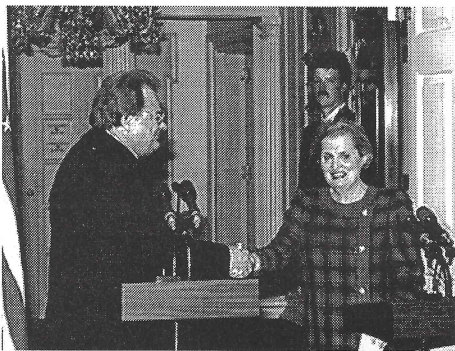




**INTERNATIONAL POLITICS & MULTILATERAL RELATIONS**

**Udoenko-Albright Meeting Confirms Continuity of U.S. Policy towards Ukraine**



Washington, Mar. 1997... Continuing from Canada, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udoenko paid a brief but important visit to discuss NATO expansion and other issues on the U.S.-Ukraine agenda with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. He came away expressing satisfaction with the results of his first meeting with President Clinton's new Secretary of State, and said it underscored the post-election continuity of the U.S. "strategic partnership" with Ukraine.

Minister Udoenko said the meeting showed support for the NATO-Ukraine charter being formulated in conjunction with the Western alliance's planned expansion into Eastern Europe. Secretary Albright stressed that the United States and Ukraine "are strategic partners in building our shared vision: a Europe at peace, fully integrated and fully free." She said she expects that the charter outlining NATO's relationship with Ukraine will be ready before NATO's July summit in Madrid.

**NATO support also key issue in Brussels**

In Brussels on March 20, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana told Udoenko that the proposed charter with Ukraine includes

"increased cooperation" and "political consultations in crisis situations."

Jack Segal, the Director of the U.S. State Department's Office of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Moldovan affairs, stressed that the NATO-Ukraine process is not dependent or linked to progress on the NATO-Russia agreement. The U.S. expects that the Russia-NATO talks will advance, but its advancement is not essential to the success of NATO's relations with Ukraine.

The Clinton administration's position is that no non-NATO country has the right to veto Ukraine's relationship with NATO, Mr. Segal said, adding that the administration is not aware of any NATO member that has any intention of doing so. The State Department official said the United States supports the rapid development of Ukraine's relationship with NATO and that both the U.S. and Ukraine have expressed their satisfaction with the progress made thus far. Mr. Segal pointed out that Washington had accepted the responsibility in Brussels for advising and assisting Ukraine in the NATO-Ukraine charter negotiating process.

**President Kuchma says Russia pushing Ukraine into NATO, away from CIS**

Feb.-Mar. 1997... In a series of interviews, President Leonid Kuchma said Russia's aggressive policy toward Ukraine was pushing Kyiv into seeking NATO membership. Russia, he said, 'has not got rid of a stereotype of Ukraine as its constituent part or, at least, its sphere of dominant influence.' This biased view has not changed over the past year, in fact, it has deteriorated.

As example of these difficulties, he pointed out that the signing of a framework bilateral Treaty continues to be preconditioned by the solution of the Black Sea Fleet problem. So are visits by the President and Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. Also, a significant number of mutually advantageous economic projects remain unrealized, and a free trade agreement between the two countries is not fully implemented.

The issue of the limitation and demarcation of a Ukraine-Russia state border has also not been decided. "It is one of Russia's levers on Ukraine. I hope that soon the Russian political elite will come to

understand that the absence of precisely outlined borders is not a minor traffic accident. It is an important political issue, a prerequisite of the existent of any independent, sovereign state," said Kuchma. "Russia pretends that Ukraine as a sovereign and independent state does not exist."

However, Russian entrepreneurs and business executives see much clearer prospects between the two countries, said the President. "While the politicians quarrel, businessmen find mutual understanding." Unfortunately, because of the politics, huge amounts of joint Ukraine-Russia projects are blocked or lying idle, gathering dust through taxes and customs obstacles.

Kuchma reiterated the NATO alliance could be salvation for Ukraine from Moscow if Russia continues to pursue its current policies. He said Ukraine's current neutral status is in the interest of everyone, including NATO, Russia, Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Kuchma also said Ukraine cannot exist within the CIS system, as it had its own individual characteristics and its own destiny. "The ideology of the CIS should be transformed from the formulation of integration to one of cooperation, and preservation of existing political and economic ties... the right of the strong should not prevail."

**Negotiations with Ukraine Vital, Axworthy tells North Atlantic Council**

Brussels, Feb. 18, 1997... In an address to the Council, Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy reinforced Canada's need to build stronger transatlantic links. He confirmed the commitment for NATO enlargement, and that it should proceed as quickly as feasible.

Axworthy stressed the importance of negotiations with Ukraine and fully supported concluding an agreement with Ukraine prior to Madrid's July summit: "A special NATO-Ukraine relationship is essential and will do much to strengthen Ukraine's sovereignty."

A draft NATO-Ukraine agreement was being prepared for negotiations leading up to Madrid.