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\$1/\$2 in Ukraine

Peace Corps inducts 41st group of volunteers for Ukraine

by Mark Raczkiewicz

Special to The Ukrainian Weekly

KYIV – When the main hall in the Teacher's Building in Kyiv erupted in thunderous applause on June 16, U.S. Ambassador John Tefft urged the 103 newly inducted Peace Corps volunteers to take that enthusiasm with them to their community sites.

Mr. Tefft had just administered the oath to the 41st group of volunteers. The ceremony coincided with two other 2011 milestones: Ukraine's upcoming 20th year of independence and Peace Corps' 50th anniversary.

It was also a reminder that Ukraine still has a demand for Peace Corps volunteers. It's a need that has long been phased out in neighboring Poland and Slovakia, as well as the three Baltic states to the north – all of which have made the transition to market economies and joined the European Union and NATO.

"Ukraine isn't in the European Union, but we see Ukraine moving in that direction. We're helping to support that through English language teaching; there are programs in place that we offer to assist Ukraine to be more effective in the global environment," said Douglass Teschner, Ukraine's Peace Corps director.

Mr. Teschner, himself a former Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco, said Ukrainian government agencies have been receptive to the idea of having native-speaking English teachers of English and youth development volun-

teers serve for two year terms, with all expenses paid for by the U.S. government.

That's part of the reason why Ukraine is home to the world's largest Peace Corps contingent with 462 volunteers as of the June 16 swearing-in ceremony.

"Ukraine is a big country with 46 million people, so that drives numbers," explained Mr. Teschner. "There's obviously a lot of need and we've a lot of support from government agencies who want more teachers, more youth development and people to work for non-profit organizations."

The majority of volunteers in Ukraine teach English as a second language and are mostly in small towns and rural areas where communities need them the most. The newest group consisted of 41 English teachers who will be based in schools and lyceums. Twenty-eight were community development volunteers who also will work in schools and social centers to promote healthy lifestyles, safe Internet usage, leadership skills, as well as other activities. The remaining 34 volunteers will be sent to civil society organizations and local city councils to work on small to medium-scale community development projects.

"It's a common misconception that TEFL [Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language] volunteers are here to teach English," said Sam Johnston, a volunteer in Haivoron, Kirovohrad Oblast. "I realize now that I'm doing something

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Resistance grows to government's regressive policies in education



National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy

At the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy (from left) are: Volodymyr Panchenko, Viacheslav Briukhovetsky, Serhiy Kvit, Volodymyr Morenets and Andrii Meleshevyich, authors of a collection of articles critical of the policies of Minister of Education, Science, Youth and Sports Dmytro Tabachnyk.

by Yevhen Savvateyev

Special to The Ukrainian Weekly

KYIV – Ukraine's pro-Western forces are stepping up their resistance to the administration of President Viktor Yanukovich, which is preparing legislation that critics expect will be a draconian, neo-Soviet overhaul of Ukraine's university system.

Student groups such as Priama Diya (Direct Action), the social movement Vidsich (Resistance) and the youth NGO

Foundation of Regional Initiatives have staged protests, while education progressives such as National Deputy Lesia Orobets are leading the opposition in Parliament.

The National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy on May 24 presented a collection of articles – authored by its professors – critical of minister of Education, Science, Youth and Sports Dmytro Tabachnyk. The book is called

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Plast marks its 99th anniversary, prepares for centennial in 2012



Illya M. Labunka

Dmytro Kolesnyk (left), interim head of Plast in Ukraine, and Yuriy Nakonechny, head of the organizing committee for the Centennial International Plast Jamboree in Ukraine, hold a flag symbolizing Plast's 100 years of activity.

by Illya M. Labunka

Special to The Ukrainian Weekly

KYIV – Leaders and friends of Plast in Ukraine marked the worldwide Ukrainian scouting organization's 99th anniversary – and raised awareness of Plast's upcoming centennial in 2012 – by hosting an indoor "vohnyk" (campfire) in Kyiv.

The event was co-organized by the Charitable Fund of Plast's Chief Scout Lubomyr Romankiw and the Children's World National Charitable Fund.

Co-hosted by honorary Plast member Sashko Polozhynsky, leader of the Ukrainian hip hop, rap core and punk rock band Tartak, and Maria Burmaka, singer and National Artist of Ukraine, the vohnyk took place on April 12, at the Teacher's Building in the Ukrainian capital.

While co-hosting the event, Ms. Burmaka, who is not a member but a great

friend and supporter of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization, expressed her genuine wish and intention to one day become a full-fledged member of Plast.

The honor of lighting the candle that symbolized the evening's vohnyk was bestowed upon the actor and National Artist of Ukraine Bohdan Beniuk. Mr. Beniuk, another of Plast's supporters in Ukraine, said that the country's future depends on Plast, because it's a patriotic organization that builds character.

"Let this vohnyk instill in us the hope and future of our life on the territory of our country and homeland, enriched with our own language and traditions," stated Mr. Beniuk. As the candle began to glimmer ever so brightly, in the spirit of a typical scouting campfire all present began singing traditional Plast songs.

Afterwards, Serhiy Letenko, president

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Resistance grows...

(Continued from page 1)

"The Time of a Cheap Clown. Ukrainian Education: Trials of Woeful Reform."

"The Education Ministry's current legislation is all about money," said Dr. Viacheslav Briukhovetsky, the university's former longtime rector. "The word 'ability' in this version of the law is lost. Why do students need ability? Fork over the money! That's the quintessence of this legislation. Everything is oriented toward controlling money streams."

The university decided to publish the book just as the ministry concluded preparing its retrograde legislation. "On Higher Education," said Dr. Serhiy Kvit, the university's rector. The articles and interviews were originally published in the mass media between 2010 and 2011.

"This book is valuable in the sense that practically all its articles were scattered throughout the Internet," Dr. Kvit said. "With all respect to the network, with time these publications would have stopped drawing the attention of our readers. At that, we're the single university that's realistically voicing its position, while others are doing it covertly. So for us, this book is important as a certain symbol of the struggle."

The derogatory reference to Mr. Tabachnyk as a "cheap clown" is borrowed from fellow Party of Regions member and current Infrastructure Minister Borys Kolesnikov, who coined the reference back in 2008.

Kyiv Mohyla Academy has led the limited opposition against Mr. Tabachnyk because his retrograde policies threaten the university's unique advantages, such as its Western-style curriculum that embraces interdisciplinary studies and offers the nation's only Ph.D. programs.

The resistance, according to its leaders, has gained in some concessions from the

Education Ministry. For example, the legislation includes the concept of plagiarism, which is worth condemning. Additionally, the definition of a "classic university" is no longer determined by its number of students – a clause that threatened to classify Kyiv Mohyla Academy and the National University of Ostroh Academy as colleges.

Dr. Andrii Meleshevych, the dean of legal studies, participated in the legislation's preparation. Progress was made since the first draft, he said, but it still contains significant flaws, such as the absence of any concept of interdisciplinary studies.

"Why is this important? If we look at the scientific achievements attained by Nobel Prize winners in the last 10 years, then we'll see that this research brings together two or more sciences," he explained.

The legislation also fails to provide Ukrainian students with the means to have their academic degrees earned in the West, recognized within the Ukrainian academic bureaucracy, Dr. Meleshevych said. "The only option offered," he said, "is the degrading procedure of 'notrification.'"

"Under Tabachnyk, the ministry became an ideological center of Sovietization and Russification," said Dr. Volodymyr Panchenko, the university's vice-president of coursework. "During the time of [former President Leonid] Kuchma, Tabachnyk wanted to create a structure that would be a division of agitation and propaganda. It didn't happen then, but this division exists today. Only it's called the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Sports."

The articles in "The Time of a Cheap Clown" were penned by Drs. Kvit, Briukhovetskyi, Meleshevych, Panchenko and Dr. Volodymyr Morenets, the vice-president of scientific-educational studies. Dr. Briukhovetsky quipped that he'll offer the book as a gift to Mr. Tabachnyk once he leaves the post: "While he's still minister though, he needs to count money instead of reading books."



Dr. Serhiy Kvit, president of the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy.

So far only one draft of the bill "On Higher Education" has been registered with Parliament. Authored by Party of Regions National Deputy Yurii Miroschnichenko, experts said it significantly differs from the drafts revealed by the Education Ministry, which is still working on the final version.

"I have the impression that this bill, like a bride before marriage, is being hidden, so that it's not stolen or cursed," Pavlo Polianskyi, board chairman of the Education Monitoring Center, told a June 3 roundtable discussion held in Kyiv on the topic "College Admissions: What Do the 'On Higher Education' Bills Offer Society?" Yet, some details have already leaked. For instance, the legislation grants the Education Ministry and its minister 80 new spheres of authority, Ms Orobets said.

The new legislation grants universities the ability to examine three factors when admitting applicants. Besides standardized testing scores, they can consider high school grades, as well as scores from the

university's own tests. These are merely avenues of corruption, the roundtable's participants said.

In 2008 and 2009 standardized admissions tests were the single criteria on the government allowed universities to use in conducting admissions. Proponents said this significantly reduced corruption, while critics said it excluded other important factors, such as high school grades.

"There's a very high threat of various corruption schemes in college admissions at the current moment," Ms. Orobets said. "The category of applicants has grown by who can gain admission beyond standard testing, whether by [university] tests or through exemptions. The number of loopholes in the rules of college admissions has grown."

Ms. Orobets read a letter she obtained that was authored by Mr. Myroshnichenko, who also serves as the president's representative in the Verkhovna Rada, which compares President Yanukovich's priorities in education reform with those in the Education Ministry's draft legislation.

It cites "a complete absence of autonomy of higher educational institutions," she related. "The Education Ministry is increasing its influence on state higher educational institutions and doesn't support their independence, complicates and worsens the situation. This is a significant worsening of the situation, as compared with the current law."

"That's the general conclusion and slap on the face that the Presidential Administration is giving this reform being prepared by Tabachnyk," Ms. Orobets said. It remains to be seen which legislation the parliamentary coalition will ultimately support.

[For an interview with Lesia Orobets, see page 5.]

Yevhen Savvateyev is a fourth-year student majoring in history at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

Pilgrimage to Ukraine

October 2-14, 2011

Led by Archpriest Rodion Laskowski

Kyiv Pecherska Lavra-St. Michael's Monastery

Holy Trinity Monastery, Kitayevo

Rivne and Lutsk (Museum of Orthodox Icons)

Pochaiv Lavra

Crimea-Sevastopol-Chersoneses-

St. George Monastery-St. Clemens Cave Monastery-

Livadia Palace-St. Volodymyr Cathedral

Cost: \$2700.00

(includes Boston to Kyiv round trip air fare, all hotels, bus and train fees, and all meals).

For more information contact Tatiana Kukunova at 781-320-0102, or e-mail tkukunova@aol.com.

Turning...

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for extortion and murder with ties to the highest levels of the state militia. While in custody, Honcharov, who was in custody for a year and died in August 2003, sent a diary of his activities to a human rights watchdog group, the Institute for Mass Information. The diary was to be read only after his death. In the diary, Honcharov alleged that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was involved in the abduction and murder of Gongadze.

Within days Ukraine's Procurator General's Office (PGO) denied that it had any evidence to support the newspaper's allegations. It responded to the article by underscoring that its investigation was providing results.

On June 21, 2004, the press office of the Procurator General Hennadii Vasyliiev issued a statement explaining that its suspect was a person who was incarcerated for previous murders by decapitation. Serhii Rudenko, press spokesman for the PGO, who would identify the suspect only as "K," said the individual had admitted to murdering the journalist and had described in detail how the killing, and particularly the beheading, had taken place. No motive for the killing was provided by Mr. Rudenko.

National Deputy Hryhorii Omelchenko, said on June 17, 2004, that his ad hoc parliamentary committee would send a request to Mr. Vasyliiev that he open a criminal case against Mr. Kuchma to investigate his involvement in the Gongadze case. The committee concluded that Mr. Kuchma "was the main figure behind the criminal activities aimed against Gongadze" and that he "was the organizer of the journalist's abduction."

Mr. Omelchenko asserted, however, that there was no evidence to suggest Mr. Kuchma was responsible for the journalist's murder.

The Independent also stated that State Militia Gen. Oleksii Pukach had ordered Gongadze's abduction after a decision by Minister of Internal Affairs Yurii Kravchenko, a close ally of Mr. Kuchma. Mr. Pukach was arrested by Procurator General Oleksander Piskun, Mr. Vayliyev's predecessor, but was released six days later, after Mr. Kuchma dismissed the procurator general, accusing him of abuse of power for personal gains.

Other evidence presented by the newspaper included statements collected by the PGO made by witnesses, and the newspaper claimed that Mr. Vasyliiev would be able to destroy the documents after they became public in order to maintain the cover-up. Witness statements showed they had feared for their lives, should their identities ever become known. Three investigators stated that 25 investigators were watching Gongadze before his abduction, and were told to forget the surveillance activity had ever taken place.

The newspaper further asserted that documents in its possession pointed to members of the Kisil crime family. Hryhorii Serhienko, a state militia investigative agent, and his colleague Olexander Muzyka had infiltrated the crime family. The infiltrators carried out the order to murder Gongadze with members of the Kisil crime family. Kisil, leader of the family, died in 2003 when his bulletproof German-made luxury car exploded with him inside while parked in downtown Kyiv.

Source: "London newspaper claims it had proof of Kuchma's role in Gongadze's abduction," by Roman Woronowycz, The Ukrainian Weekly, June 27, 2004.