peter Goldring
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