

1. A poll by a Kiev weekly revealed that the Ukrainians still think of the Poles as their best friends (the news.pl)
2. Relations between Ukraine and Russia entered stage of "coolness, alienation and even loathing" – Ukrainian analyst (REGNUM)
3. Ukraine president to discuss anti-Semitism spike (Jewish Telegraphic Agency)
4. Ukrainian president, Jewish leaders to meet (Jewish Telegraphic Agency)
5. Ukraine Shines in European Property Market (Ltd PRLog.Org)
6. Vanco to explore Ukraine's Black Sea (EnergyCurrent)
7. Black Sea Shelf Exploration Deal Signed (Ukrainian Observer)
8. Ukraine: The Power Of A Second Chance (RFE/RL)
9. Tymoshenko promises death to hopes of Party of Regions (UNIAN)
10. Tymoshenko wants Ukraine to remain key gas transit route (New Europe)
11. Gates begins Europe tour in Ukraine (Press TV)
12. US Defence Secretary Gates arrives in Ukraine (FOCUS/ AFP)
13. Trade Office gets federal grant for Ukraine sales (AP/KXMC)
14. Ukraine Braces for 15% Gas Price Hike (Bloomberg/The Moscow Times)
15. Ukraine government supports continuous gas agreements with Russia (Itar-Tass)
16. Political situation in Ukraine may delay its admission to WTO (Itar-Tass)
17. Ukraine not to send troops to Afghanistan (RosBusinessConsulting)
18. Bravo and stay tuned: Ukraine's parliamentary elections 2007 (Maidan.org.ua)
19. Party of Regions Frightens With Referendum Again (Ukrayinska Prawda)
20. MP Candidate Kaskiv Opposing Imperative Mandate But Ready To Support Its Introduction (Ukrainian News Agency)
21. Svoboda Urges Justice Ministry To Cancel Registration Of Progressive Socialist Party, Communist Party And Putin Politics Party (Ukrainian News Agency)
22. Lazarenko intends to come back to Ukraine this year (ForUm)
23. Yushchenko calls Tymoshenko's military initiatives "offensive" for Ukraine (REGNUM)
24. Ukraine to host southeast Europe defense ministers' talks (RIA Novosti)
25. Yatsenyuk believes in Common Economic Area (ForUm)
26. Dr. Aubrey A. Lurie: Ukraine's past dotted with opportunities and horrors for minority groups (Shreveport Times)

**1. A poll by a Kiev weekly revealed that the Ukrainians still think of the Poles as their best friends
the news.pl, 19 October 2007**

Ukraine is not forgetting the strong support the country received from Poland during the so called "orange revolution" to introduce democracy in Ukraine in 2004.

The polled people were to point the most Ukraine-friendly country. As many as 47.7 percent of them chose Poland without any hesitation. In the ranking the Poles turned out to be more trustworthy than the Russians, traditional Ukraine allies. And it was Russia that was mentioned second most frequently (by 45.2 percent).

Yet another Ukrainian neighbour Belarus came third. The country was chosen by 36 percent of the questioned, followed by Georgia and the United States.

In spite of the fact that the Ukrainians evaluated Russia as a very friendly country, they also pointed to Moscow's negative influence on their county. In the same poll as many as 27.7 percent Ukrainians said that Russia is Ukraine's enemy.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.thenews.pl/archives/1512-Ukrainians-Poles-are-our-best-friends.html>

**2. Relations between Ukraine and Russia entered stage of “coolness, alienation and even loathing” – Ukrainian analyst
REGNUM, 19 October 2007**

The events taking place now in Ukraine, are not treated seriously by Russians – they are taken as fun of local elites, political analyst Vadim Karasev announced at a round-table discussion “What the Kremlin thinks of the relations with Ukraine”, a REGNUM correspondent informs.

According to the analyst, coolness in Russia’s attitude towards Ukraine is seen today. “Russians prefer to keep distance in their relations with Ukraine, no proximity, no getting mushy, no tears, no nostalgia or any other sentimental mood. It is high time to comprehend that there are no brothers and sisters any longer,” Karasev said. According to him, Ukraine poses no interest to Russia any longer. “Russia is looking on the global architecture and its place in it; its view is turned to the East, in the USA and Europe. Ukraine becomes uninteresting to it, as it has only regional importance,” the analyst notes.

According to Karasev, Russia can be interested in three aspects only: “if there is no stability in Ukraine, which can become a reason for Russia’s head ache, effectiveness of its gas transit – to secure sustainability of Russia-EU relations and that Ukraine does not take the way of Poland and Czechia in placing anti-missile systems in its territory,” the expert says. In the rest of things, according to Karasev, “coolness, alienation and even loathing” are ruling in the Ukrainian and Russian relations.

Permanent news address: www.regnum.ru/english/901973.html

**3. Ukraine president to discuss anti-Semitism spike
Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 19 October 2007**

Ukraine's president will meet Jewish leaders Monday to discuss Ukraine's recent spike in anti-Semitic attacks.

The meeting, set for the president's office in Kiev, comes on the heels of widespread Jewish criticism of government inaction regarding the mounting attacks against Jews and other minorities in the country.

Last week, European Jewish Congress President Moshe Kantor cancelled an official visit to Kiev in protest.

Law enforcement officials and other prominent leaders will take part in Monday's meeting.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yuschenko is expected to make a statement afterward on plans to stem the tide of ethnic hatred and anti-Semitic attacks in Ukraine.

In late September, three separate attacks on observant Jews took place on consecutive days in the cities of Zhitomir, Sevastopol and Cherkassy. On Oct. 5, the Chabad house in the city of Uzhgorod was robbed and set ablaze.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.jta.org/cgi-bin/iowa/breaking/104775.html>

**4. Ukrainian president, Jewish leaders to meet
Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 21 October 2007**

Ukrainian President Viktor Yuschenko will meet local Jewish leaders to discuss recent anti-Semitic attacks.

Yuschenko on Monday also will meet with representatives of the Ukrainian community and law enforcement generals about a spate of anti-Semitic attacks in Ukraine and the lackluster reaction by law enforcement agencies. There have no been no arrests or successful prosecutions, a member of Yuschenko's administration told JTA.

Yuschenko is expected to make a statement about combating the rise of ethnic hatred and anti-Semitic attacks in his country.

In late September three separate attacks on observant Jews took place in Zhitomir, Sevastopol and Cherkassy. On Oct. 5, the Chabad house in the city of Uzhgorod was set ablaze and robbed.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.jta.org/cgi-bin/iowa/breaking/104778.html>

5. Ukraine Shines in European Property Market **By David Stanley Redfern Ltd** **PRLog.Org, 19 October 2007**

One of the latest European hot spot for investments in the property game is the vastly overlooked Ukraine. Ukraine in Eastern Europe doesn't attract a fraction of the attention it surely will in future years. Is now the time to invest in Ukraine?

David Stanley Redfern Ltd are reputable overseas property investment specialists with a reputation for assertive attainment of high quality investment opportunities. Frequently scrutinising the market place and it's ever changing tendencies, David Stanley Redfern Ltd often investigate the European property market and in particularly, it's contrasting opportunities. Their knowledge and experience has, over the years, served both themselves and their clientele very well indeed. One of the latest European hot spot for investments in the property game is the vastly overlooked Ukraine.

Owing to the more commonplace and well established European components like Italy, France, Germany and Sweden who stand at the forefront of the minds of almost any potential investment property or holiday home buyers, Ukraine in Eastern Europe doesn't attract a fraction of the attention it surely will in future years. So, is now the right time to invest in Ukraine?

With escalating recognition and growing popularity, the Ukraine is set to go from strength to strength. Inevitably, rising property values, an expanding population and investment enhanced appeal are all factors that will surely only serve to boost its economy. There's no doubt that Ukraine is on the move and upwardly mobile in the marketplace. Investing now before the market shifts can only be a wise move then, can't it?

Ukraine does face contention from other upcoming European locations like Russia, Finland, Poland, Slovakia, and Estonia, to name but a handful of countries in a similar position. With all of this to take into account and so many pertaining facts to process, it's reassuring to know that there are specialists like David Stanley Redfern Ltd who can offer guidance.

And although the guidance can only serve as just that, as with all things in life, no assurances can ever be made in an ever changing environment, such as the overseas property investment arena. However, a part of Europe that is deservedly attracting a lot of attention at the moment is the Black Sea region and its bordering countries, which of course includes a prominent Ukraine.

Perhaps prominent because of it's tripled 2005/6 gross domestic product (GDP) or the aforementioned increasing property prices that followed, perhaps not. These are two unavoidable factors that are positively impacting the Ukraine and its profile. And with the prestigious Kiev as its capital, serving as an example of undeniable accomplishment, there can be little doubt about the countries historic and cultural heritage that looks set to continue long into the ever brightening future of Ukraine.

So if being a part of that future sounds like the right move for you, don't hesitate to contact David Stanley Redfern Ltd and enquire about any of their exclusive Ukraine properties that are available from as little as 45,000 euros. As well as their range of proven and satisfactory customer services, they can also offer financial solutions too.

Find out more about Coastal Ukraine property at:
http://www.davidstanleyredfern.com/Ukraine-Coastal_Ukraine.aspx

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.prlog.org/10034805-ukraine-shines-in-european-property-market.pdf>

6. Vanco to explore Ukraine's Black Sea EnergyCurrent, 19 October 2007

The government of Ukraine signed a production sharing agreement with Vanco International Ltd., a subsidiary of Houston-based independent Vanco Energy Co., giving Vanco the opportunity to explore and develop the deepwater Prykerchenska Block in the Ukrainian Black Sea. Work will begin immediately on a detailed exploration program, which will include a 3-D seismic survey in 2008 followed by exploration drilling.

Located to the southeast of the Crimean Peninsula, the Prykerchenska Block covers nearly 5,020 square miles (13,000 sq km), or about one-third of Ukraine's deepwater area, with water depths ranging from 1,640 feet (500 m) to over 6,560 feet (2,000 m). Exploration will concentrate on the Tetyaev High, in water depths greater than 6,560 feet (2,000 m) where Vanco has identified a series of large structures. The company will also explore on the shallower Sudak Folded Belt where Vanco said it has identified numerous attractive prospects.

The approval for Vanco comes as Ukraine seeks to boost oil and gas output by a third within the next several years. If exploration efforts are successful, the development of the project will require investments of more than US\$20 billion. "With the Prykerchenska production sharing agreement now in place," said Vanco's Chairman and President Gene Van Dyke, "we can proceed with plans to explore fully this frontier area of Ukraine's deep Black Sea."

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.energycurrent.com/index.php?id=2&storyid=6125>

7. Black Sea Shelf Exploration Deal Signed Ukrainian Observer, 20 October 2007

Deputy Prime Minister Andriy Klyuyev and Vanco Energy Company Chairman and President Gene Van Dyke Friday signed a production sharing agreement to explore the Prykerchenska area of Ukraine's Black Sea shelf.

The Prykerchenska Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) with Vanco International Ltd., a subsidiary of Houston-based independent Vanco Energy Company, represents the culmination of a tender process through which in April 2006 Vanco was granted the right to negotiate the first license to explore the deepwater part of Ukraine's Black Sea territory. The signing of the landmark PSA gives Vanco an opportunity to explore and develop the Prykerchenska Block, thought by independent petroleum geologists to present a good opportunity for a major energy find. Vanco expects to begin work immediately with exploration followed in 2008 with deep water drilling.

President Victor Yushchenko welcomed the deal, saying it would strengthen Ukraine's energy security and stimulate exploration efforts in the Black Sea. "This is a strategic project for Ukraine and this is a unique precedent for, on the one hand, formulating a national energy strategy and, on the other hand,



for cooperating with the world's leading international investors," he said.

With this agreement, Ukraine confirmed its important role in developing Europe's energy market and declared its readiness for global energy cooperation, the president added, thanking all those who made the deal possible for inviting reliable investors to Ukraine.

The approval for Vanco comes as Ukraine seeks to boost oil and gas output

by a third within the next several years. If exploration efforts are successful, development of the project would require investments of more than \$20 billion. "With the Prykerchenska PSA now in place," said Vanco's Chairman and President Gene Van Dyke, "we can proceed with plans to explore fully this frontier area of Ukraine's deep Black Sea."

Since 1997, Vanco Energy Company has built a high-potential deepwater Africa exploration portfolio. The company now holds and operates seven large licenses in five countries, including Morocco, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Vanco is a leading deepwater acreage holder in Africa with more than 10 million net deepwater acres under license.

During the early 1990s, Vanco embarked on a new strategy to focus on frontier exploration in the deepwater regions of the world. In 1996, recognizing the immense possibilities offshore Africa, Vanco began an aggressive program of acquiring and evaluating frontier deepwater opportunities. High potential contract areas were secured in Gabon (1997), Morocco (1998, 2001), Côte d'Ivoire (1999), Senegal (1999), Equatorial Guinea (2000), Namibia (2000), Madagascar (2001) and Ghana (2002). In April 2006, Vanco won the right to negotiate Ukraine's first Production Sharing Agreement covering the Prykerchenska area, offshore Black Sea.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://ukraine-observer.com/index.php?c=249>

8. Ukraine: The Power Of A Second Chance
By Jan Maksymiuk
RFE/RL, 19 October 2007

Now that President Viktor Yushchenko has confirmed that he wants the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT) and the Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defense (NUNS) bloc to form a ruling coalition, the two Orange Revolution allies may have a second chance to deliver on the promises they solemnly made in 2004 and disappointingly failed to meet.

But while Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko have already shown some public signs of unity -- most recently in Lisbon on October 18, where each espoused the virtues of European values during a

Congress of the European People's Party -- the question remains as to whether they have overcome their past differences sufficiently to run a new government.

After Yushchenko backed the pairing on October 17, Tymoshenko and Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, a leader of the pro-Yushchenko NUNS, presented the coalition deal they initialed on October 15. The entire 105-page document was subsequently published on the Internet.

The most important provisions of the deal state that Tymoshenko is to be proposed as prime minister, while the NUNS bloc will nominate a candidate for the post of parliamentary speaker. Cabinet portfolios are to be distributed on a 50-50 basis between the two blocs.

The deal makes room for a third "democratically oriented" participant in the coalition, although it does not mention it by name. It does, however, clearly stipulate that neither the Party of Regions nor the Communist Party can be considered as a potential coalition partner, thus narrowing the field to only the Lytvyn Bloc, which has 20 lawmakers in the 450-seat Verkhovna Rada.

Orange Sequel

The overwhelming feeling of *deja vu* that Ukraine observers may experience upon hearing such news is quite understandable.

A similar, if somewhat shorter, coalition document was preliminarily signed by the BYuT and Our Ukraine immediately after the March 2006 elections. At that time, the desired third coalition partner was the Socialist Party, which failed to win parliamentary seats this year.

After four months of futile coalition talks in 2006, the Socialists switched sides and formed a ruling majority with the Party of Regions and the Communists. President Yushchenko had no choice in August 2006 but to designate Viktor Yanukovich, his bitter political rival, as prime minister.

Could such a situation repeat itself this year? Could the NUNS bloc eventually abandon Tymoshenko and form a "broad" coalition with the Party of Regions, thus uniting the west and the east of Ukraine politically, if not ideologically or emotionally? Such a turn of events cannot be ruled out.

Tymoshenko, for whom the regained post of prime minister could be a much-coveted springboard for launching a presidential bid in 2009, has already made many compromises in order to ensure President Yushchenko's support for her attempt to lead the government once again.

To begin with, she agreed to give the NUNS bloc half of the cabinet portfolios, although her party won 156 parliamentary mandates versus NUNS's 72.

Furthermore, she agreed to endorse a package of 12 bills ahead of the expected vote on her approval as prime minister in the newly elected parliament. Some of the proposed bills, including one on the Cabinet of Ministers, significantly reinforce presidential powers at the expense of those of the prime minister.

An Uncertain Majority

But not even such concessions can guarantee that Tymoshenko will be vested with the powers she craves. BYuT and NUNS together have 228 votes, just two more than the majority required to pass most legislation in the Verkhovna Rada, including the approval of a new cabinet.

Tymoshenko can expect voting discipline within the BYuT ranks, but the NUNS bloc is a motley collection of nine political groups. What if the interests of one of these groups are not duly taken into account in the distribution of post-election spoils? In such a situation, it would not appear to be difficult to persuade just three lawmakers from a dissatisfied NUNS component to skip or abstain from a crucial vote.

It also seems unlikely that the Party of Regions will allow the Orange Revolution allies to adopt the 12 bills Tymoshenko has promised to endorse, which are sine qua non for starting the new government.

The Party of Regions will almost certainly demand separate votes on each of the proposed bills in order to exhaust the combat spirit of the Orange allies and nip their coalition-building effort in the bud. Attempts to block the parliamentary rostrum and even fistfights among lawmakers are not out of the question -- and are even likely -- at the inauguration of a new Verkhovna Rada.

But even if the Orange coalition manages to pass the 12 bills to please Yushchenko, approves Tymoshenko as prime minister, and appeases the hunger of all the NUNS constituents for political jobs, the problem of how to mobilize 226 votes for each individual piece of legislation in the future will remain an issue.

The Lytvyn Bloc, which could stabilize the slim Orange majority, is not eager to reveal its political preferences or appetites. Perhaps it is just waiting for a worthy piece of post-election pie in exchange for its role of kingmaker. But what if the Lytvyn Bloc has decided not to meddle in what seems to be an unavoidable exchange of blows between the BYuT and the Party of Regions, and has chosen an observer role? In that case, the Orange allies will need a political miracle or two to get their ruling partnership going.

On the other hand, a restored Orange coalition appears to be the only way for Yushchenko to perpetuate hopes for launching his presidential bid in 2009. If the president were to again nominate Yanukovych as prime minister, he would stand to lose even the dramatically dwindled support he currently enjoys in western Ukraine.

Eyes On The Next Goal

Tymoshenko has unequivocally declared that she will immediately start working on her presidential bid if she fails to get the post of prime minister.

It is easy to predict that, given the current distribution of political sympathies in Ukraine, Yushchenko has no chance of qualifying for the second round in the next presidential polls. But keeping Tymoshenko in the government would provide Yushchenko a glimmer of hope -- either by satisfying her political appetite, or by tarnishing her image as a competent and efficient politician who can deliver on her promises.

Tymoshenko has made a lot of unworkable election promises during the campaign, including one on returning lost Soviet-era savings to Ukrainians within the next two years-- an endeavor that would require a sum equal to Ukraine's annual budget.

Another apparently unrealistic pledge, which was written down in the coalition deal, is to abolish the military draft in Ukraine as of the beginning of 2008 and switch to a fully professional army in 2009.

When asked about the plan on the sidelines of the October 18 congress in Lisbon, President Yushchenko told reporters that "I'd like to tell my political friends and colleagues: They may develop certain visions at their level or they may not, but today I'd advise them to follow the National Program for the Development of the Ukrainian Armed Forces."

And Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko, bewildered after reading the coalition-deal passage pertaining to the military draft, compared it with abolishing Newton's three laws of motion.

Thus, the birth of a new government in Ukraine is taking place on shaky ground and amid heightened expectations of economic and political wonders. Ukraine already has its fairy-tale heroine with a fetching blonde braid -- now comes the time for her to work her magic.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/10/B9629324-CFE3-4BDD-99EE-226A3F2DF9BA.html>

9. Tymoshenko promises death to hopes of Party of Regions UNIAN, 19 October 2007

The BYUT will insist on adopting the law on personal voting of the deputies in the Verkhovna Rada.

BYUT leader Yulia Tymoshenko said this during the press conference.

"This is a draft of law on voting with using the biometric characteristics. Such draft of law is in the Verkhovna Rada", noted the BYUT leader.

"It is passed by our political force and we will insist on its adoption. We have to remove this depraved practice, when deputies vote for each other", added Tymoshenko.

From his turn, one of the leaders of the Our Ukraine – People's Self Defence Bloc Vyacheslav Kyrylenko said during the press conference that the bloc guarantees 100% support while voting for the candidacies for the posts of prime minister and speaker.

In connection with it, he was mentioned that from November 2 "Ocean Elsie" group, leader of which is the Our Ukraine member Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, will go for Northern –American tour for two weeks.

"Concerning Vakarchuk. I also read this today in mass media, I connected with him and he said the tours are tours, but the voting is more important", answered Kyrylenko.

"That is why no vote from the Our Ukraine – People's Self Defence Bloc either for the candidacy for the post of the speaker of the parliament or for the post of head of the government will be lost" he added.

Giving comments about possible instability of the democratic coalition, which the opponents speak about, Tymoshenko said "As they say, hope springs eternal in the human breast".

Enumerating among "hopes of the Party of Regions" that the democratic forces "either do not announce about coalition or there will be lack of one vote or they will work uncoordinatedly", the BYUT leader said:

"I want to disappoint the Party of Regions - all their unkind hopes will die after the formation the power in Ukraine. Our two teams made considerable conclusions from the previous experience. And as they say in the Party of Regions, "they will never live that long!"

Constant URL of article: <http://www.unian.net/eng/news/news-217859.html>

10. Tymoshenko wants Ukraine to remain key gas transit route New Europe, Issue : 752, 20 October 2007

Ukraine wants to continue to provide a transit route for 80 percent of Russia's natural gas and seeks new routes to bring Central Asian gas to the European Union, says a coalition agreement between the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and Our Ukraine - People's Self Defence.

Ukraine needs loans for the modernisation of its gas transportation network, energy saving technologies and larger underground gas storage facilities, the agreement read. The country must ensure stable deliveries of natural gas from Russia on the basis of intergovernmental agreements and sign long-term gas contracts with Central Asian states, the coalition said. Ukraine will seek an agreement with the Iranian, Turkish, Austrian, Romanian and Bulgarian governments on its involvement in the Nabucco gas project.

Meanwhile, Vitaly Martynyuk, an analyst at the Ukrainian Independent Political Research Centre, said Ukraine could have energy problems in three years when new gas pipelines are opened to Europe

that bypass its territory. "Real energy problems could begin for Ukraine in three years in 2010 - 2011. These years have been set as the timeframe for opening new gas pipelines to Europe. All of them bypass Ukraine as well as Belarus, which will be our sister in misfortune in this sense," Interfax quoted him as saying.

The Nabucco, Blue Stream, South Stream, and Nord Stream projects are the main natural gas pipelines that will bypass Ukraine, he said. Martynyuk said the Nabucco pipeline with capacity for up to 13 billion cubic metres a year to be built starting next year and opened in 2011 will connect Turkey to Austria through Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. The pipeline will transport Caspian and later Middle East and Turkmen natural gas to Europe. It will hook into the trans-European energy system. The pipeline will reach maximum capacity of 30 billion cubic metres in 2020.

Gazprom has suggested transporting Russian gas in the Blue Stream pipeline through the Black Sea to Turkey for transport through Bulgaria, Serbia, and Croatia to western Hungary. The pipeline will be opened in 2010 and will pump up to 16 billion cubic metres of gas. It will be an alternative to Russian gas transport through Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, and Bulgaria. Gazprom in June signed a memorandum with ENI Paolo Scaroni to build the South Stream pipeline through the Black Sea that will run from Russia's Black Sea coast to Varna, Bulgaria, through Greece and the Adriatic Sea to Italy. The pipeline will have capacity for 30 billion cubic metres of gas a year.

The Nord Stream pipeline will pump nine billion cubic metres of Russian gas to Germany through the Baltic Sea starting in 2010. It is also an alternative to transport to Western Europe bypassing Ukraine. The pipeline will be expanded to 55 billion cubic metres eventually. Martynyuk said if you add up the possible transport of Russian gas bypassing Ukraine (up to 180 billion cubic metres including the Yamal-Europe pipeline through Belarus) and compare it to the capacity of Ukraine's gas transport system (179 billion cubic metres annually at output), Russia could completely ignore the Ukrainian gas transport system after 2011 and dictate its terms.

"This could lead to the scenario that has been mentioned so many times - Gazprom could buy the Ukrainian gas transport system and put natural gas prices on the European level of USD 230 per 1,000 cubic metres," Interfax quoted him as saying.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.neurope.eu/articles/79001.php>

11. Gates begins Europe tour in Ukraine Press TV, 21 October 2007

US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates starts a tour of Europe in which he will meet officials from Ukraine, the Czech Republic and NATO.

Gates will be in Ukraine on Sunday and Monday to hold talks with President Viktor Yushchenko and Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, AFP reported.

US-Turkey relations are threatened as Washington has failed to act against Kurdish rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, as expected by Turkey.

On Tuesday, Gates will visit the Czech Republic, where the US aims to set an anti-missile defense system, a move strongly opposed by Russia.

The Netherlands will be Gates' next stop, where he will attend an informal meeting of NATO defense ministers on Wednesday and Thursday.

His tour will wrap up on Friday with a visit to US Army's European headquarters, which is located in Heidelberg, Germany.

AKM/BGH

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=27974§ionid=351020606>

12. US Defence Secretary Gates arrives in Ukraine FOCUS/ AFP, 21 October 2007

US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates arrived in Ukraine Sunday on the first stop of a European tour that will see him discuss Turkey's threat to attack Kurdish rebels based in northern Iraq and US plans for an anti-missile shield.

Gates arrived at 1:30 pm (1030 GMT) and was due to meet Turkish Defence Minister Vecdi Gonul later Sunday before holding talks with the defence ministers of Ukraine, Albania, Croatia and Macedonia.

Earlier in the day, Turkey pledged strong action against Kurdish separatists after 12 Turkish soldiers and 23 rebels were killed in a clash in the southeast of the country. Turkey's President Abdullah Gul, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and top ministers and military leaders were to meet Sunday to decide a response to the attack which Turkey blamed on Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels.

The government is ready to use the parliamentary authorisation it obtained Wednesday to conduct a cross-border military strike against PKK bases in northern Iraq, Erdogan said. The United States is worried about any action that could destabilize the relatively peaceful northern Iraq.

On Monday Gates was due to meet Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and on Tuesday was scheduled to visit the Czech Republic, where the United States aims to put a radar station as part of its Europe-based shield against possible missile attacks from countries such as Iran and North Korea. On Wednesday and Thursday Gates will be in the Netherlands for an informal meeting of NATO defence ministers.

He is expected to ask countries to send more troops to patrol Afghanistan, where international forces are battling an insurgency by extremists of the ousted Taliban regime.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n124946>

13. Trade Office gets federal grant for Ukraine sales AP/KXMC, 21 October 2007

Bismarck, N.D. (AP) The North Dakota Trade Office is getting a \$129,000 federal grant to expand exports of Agricultural equipment to the Ukraine.

The money is from the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration.

The Trade Office says it has a long-term strategy for North Dakota's farm equipment industry to increase market share in the Ukraine. The former Soviet state has a rapidly growing economy.

The Trade Office is putting about \$263,000 of its own money and resources into the three-year program.

Ukraine bought North Dakota Agricultural equipment valued at 35 million dollars in 2006. In the first three months of this year, North Dakota equipment companies exported 26 million dollars in equipment to the country.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.kxmc.com/News/173275.asp>

14. Ukraine Braces for 15% Gas Price Hike **Bloomberg/The Moscow Times, 21 October 2007**

NEW YORK -- Ukraine is bracing for a larger-than-expected increase in the price of natural gas charged by Russia, which is likely to fuel inflation and curb economic growth, Ukrainian Economy Minister Anatoly Kinakh said Friday.

Russia may increase the price of natural gas next year by 15 percent, Kinakh said in an interview in Washington.

That's more than Ukraine's initial estimate of a 10 percent increase to \$143 per 1,000 cubic meters.

Higher gas prices will make it harder for Ukraine to hold its inflation rate to the 6.8 percent government forecast for next year, he said. Ukrainian industries, including chemicals, need time to adjust to increases in gas prices, which remain far below European levels of \$270 per 1,000 cubic meters, he said.

"At a gas price of \$180 per 1,000 cubic meters, our chemicals-making industry, one of the major exporters, would become loss-making," he said. "We need time to modernize our economy, to implement new technologies and cut energy consumption."

Gazprom cut supplies to Ukraine in January 2006 in a dispute over prices that interrupted shipments to Europe. Russia later doubled what it charged Ukraine for gas, and it raised the price by another 37 percent in 2007.

The European Union depends on Russia for about a quarter of its oil and gas imports. The incident cast doubt over Russia's reliability as a supplier of energy.

"There is a very serious political component here," Kinakh said of Russia's gas-pricing policies.

"It's very important for us not only to agree on the price for next year but also to have a medium-term strategy," he said. "It won't be possible to keep the price" below the average European level "longer than two or three more years."

"We managed to withstand these prices because of high prices for our major exports, such as metals and chemicals," Kinakh said. Metals and chemicals, such as fertilizers, make up 52 percent of Ukraine's exports, he said.

Ukraine's economy will probably grow about 7 percent this year, compared with the government's initial forecast of 6.5 percent and the central bank's estimate of 7.5 percent, Kinakh said. Next year, growth may slow to less than 6.5 percent, he said.

"Ukraine's consumer prices may rise as much as 13 percent by some estimates, but the government must make every effort to restrict it to 11 percent" this year, Kinakh said. It initially planned to cut inflation to 7.5 percent in 2007.

Ukraine will attract at least \$5 billion in foreign direct investment this year, Kinakh said. "This is still not much, given Ukraine's economic potential."

Foreign direct investment rose 50 percent in the first half of the year from the same period a year earlier, to \$2.55 billion, he said.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2007/10/22/043.html>

15. Ukraine government supports continuous gas agreements with Russia Itar-Tass, 21 October 2007

WASHINGTON -- The incumbent Ukrainian government comes out for continuous gas agreements with Russia, Ukrainian Economy Minister Anatoly Kinakh told Itar-Tass on Saturday. He heads the Ukrainian delegation at an annual meeting of the governing boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In reply to a question whether he believes it possible to revise Ukrainian-Russian gas agreements after the formation of a new Ukrainian government Kinakh said, "I pin high hopes on the principle of continuity being preserved in this issue."

In Kinakh's view, further growth of the Russian gas price is inevitable as long as both countries are passing to market relations. Meanwhile, he emphasized that this process is gradual. "After the latest rise in the Russian gas price Ukrainian economy confirmed its potential – the GDP growth made 7.3%," Kinakh pointed out.

However, he acknowledged that if the gas price on the Ukrainian-Russian border reaches 180 dollars for 1,000 cubic meters the operation of many Ukrainian enterprises, particularly in the chemical industry, would become loss-making.

The minister agreed that the trade of the countries may reach 30 billion dollars in 2007. Thus, his forecast coincided with Russia's assessments. "It is quite real," Kinakh said in comments on Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's statement on Friday that the trade of the countries may reach 30 billion dollars in 2007.

Speaking on Russian Vice-Premier and Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin's statement on Russia's interest in a gradual reduction of the dollar exchange rate, Kinakh said the Ukrainian government intends to maintain an exchange rate within a range of 4.95-5.25 hryvnas for a dollar in the near future.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=11989470&PageNum=0>

16. Political situation in Ukraine may delay its admission to WTO Itar-Tass, 21 October 2007

WASHINGTON - The political situation in Ukraine may delay the republic's admission to the WTO, said on Saturday Ukrainian Economics Minister Anatoly Kinakh in an interview with Itar-Tass. He heads the Ukrainian delegation at the annual meeting of the governing bodies of the IMF and the World Bank.

Kinakh claimed that a date of Ukraine's admission to the World Trade Organisation will largely depend on when the new national parliament can start operating, how quickly a new government will be formed and within what time parameters work on Ukraine's accession to the WTO is completed.

The minister noted that Ukraine has signed bilateral protocols on conditions of mutual access to markets of goods and services within the process of joining the WTO with 49 out of 50 countries, with which talks were conducted. Kyrgyzstan turned to be the last country. This topic was also discussed in Washington at a meeting in the US Commerce Department and in the office of the US representative at trade talks.

"It is very important that we should not worsen bilateral trade and economic relations with Russia after an admission to the WTO," Kinakh emphasised.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=11989467&PageNum=0>

17. Ukraine not to send troops to Afghanistan
RosBusinessConsulting, 22 October 2007

Ukraine has no plans to send combat units to Afghanistan, Ukrainian Defense Minister Anatoly Hrytsenko announced after a meeting with his US counterpart Robert Gates, as part of the preparations for the council of Southeast Europe's Defense Ministers meeting scheduled for today in Kiev, the Ukrainian Minister's press office reported today. Hrytsenko reiterated that Ukraine had one medical officer in Afghanistan due to be replaced by two medics, while another military officer was being trained to join the headquarters staff.

The US and Ukrainian Defense Ministers also discussed cooperation issues for 2008, with the US's technical assistance in building an international center for peacekeeping and security as a top priority for the partnership.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.rbcnews.com/free/20071022105304.shtml>

18. Bravo and stay tuned: Ukraine's parliamentary elections 2007Z
By Oksana Bashuk Hepburn
Maidan.org.ua, October 2007

Two days before the election, Russia's Ambassador to Ukraine Victor Chornomyrdyn stated that energy prices to Ukraine this winter will depend on who wins the election. Two days after the Orange forces won, Russia's Gazprom declared that Ukraine has a 1.3 billion dollar energy debt. Former Prime Minister Yanukhovich and the Minister of Energy, the incompetent Yuriy Boyko—both from the losing Party of Regions—headed for Moscow while the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko muddied the political waters by calling for a united government comprising the top three parties, a ploy that prevented the Orange forces from forming the government following the March 2006 parliamentary elections. Things looked like the political shenanigans following that election might be in the works again. Not any longer. On October 16, the President called on the Orange forces to form a government. Bravo.

So who are the winners and losers of the September 30 elections?

Despite attaining the highest number of votes, the biggest loser is the ruling Party of Regions: it failed to hold power. Only 34 % of Ukrainian voters backed it. The other big loser is Olexander Moroz. His Socialists failed to pass the 3% barrier required to sit in parliament. No surprise here. After the March 2006 elections Moroz abandoned the Orange forces to join Yanukhovich. Now, he is being punished. One attractive Kyiv voter summed up the prevailing attitude of voters: "Anyone, but Moroz."

The under-performance of the two key pro-Russia parties prevents them from taking power in parliament. Bad news for them, and for Russia's President Vladymyr Putin. His designs to control Ukraine as part of a re-emerging new Russian empire are well known. In secret discussions with Mr. Yanukhovich, just weeks before the election, he promises that he will continue as Prime Minister regardless of the will of the people. Then, came the Ambassador's threats, and the pilgrimage of the sitting duck ministers to Moscow. What will be his moves to protect Russia's interests in light of the Orange victory?

Undeniably the big winner is BYuT, Yulia Tymoshenko's Block, pulling in over 30% of the votes. Her political staying power and momentum are impressive. Twice dismissed by President Viktor Yushchenko as the Prime Minister, she has put personal animosities aside to cobble, again and again, an Orange coalition knowing full well that without a united presence the pro-West forces are doomed. The voters have rewarded her with growing support in the last three elections. Additionally, this time she made inroads beyond the historically pro-West regions of Ukraine winning handsomely in central and parts of south-eastern Ukraine. She deserves to form the new Orange government and become the Prime Minister aagain. The people have given her their support to govern the country her way, but will she be allowed?

There are two other winners. Although small in percentage of votes taken, the Communist party, dismissed by some as yesterday's phenomenon, has nearly doubled its electoral support to nearly 5%. Its gain is a testimonial to the poverty in the rural areas, the national high unemployment, and the low pensions—all a big issue in Ukraine. Allegedly funded by Ukraine's richest oligarch Renat Akhmetov who funds the Party of Regions as well, the Communists will join the Regions to form the opposition.

A big winner in the small category, and someone to watch, is the phoenix-like resurrection of Volodymyr Lytvyn. Parliament's Speaker under President Kuchma, he returns after a two year political absence. His Block obtained near 4%. It was expected that he would support the Regions. However, his political ambitions seem long term. Given Ms. Tymoshenko's standing, he might lead towards the Orange or stay independent—a new phenomenon in Ukraine's politics—supporting issues with popular appeal, regardless of party sponsorship.

What about Nasha Ukraina-Natsional'na Samo Oborona (NUNS) whose honorary head is President Yushchenko? Are they winners or losers?

Although they placed third after BYuT and the Regions receiving nearly 15% of the vote the NUNS, in particular the Our Ukraine faction, cannot be counted as a winner. The force that brought millions to contest and win the fraudulent presidential elections has lost support because of its inability to deal with Russia's meddling in Ukraine's affairs, the capitulation to Russia's grab of the energy sector, and failure to deal with corruption. It formed a loose union, in time for the elections, with young Yurij Lutsenko, a high-profile freedom fighter and Orange Revolution figure. His NSO gave Our Ukraine a boost. Immediately following the election results he made a public statement supporting Tymoshenko. Nasha Ukrayina took its time. Such decisive acts are the stuff of great political leaders: watch him.

Above all, it was the people who emerged as the greatest winners in the elections. They made their choice switching loyalties in order to reward those who espouse their values rather than those whose net value has grown at the people's expense. They created the winners and losers and elected for themselves a new government.

All seems as it should be in Ukraine now. Yulia Tymoshenko and the NUNS's Orange alliance will form the government. The opposition will comprise the Regions and the Communists. Even without Volodymyr Lytvyn the Orange power has the numbers. But, they also had them in March 2006 and lost. True, but with each election the political sophistication of both the electorate and politicians in Ukraine is mounting. It's politics are still somewhat of a crap shoot and backs needs to be watched. But, for now, the people's choice has prevailed.

What about Ambassador Chernomyrdyn's statement? It is odd that he was neither reprimanded by the President Victor Yushchenko nor asked to withdraw his remarks. Nor were there calls for the Ambassador to leave the country as a persona non grata, a likely move in other democratic countries especially given his long standing record of meddling in Ukraine's politics on behalf of Russia.

Will this happen? Stay tuned.

*Oksana Bashuk Hepburn is the President of U*CAN Ukraine Canada Relations Inc., a consulting firm, and a commentator. She is writing a novel dealing with Ukrainian and diaspora politics.*

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://eng.maidanua.org/node/781>

19. Party of Regions Frightens With Referendum Again Ukrayinska Prawda, 20 October 2007

The Party of Regions (PRU) declares it will continue organizing all-Ukrainian referendum concerning official status for Russian language, non-alignment status of Ukraine and election of regional state administrations heads.

"The Party of Regions continues organizing the referendum. Collected documents are transmitted to the Central Election Commission," says the PRU declaration.

The PRU members stressed that they had already gathered 5 million of signatures to support the referendum.

"In our opinion, it is necessary to proceed with the constitutional reform, as its incomplete in several positions is a reason of a lot of crises and misunderstandings in the society," emphasized the PRU members.

In addition they say that "there are sensitive issues to be solved and they will be considered at the referendum."

"Politicians should take the people's opinion into consideration. That is why we want to know exact position of people concerning the referendum issues," says the declaration.

As known, earlier the PRU representative Vasyl Khara stated that the party might not insist on the referendum.

Permanent Link: <http://www.pravda.com.ua/en/news/2007/10/20/9230.htm>

20. MP Candidate Kaskiv Opposing Imperative Mandate But Ready To Support Its Introduction Ukrainian News Agency, 22 October 2007

Verkhovna Rada deputy candidate from the Our Ukraine People's Self-Defense Bloc Vladyslav Kaskiv opposes imperative mandate, which foresees ban for deputies to switch factions, but is ready to support its introduction.

He disclosed this in an interview to Fifth TV Channel on October 21.

"Imperative mandate is shame. That is the position, which radically moves Ukraine away from Europe and which creates situation when we may appear in authoritarian regime," he said.

At the same time, Kaskiv has marked that in the case his faction decides to support the bill on introduction of the imperative mandate, he will back it.

The Our Ukraine People's Self-Defense Bloc representative marked that his position concerning introduction of imperative mandate is shared by most of the members of the political council of the bloc.

He also expressed his hope that the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and the Our Ukraine People's Self-Defense Bloc will manage to settle all misunderstandings concerning program of the future coalition before official creation of the parliamentary coalition.

"Introduction of imperative mandate by the democratic coalition does not contain anything democratic. It is obviously conflicting with the democracy and humiliates dignity of people's deputies," Kaskiv said.

As Ukrainian News earlier reported, agreement on creation of the parliamentary coalition between the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and the Our Ukraine People's Self-Defense Bloc foresees introduction of the imperative mandate.

Kaskiv initiated joint meeting of the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and his bloc's political councils to discuss tasks of the future Cabinet of Ministers.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

**21. Svoboda Urges Justice Ministry To Cancel Registration Of Progressive Socialist Party, Communist Party And Putin Politics Party
Ukrainian News Agency, 22 October 2007**

Svoboda political party is urging the Justice Ministry to cancel registration of the Progressive Socialist Party, Communist Party and Party of Putin's Politics, accusing them of anti-Ukrainian activity.

This follows from Svoboda's statement sent to the Justice Ministry.

The message also says activity of the parties lead to provocations in Ukraine.

Also, Svoboda is calling for launching proceedings against those guilty of desecrating the national symbols on Hoverla.

As Ukrainian News earlier reported, the investigative department of Ivano-Frankivsk Region Police filed a criminal case on October 20 alleging the desecration of national symbols on the Hoverla Mountain.

The Security Service established the names of three masterminds and two vandals who desecrated national symbols on the Hoverla Mountain.

The suspects did not destroy the signs they only simulated the process, the SBU said.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://www.ukranews.com/eng/article/74574.html>

**22. Lazarenko intends to come back to Ukraine this year
ForUm, 19 October 2007**

Ex Prime Minister of Ukraine Pavlo Lazarenko expressed hope that in 2007 court would make a decision allowing him to come back to Ukraine.

According to information of a range of mass media, Lazarenko noted that his lawyers had submitted written arguments to the Court of appeal. Hearing must start after October 30. "I hope the court decision will be favorable for me that will allow me to return to Ukraine this year," he said.

In august 2006 federal court of San-Francisco sentenced Lazarenko to 9 years imprisonment and to fine of USD 10 million. Lazarenko was admitted guilty in corruption, money laundering and blackmail.

Waiting for court process, Pavlo Lazarenko spent more than 4 years in prison. In 2003 he was released on bail of USD 65 million.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://en.for-ua.com/news/2007/10/19/142512.html>

**23. Yushchenko calls Timoshenko's military initiatives "offensive" for Ukraine
REGNUM, 19 October 2007**

Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko says that the question of switching the Ukrainian Army to the contract basis must be settled only within frameworks of the legal acts, which are in force now. He

made the statement today, on October 18, in an interview to Ukrainian reporters in Lisbon, a REGNUM correspondent reports citing press office of the Ukrainian president.

In this context, the president reminded that a national defensive doctrine was adopted in Ukraine for years ahead, and several years ago a national program for developing the Ukrainian Armed Forces was passed. The latter clearly registers switching the army to the contract basis by 2010. The president reminded that experience of other countries showed that the process takes 10-12 years as a rule, but not less than seven. Yushchenko emphasized that the question of turning to contract army concerns not only the question of money. "A contract soldier is a man who needs new weapons technologies, new education, new tactical tasks, and for many people who now represent the Ukrainian defensive forces – new training school," the president added. "This is not a question of none months," he added calling such presentation of the issue not only incorrect, but "offensive." "This is neglect of interest first of all of the military and the security of the nation," the president said.

The president also assessed negatively bringing the issue to a political angle. "I would like to inform my political friends and colleagues: on their level, they can form or not form relevant visions, but I would advise to them to stick to the national program of the Armed Forces development strategy," Viktor Yushchenko concluded. According to him, it goes about things that are now "least needed to be discussed, and are most needed to be secured unity of the political approach."

Earlier, BYT leader Yulia Timoshenko announced as a part of her platform switching the army to the contract basis.

Permanent news address: www.regnum.ru/english/901940.html

24. Ukraine to host southeast Europe defense ministers' talks RIA Novosti, 22 October 2007

Ukraine will for the first time host a session of the Council of Southeast European Defense Ministers, a spokesman for the country's Defense Ministry said on Monday.

Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko and U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates are to attend the session.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said the agenda would include reports on the 2007 activity of the Council's coordinating committee and on the South East Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG), as well as speeches by the NATO Allied Joint Force Command.

"The Kiev session of the Council of Southeast Europe Defense Ministers should focus on Ukraine's statement concerning its ambitions to join the agreement on the Multinational Peacekeeping Forces of Southeast Europe," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In addition, the participants will adopt annual documents, draw up a joint statement, and fix the date and venue for the next meeting of the Council.

Viktor Yushchenko became president of Ukraine in early 2005 after a court overturned what it said was a rigged presidential election won by Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. Yushchenko has since sought membership for Ukraine in NATO and the European Union.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://en.rian.ru/world/20071022/84905010.html>

**25. Yatsenyuk believes in Common Economic Area
ForUm, 19 October 2007**

Foreign Minister for Ukraine Arseniy Yatsenyuk considers that Common Economic Area is “vital” project. He said that today at joint press conference with the Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov.

According to Yatsenyuk, it is a “vital” project but at the same time “there is no progress in the process of formation of CEA” for last two years.

He has reminded that Ukraine does not consider possible accession to Customs union within Common Economic Area, but economic integration must be considered.

In turn Sergey Lavrov said that Ukraine and Russia would find ways for economic integration with consideration of interests of two countries.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:
<http://en.for-ua.com/news/2007/10/19/153016.html>

**26. Dr. Aubrey A. Lurie: Ukraine's past dotted with opportunities and horrors for minority
groups
Shreveport Times, 21 October 2007**

In August, my wife and I toured The Ukraine under the guidance of Stephen Berk, professor of History at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y. Berk is an expert in Russian history, and is an outstanding lecturer and teacher.

There were two interesting aspects of the visit — the political history of the region during the Soviet and post-Soviet era, and the fate of minority groups.

Ukrainian history shows that for a millennium it was ruled by the Khazars. Lithuania/Poland, Russia, and the Soviet Union, until 1991, when it became an independent country. It was the breadbasket to the Soviets even at considerable cost to themselves. Stalin's farm collectivization shipped farm supplies to other parts of the Soviet Union and export markets. This led to famine and starvation of the peasants of the Ukraine in 1932-1933 and 1946-47.

The city of Odessa on the Black Sea was a major warm-water outlet for the Russian empire's exports and the Russian Black Sea Fleet is based close by in the Crimea, an autonomous republic on the Black Sea.

The country was the major domicile of the Cossacks who would rise, every so often, against the ruling class. Today the Ukraine is struggling to break from the yoke-hold of Russia and to look westward, hoping eventually to join the European Community, even though the Ukraine depends on Russia for its gas supplies and forms an important part of the pipeline transit route for Russian gas exports to Europe.

Widespread poverty is evident in the three cities we visited, Lviv (also called Lvov, Lvuv or Lemberg), Kiev and Odessa. Lviv was part of the Hapsburg, Austrian-Hungarian Empire and largely Polish until 1939. It was on the trade routes to the East until the discovery of the Americas.

Kiev is the capital city and shows the most reconstruction and updating. It is a beautiful city. Tall buildings with curves and angles are gradually replacing Soviet-style architecture with its stolid concrete-block buildings. Despite poverty and difficulties, a palpable energy was felt in the populace who appear to take pride in their recent independence.

A visit to a large World War II museum in Kiev was a memorable and emotional experience,

even for us non-Russians. The sufferings of the Soviet Union in World War II were horrible — 27 million people died at the hands of German forces and a probable equal number by Stalin. Stalin purged widely — army generals, factory and

land workers, intellectuals and political opponents. Chernobyl is 80 miles north of Kiev. We did not visit there, as it is still closed to outsiders. The magnitude of that nuclear reactor accident is still felt, not least in the 4,000 Ukrainian children with thyroid cancer related to the radiation released.

Odessa, the "Pearl on the Black Sea," used to be a great city. It was cosmopolitan, tolerant of divergent opinions, governed by the Duke de Richelieu. He organized good garbage collection, purified the water supply, controlled outbreaks of plague and inoculated the population against smallpox. Writers, poets, musicians, artists, newspapers and philosophers flourished there. The port was active. The city had large minority populations of Jews, Greeks and Armenians.

The minority group of interest to our group was the Jewish population of Central and Eastern Europe. Before World War I the majority of Jews lived in Germany, The Austrian-Hungarian Empire and the "Pale of Settlement" which included Eastern Poland, the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), The Ukraine, Western Russia, Belarus and Galicia. The Pale of Settlement was the area in which Jews were "allowed" to live in small villages (shtetls) and small cities, but not the large ones like Moscow and St. Petersburg.

For the most part they were poor and susceptible to forced conscription into the army for 20 years, as well as numerous attacks, rapings and killings (pogroms). Despite the poverty and difficulties, their lives were rich in religious observance, cultural activities, music and learning. Everyone could read and write, unlike the peasants around them. Any philosophy that offered hope and advancement flourished amongst them. Thus, Zionism, Socialism and Marxist ideology, and trade unions were supported strongly, especially in freer cities such as Odessa in the Ukraine.

Emigration was rife, not only to escape persecution, but to seek countries with more accessible job and financial opportunities. At the turn of the 19th century, most emigrants desired to get to the USA, and millions came, until 1925, when emigration was restricted by an act of the U.S. Senate. My father in Lithuania in 1925 was three weeks from being granted his American papers. When that opportunity closed, he made for South Africa.

The U.S. Senators, in their 1925 wisdom, thought that immigrants from Eastern Europe would bring disease, poverty and threaten the WASP society that was the American dream. Little could they imagine or credit the enormous contribution made by Eastern European Jewish immigration to all spheres of American life.

The pogroms in the Ukraine had their standards set by a Cossack by the name of Bodhan Chmielnicki. He and his followers from the 17th. century on made a sport of bayoneting, raping and pillaging Jews. The Cossacks played on the universal hatred of Jews in Europe for their many perceived crimes. (I was able to give the finger-sign to a statue of Chmielnicki in Kiev).

Not even the dastardly deeds of the Cossacks could compare to the fate facing every Jew in Europe at the hands of the Germans in World War II. In each of the three cities we visited, there was massive slaughter and killing fields.

Of particular note was a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev, called Babi-Yar. Here, the Jews of Kiev were marched, and summarily shot — men, women, children. It is estimated that at least 130,000 were slaughtered in three weeks. Dmitri Shostakovich, the great Russian composer, dedicated the first movement of his 13th Symphony to this tragedy. It was particularly haunting to be present at these killing sites, and to recite the Kaddish prayer, which praises God, even though he was "sleeping" at that time.

Of interest, is that with the demise of the Soviet Union, religion has made a strong comeback in the Ukraine. The Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches are flourishing, as well as synagogues, Hebrew schools and social services.

This trip again emphasized, to me, the magnificence of America and what we have to fight hard to

protect — the right of every religion to free expression; that there is no one state religion (this is NOT a Christian country, no matter what certain fundamentalists would prefer). Civil liberties are NOT a given right. The world went mad during my lifetime. We have to prevent that from happening again. However, how to do so and still preserve the fundamental rights of every person, no matter color, creed or orientation? That is the challenge of our age.

One final note. On my first day back at work, I was discussing with a professional assistant his purchase of a new car. He had researched possibilities online and found a good offer in Dallas. He assured me he got the lowest price possible. He was proud of his bargain hunting and felt that he "deserved a menorah, for his efforts." Even in America ...

Dr. Aubrey A. Lurie is a Shreveport physician.

Text available on World Wide Web, URL:

<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071021/OPINION0106/710200303/1007/OPINION>