Ukraine’s leaders commit to EU, drawing some domestic opposition

by Zenon Zawada

KYIV – With Ukraine’s top leaders recently eliminating any doubt that they support signing the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, they now face having to deal with not only unprecedented pressure tactics from the Russian Federation, but mounting opposition domestically.

The Communist Party of Ukraine said it will begin collecting signatures to hold a referendum on the Customs Union. Additionally, a handful of Party of Regions national deputies have declared they won’t support the Association Agreement, also raising the possibility of forming a parliamentary group for the Customs Union.

“I want to warn you again that you are committing a crime,” thundered Communist Party Chair Petro Symonenko from the parliamentary rostrum during the September 3 opening session.

His speech reached hysterical tones and sounded incoherent at moments. “You will complete destroy the economic sovereignty of our state. And who doesn’t know today – what are you doing? You will be transporting products from Europe at zero tariffs, but the Ukrainian producer will be transporting at those [prices] that he had been selling them for. Well, why are you making fools out of the Ukrainian people? Control all these issues first, protect the Ukrainian producer; and then talk about European values.”

Ukraine’s opponents to the Association Agreement are taking their marching orders from the Russian government, political observers said, in response to growing evidence that Ukraine’s leadership is committed to signing the historic pact at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius on November 28-29.

President Viktor Yanukovych cast away doubt about his intentions in an August 29 interview with television journalists. “The autumn of this year will finalize everything,” he said, as reported by the presidential website. “We will fulfill all the conditions, of that I don’t have any doubt. I don’t see any obstacles today to signing this document. Therefore, I’m hoping the time will come and the decision will be made.”

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, who was born and raised in Russia and spent most of his life there, offered an even firmer endorsement when opening his weekly Cabinet of Ministers meeting on August 28.

“After signing the Association Agreement with the EU, Ukraine will create a free trade zone with the EU,” he said. “That has to be accepted as reality.”

Despite assurances by both leaders that Ukraine would maintain close economic ties with Russia, pro-Russian forces in Ukraine kicked into action.

The first to emerge was Party of Regions National Deputy Oleg Tsariiov, who declared that the Association Agreement violates the Constitution of Ukraine, which he said would have to be amended.

He had to be brought back into line by Mr. Yanukovych, who embraces Soviet methods of governance. To set an example for the other Regions deputies, the Presidential Administration sent out a “tennyk” (black-out orders to media) to Ukraine’s main television networks to ignore Mr. Tsariiov’s report the ua.com news site, citing its anonymous sources in the administration.

Yet that wasn’t the end of the administration’s use of authoritarian methods to pursue integration with Europe.

The Communists organized their first signature-gathering rally for a referendum on the Customs Union for September 8 in Kyiv. Yet, on September 2, a Kyiv court forbade them from holding the rally. The same ruling also forbade a representative from

Scholar speaks on DPs, forced laborers at U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

by Yaro Bihun

WASHINGTON – World War II displaced or made homeless more than 30 million Europeans, among them millions of Ukrainians. Their plight and how their lives evolved since then was the subject of a two-week workshop in Washington at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, that brought together an international team of specialists to discuss how they can integrate their research findings and illuminate the profound human cost of that war and its aftermath.

Among those specialists was Prof. Marta Dyczok of the University of Western Ontario, who joined with 10 fellow participating experts in their concluding panel discussion on August 23 focusing on some of the aspects of the various problems refugees faced, among them immigration and repatriation – both voluntary and forced.

Prof. Dyczok noted that one of the problems she and her colleagues encountered in their research of this subject was that most of these refugees and immigrants did not always have the opportunity to put their remembrances on the historical record.

And that was especially true for the largest such group – the “Ostarbeiter,” forced laborers from the East under German rule. Most of them were repatriated after the war – some by force, some voluntarily. But, as Prof. Dyczok noted, it has been especially hard to research what happened to those who went back to the USSR.

“We don’t really know what happened to them,” she said. The official Soviet line was that they were liberated, welcomed home, given housing and jobs, and were enjoying a wonderful life.

In fact, Prof. Dyczok noted, “they were treated as traitors, they were re-conscripted into the Red Army into labor battalions... and their narratives are only now starting to come out.”

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Volodymyr Vernadsky... (Continued from page 7)

most forceful voices arguing for the exploita-
tion of nuclear power, surveying Soviet ura
num sources and having nuclear fission
research conducted at his institute.

A contemporary of many of the world’s
famous scientists and early Nobel laure-
ates, including Albert Einstein, Vernadsky
helped form the foundations of our mod-
ern scientific revolution. He is simultane-
ously considered to be the founder of sev-
eral important branches of science: bioge-
chemistry, radiogeology and ecosystems. It
is this last achievement that has helped to
rekindle his fame in contemporary scientif-
circles.

Vernadsky is now best known for his
1926 book “The Biosphere” in which he
expanded on and popularized the term “biosphere.” The first scientific monograph
on the earth’s biosphere as we know it
today, it stated that life is the geological
force that shapes the earth. Vernadsky’s
formulation of the earth’s evolution hypothesized three stages: the geosphere, where
the primitive earth coalesced into a core,
containing rock and crust; the biosphere,
where life begins and starts to shape the
planets ecosystem, hydrology and atmospheres; and finally, the noosphere,
or “sphere of reason.” He firmly
believed in man’s ability to shape the earth
for the good of mankind – an early expres-
sion of the modern idea of sustainable
development. He reasoned that mankind has
a profound influence in reshaping the
planet via industry, agriculture, forestry,
energy development and urbanization.

Prof. G. E. Hutchinson of Yale University,
who is considered to be the “father of mod-
ern ecology,” helped to resurrect Vernadsky’s standing among the world’s
ecological community to the extent that

UNESCO has noted Vernadsky’s 150th
anniversary. During the 1905 Russian
Revolution, Vernadsky was a founding
member of the Constitutional Democratic
Party, referred to as “Kadets.” He, along with
numerous pro-
fessors at Moscow University, resigned in
1912 in protest against anti-semitic educational
policies. It was then that he went touring the
scientific centers of Europe, Canada and the
U.S., visiting various laboratories,
including the Geophysical Laboratory of the
Carnegie Institute of Washington. He was
elected to the Russian Academy of Sciences
in 1912. During the 1917 Revolution, he was
a member of the Kerensky government
as assistant to the minister of education.

That summer, afflicted by tuberculosis, he
moved back to the family dacha in Poltava
and began writing “Living Matter.”

Vernadsky consciously made a choice
to emigrate to the United States, which
would have meant continuing his science under favorable
conditions (the British Association of
Science arranged for a Red Cross ship to
wait for him near the Crimean coast in
1920), and staying in the country. He stayed,
knowing that he would face a hard life in
the U.S., but refused to join the Communist
Party. In 1941, he and many other Soviet sci-
entists were evacuated to Kazakhstan,
returning to Moscow in late 1943.

In 1943, Vernadsky wrote a remarkable
article summarizing his world view of evo-
lution and the biosphere, which was
published in the journal American Scientist
in January 1945. In that article, he casually
stated that “[A]t that time, in 1917-1918, I
happened to be, entirely by chance, in
the Ukraine, and was unable to return to
Petrograd until 1921.” It was at that
“chance” moment in Ukraine’s history that
Vernadsky was tasked to organize and
head the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.
He died in Moscow on Christmas Eve,
January 6, 1945, at the age of 82.

The real barricades (Continued from page 6)
electoral legislation, the establishment of
dates for by-elections in the outstanding
five single-mandate constituencies, [and]
clear rules for balanced media access to
electoral competitors.”

There have been plenty of such roundta-
bles. There was even a president-initiated
committee with representatives from
major international organizations on elec-
tion legislation, consultation with the
Council of Europe’s Venice Commission,
etc. Both major organizations withdrew
from the committee after understanding
that their input could remain only verbal,
the Venice Commission’s criticism was
ignored, and the elections held as the party
in power wished. Moves under way at pres-
tent involving major changes in media own-
ship seem clearly aimed at anything but
balanced media coverage.

Ukraine’s standing in the world has been
damaged badly over recent years. European
integration is Ukraine’s chance to climb out
of a post-Soviet dead end. That, however,
means real commitment to electoral and
other democratic values, not mere cosmet-
ic touches that will have rubbed off before
any agreement can be ratified.

Scholar speaks... (Continued from page 1)

In her research Prof. Dynczuk got a letter
written in 1992, after the Soviet Union col-
lapsed, from a Ukrainian whose Ostasheve
mother chose to return home, believing she
would be welcomed there. But her experi-
ence was very different. Her son writes that
he didn’t learn about this until 1991. His
parents were afraid to tell him their true
life story under Soviet rule. But, in this case,
their memories survived, she said.

Ukrainian refugees in the post-war
Displaced Persons camps in Europe were
also faced with the task of trying to con-
vince the International Relief Organization
(IRO) and the United Nations Relief and
Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)
officials that they were not Polish or
Russian, but Ukrainian. And things got
much worse with the coming of the Cold
War, when any semblance of East-West
cooperation in these areas ground to a halt.

Prof. Dynczuk received her Ph.D. from
the University of Oxford in 1995 and now is
associate professor in the Department of
History and Political Science, focusing on
East Central Europe and Eurasia – especial-
ly Ukraine – at Western University in
London, Ontario. She is also associated ac-
demically with the University of Toronto
and the National University of Kyiv Mohyla
Academy.

According to Prof. Dynczuk’s official biog-
raphy, her special research interests are in
the areas of the politics of history, mass
media, migration, post-communism and
the World War II. Her current special project is
examining how media representations of
Ukrainians displaced during World War II
shape collective memory, and how this
story challenges dominant narratives. Two
of her earlier studies were “The Grand
Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees” (2000) and

The 10 other academic specialists par-
ticipating in the Holocaust Memorial
Museum workshop and panel discussion
bailed from Germany, the Czech Republic,
Poland, Israel, Great Britain and the United
States.