

Ukraine vote buries fiction of 'Soviet Union'

by Konstantin George

The last fiction that a "Soviet Union" exists was buried Dec. 1, when Ukraine's 37 million voters decided by a 90% margin in favor of immediately proclaiming Ukraine an independent nation. The margin exceeded by about 10% the pre-referendum expectations of all pro-independence groups and the opinion polls contracted by the Ukrainian Parliament. Voters also elected Ukraine Parliament President Leonid Kravchuk, who received somewhere between 55% and 60% of the vote, as the republic's first President. The runner-up was Vyacheslav Chornovil, leader of the Rukh national movement, who got about 25% of the vote. This low tally is not reflective of Rukh's true strength, as the Rukh vote was split among four candidates.

The outcome of the Ukrainian referendum and election marks a dramatic change in European and global politics. Ukraine, with a population of 52 million, has the industrial, agricultural, and technological capacity to rival that of France at the turn of the century. Ukrainian independence has removed the last tactical constraints on the part of the Russian Federation leadership under President Boris Yeltsin, to proclaim Russian independence. Ukrainian independence also buries the possibility of any successor state to the U.S.S.R.

The end of an illusion

Despite the failure of the August coup, western governments and media feverishly clung to the illusion that a new Moscow Center, led by Mikhail Gorbachov, could somehow be resurrected. This illusion now lies shattered, as the new line in the European media, including the British press, and the international rush to recognize Ukraine attest.

Samples of British media coverage after the vote include

the Dec. 2 headline in the London *Independent*: "Birth of Ukraine: Death of U.S.S.R." And the same day's London *Guardian*: "Ukrainian Mass Vote Ends U.S.S.R." The *Guardian* coverage read: "Ukrainians yesterday voted overwhelmingly for their republic's independence, killing off any last chance that the Soviet Union can survive as a political union."

Buried with the Soviet Union is Gorbachov's project for a so-called new union, based on the republics signing a "New Union Treaty." Throughout the election campaign, President Kravchuk had insisted that Ukraine will never sign any treaty for a new political union. In his final pre-election speech on Nov. 29, Kravchuk denounced Gorbachov and the New Union Treaty, declaring flatly that Ukraine will never join. "He [Gorbachov] is trying to create a state on three levels—autonomous republics, states, and then a super-state on top. Such a state is doomed, it cannot exist. It will either be a centralized, totalitarian state, or it will fall apart."

Creating national institutions

Replying to an American-led slander campaign against Ukraine on the issue of the former Soviet debt, Kravchuk reiterated that Ukraine will pay its share of the former Soviet foreign debt, but only after receiving assurances that it will get its share of former Soviet gold, foreign exchange reserves, and other assets. He concluded by saying that Ukraine will have its own currency, national bank, and armed forces. Ukraine is ready to join an "Economic Union" with Russia and other republics after the elections, he said, but only if it is a loose economic union, "like the European Community."

As most recently confirmed by Yeltsin in an interview to

Izvestia on Nov. 29, the institutional changes in Ukraine will be emulated by Russia and the other republics. Yeltsin, knowing in advance what the Ukrainian election outcome would be, declared: "Ukraine will be free to do what it wants, introduce its own currency, have its own army. The situation for Russia will then also change. As a reciprocal measure, we shall have to introduce our own currency, and do something about the army." In the same interview, against the background of a coming Ukrainian land reform, which will give land to the farmers, Yeltsin announced that he will soon issue a decree disbanding all loss-making state and collective farms, and redistribute their land to private farmers.

In agricultural policy, there is a parallel between measures being taken by Ukraine and Russia. Large tank plant facilities in Kharkov, St. Petersburg, and the Urals industrial center of Nizhni Tagil are being converted to produce tractors and other agricultural machinery suitable for private farmers.

The Ukrainian elections also debunked the myth of "inter-ethnic conflict" between Ukrainians and Russians. The 90% majority for independence would have been impossible had not a solid majority of Ukraine's 12 million Russians voted for independence. The vote of Ukraine's ethnic Russians made a laughing-stock out of the correspondents and "analysts" of the western media who, since August, invested so much time, energy, and newsprint on inventing scare stories about non-existent "ethnic conflicts." In the two regions of Ukraine with the heaviest ethnic Russian concentrations, Donetsk and Kharkov, no less than three-quarters of the Russians voted for independence. Even in the Crimea, the one "bastion" of Russian chauvinism, a majority of the population and up to 40% of the Russian population voted for independence.

Diplomatic recognition

The process of diplomatic recognition of Ukraine began as soon as the referendum results were known. On Dec. 2, Ukraine was formally recognized by neighboring Poland, and Russia announced that it would follow suit. Thus, in an historic irony, Ukraine was first recognized by the two countries which, through much of history, had ruled it, or parts of it, as occupiers. The next day, Hungary extended diplomatic recognition to Ukraine and to Russia as well. Among the OECD nations, all announced that they would "soon" be recognizing Ukraine, but as of Dec. 4, recognition had come only from Canada, reflecting the electoral significance of the high proportion of Ukrainian immigrants among Canada's 25 million people.

The imminence of formal Russian recognition was clear from a declaration by President Yeltsin Dec. 3, where he announced that he was "convinced of the necessity of establishing new relations at government level, including diplomatic relations between Russia and Ukraine." This will occur "in an accelerated manner," he said, because he was "convinced that Ukraine will abide by agreements" concerning

arms control, nuclear weapons, respect of human rights, and protection of minorities. According to statements by Kravchuk on Ukrainian television Dec. 3, formal Russian recognition is expected on Dec. 5 or 6, after the official Ukrainian vote results are made public.

On Dec. 6, on "parallel" visits, Yeltsin and Kravchuk will arrive in the Belorussian capital of Minsk where they will hold bilateral talks on economic and political cooperation. As confirmed in a Dec. 3 statement by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoli Silenko, on Dec. 7 Yeltsin and Kravchuk will hold tripartite talks with the leadership of Belorussia, to create a politically loose cooperation association among the three Slavic republics, as the bridge toward a future EC-like economic union.

U.S. insists on conditions

The official position of the United States is that it will recognize Ukraine, but only after Ukraine has complied with a list of "conditions." The conditions, as identified by White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, include: Ukraine's agreement concerning nuclear non-proliferation, adherence to arms control agreements, respect for human rights, protection of its ethnic minorities, and agreeing to pay its share of the foreign debt of the former Soviet Union. During December, these issues will be discussed in Kiev by a State Department special emissary, followed by the arrival in Kiev at the end of December of Secretary of State James Baker.

This U.S. position—of blackmail—has been echoed by the British government and, through Anglo-American strong-arm tactics, also adopted, at least preliminarily, by the EC and NATO.

The "conditions" policy, besides being utterly immoral, bears no relation to Ukraine's actual policy. Ukraine has repeatedly declared that it will never develop, produce, or possess nuclear weapons, and is ready to sign any treaties to this effect. Ukraine has demanded the quickest possible physical destruction of all Russian-controlled nuclear weapons on its territory. On the so-called conventional arms control front, Ukraine has declared that it will abide by all international agreements limiting conventional forces. Given that Ukraine has not yet even begun forming its armed forces, it is difficult to see how their present strength of zero can be considered a "violation" of arms control agreements.

Among the other conditions, it is the most vicious of insults for the United States—which throws into prison Bush administration political opponents on trumped up charges, as the Lyndon LaRouche case exemplifies—to demand that a republic which has conducted a free election, monitored and certified by western electoral observers, and which has no political prisoners, "prove" its "respect for human rights." Protection of minorities, who have rights exceeding European norms, has been acknowledged by Russia and enshrined in the Aug. 28 Russian-Ukrainian Treaty. The same treaty and similar treaties with all of Ukraine's neighbors—Poland,

Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Belorussia—ensure mutual respect for each country's territorial integrity.

On the issue of the foreign debt, Ukraine has formally refused to sign an agreement with the western Group of Seven, agreeing to pay its share. But this does not mean that Ukraine refuses to pay its share. Ukraine insists, correctly, that it will sign such an agreement only after it has received assurances that not only the debt, but the gold reserves, foreign exchange reserves, and other liquid assets of the former Soviet Union will also be fairly divided among the republics. Imagine General Motors being liquidated into 12 successor corporations: No American, European, or Japanese directing one of these 12 corporations would ever agree to assume GM debt and renounce all claim to GM assets. Exactly this is being demanded of Ukraine.

The Bush-Gorbachov mutual policy

Putting aside George Bush's public relations talk of "forthcoming recognition," Bush's attitude has not changed from the summer when, in Kiev, he issued a stinging denunciation of Ukrainian independence. Bush, in a panic over the collapse of the Moscow Center and his own position with the American electorate, must now sing a different tune in public. But what Bush no longer dares to say in public, his friend Gorbachov says for him.

Gorbachov has, in interviews in the Soviet media, spewed a stream of invective against Ukraine. In a TASS interview on Nov. 30, he appealed to Ukrainians to vote against independence. Ukrainian independence is a "catastrophe for the union, Ukraine itself, Russia, Europe and the world," Gorbachov said. Repeating a theme he first discussed with Bush at the May 1990 Washington summit, Gorbachov stated that Ukrainian independence "can be exploited, and lead to territorial conflicts with Russia." He claimed for Russia, despite treaties signed by the Yeltsin government with Ukraine which renounce all territorial claims, the Ukrainian regions of Kharkov and Crimea.

Interviewed by the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* after the referendum, Gorbachov declared that failure to sign the "New Union Treaty" would be a "catastrophe for the entire international community." He then warned of "ethnic conflicts," and "even wars between the republics," invoking the specter of "a confrontation between Russians and Ukrainians" producing a "general catastrophe."

Were there no Bush administration, Gorbachov's could be laughed at, as Gorbachov has little power now. However, they reflect the mutual policy of Bush and Gorbachov. Gorbachov's only hope to hang on lies in chaos and bloodshed sweeping the republics of the former Soviet Union. For Bush, the only way in which the U.S.A. can continue to militarily and strategically dominate Europe is by destabilizing these republics, to thus create for Europe a new "danger" from the East to replace the old Soviet danger that has now disappeared.

Crimes Against Humanity

Serbian atrocities exposed in EC report

by Umberto Pascali

The sickening brutality of the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian terrorist gangs against the Croatian population was confirmed by a report authored by European Community (EC) observers and leaked to the international press in Zagreb, Croatia. The report, which was not intended for publication, demonstrates, if anyone still needs proof, that Lord Carrington, Cyrus Vance, and the other "mediators" who have maintained "equidistance" between victims and butchers, knew the truth in detail. Nevertheless, they chose to protract the massacre for months, and even to recommend to governments that they not recognize independent Croatia and Slovenia.

Hospitals, churches targeted

The report was sent on Nov. 28 by the EC monitoring mission from Zagreb to the European Community headquarters in Brussels. It said that the Yugoslav Federal Army has "not hesitated to shoot either indiscriminately at purely select targets with random fire, or, in certain cases, to deliberately select civilian targets of important symbolic value, including schools, museums, churches, radio and TV stations, and—particularly—hospitals." The allegations that the Croatian forces have been using these sites for military purposes are labeled "inaccurate and specious." "We are dealing here with [Croatian] forces deploying largely small arms against a hugely equipped major army, navy, and air force," the report specified.

The Yugoslav Army has shown a "consistent pattern" in which it "pours heavy artillery fire from a distance onto a target, terrorizing it into capitulation. The Yugoslav Army-backed and armed [Serbian] irregulars then move in on foot to occupy the place. The Army then moves in to re-assume overall control. Nor is this limited to big towns. Throughout broad areas of territory, in innumerable small villages, Croatian inhabitants are killed or forced to leave, after their villages are bulldozed out of existence. No attempt is made to occupy or otherwise exploit the captured places; they are simply and wantonly destroyed."

The report stressed that the Army "offensive" was "in