



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Chairman - Helsinki Commission

I am pleased to welcome you to this hearing to examine the status of human rights and democracy in Ukraine. This is an especially timely hearing, given the ongoing political turmoil in Ukraine, sparked by the release last November of the secretly recorded tapes seemingly implicating high-ranking Ukrainian officials in the case of a murdered investigative journalist and other malfeasance. And this hearing also comes just a few days after the fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, whose devastating legacy haunts Ukraine and neighboring countries to this day.

There are various dimensions to the current political crisis, including last week's successful effort by an alliance of communists and oligarchs to unseat the reformist, pro-Western prime minister; implications of the crisis on democratic development in Ukraine; and whether Ukraine is moving away from its democratic orientation and towards Russia.

Given the importance of our relationship with Ukraine the Commission has become increasingly concerned about the direction in which Ukraine appears to be heading. Pervasive, high level corruption, the controversial conduct of authorities in the Gongadze investigation and ongoing human rights problems are raising legitimate questions about Ukraine's commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I am especially troubled by the level of corruption in Ukraine, which has had such a debilitating impact on the people and which discourages valuable foreign investment, something that Ukraine badly needs to assist in its economic recovery. Left to fester, corruption will undermine Ukraine's fledgling democracy and independence.

I note that Mrs. Gongadze is present with her daughters and I would recognize her and convey condolences on the loss of her husband.

Ukraine enjoys considerable goodwill in the U.S. Congress, and there exists a genuine desire that Ukraine succeed as an independent, democratic, stable and economically successful state. It is against this backdrop that concerns about Ukraine's direction are being raised. And it is against this backdrop that we need to examine how the U.S. can best assist Ukraine in the development of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and a market economy. President Bush last week stated that the United States stands ready to work with Ukraine as it undertakes necessary political and economic reforms.

I am especially pleased that Secretary Marchuk was able to come from Ukraine to testify, and I very much look forward to testimony from all of our distinguished witnesses.

Our first panelist is Jon Purnell, Deputy to the Acting Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the New Independent States. A Foreign Service officer, Mr. Purnell has served in Kazakhstan, St. Petersburg, Vienna and Moscow.

Our second panelist is Secretary Marchuk of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine. He has held a number of prominent positions in the Ukrainian government. From March 1995 to May 1996, Mr. Marchuk served as Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Adrian Karatnycky is the President of Freedom House and the author of scores of articles on East-European and post-Soviet issues for various journals and newspapers, including an article on Ukraine in the current issue of Foreign Affairs. Last year, Mr. Karatnycky served as co-director of the World Forum on Democracy held in Warsaw.

Dr. Ariel Cohen is Research Fellow in Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Davis International Institute at the Heritage Foundation. He has served as a consultant to private companies and the U.S. government and is the author of numerous analyses that have been published in leading journals and newspapers.

We welcome you here today, and I am pleased to recognize the Commission's Co-Chairman, Mr. Smith.