

NEW FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY IN
INDEPENDENT STATES OF THE
FORMER SOVIET UNION

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, functioning democracy in the newly emerging independent states of the former Soviet Union requires setting up new political institutions and developing the means of conducting the people's business. As we have seen in many of these countries, this is proving to be a challenge beyond the patience and political will of their leaders, particularly given the harsh economic conditions throughout the region. More often than not, responsible economic policies represent, in the short term, even greater hardships for the people whose support is essential if democracy and market economy are to be sustained in these countries.

In Ukraine this challenge was put to test earlier this year when the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, was confronted with a serious political crisis over the selection of the Speaker and other leadership positions. The Leftist forces, though in the minority, have managed to control the parliament for the past 18 months, thwarting the majority's efforts to implement President Kuchma's legislative agenda.

A vivid description of how the leftist speaker, Oleksandr Tkachenko, thwarted the majority and the subsequent developments that lead to his ouster are provided in a report by the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation. In *Update on Ukraine*, February 24, 2000, Markian Bilynski writes.

Until January 21, the final day of the fourth parliamentary session, the Rada was presided over by a chairman whose political ambitions and sense of indispensability were matched only by his limitations. Oleksandr Tkachenko had been elected essentially by default 18 months earlier as elements within the Rada and beyond fought to prevent the chairmanship from falling into the hands of anyone harboring presidential ambitions. His eventual, somewhat surprise decision to run brought about a further politicization of the legislative process and was the principal reason behind the Rada's growing ineffectiveness. Tkachenko's final unabashed identification with the communist candidate—a fitting conclusion to what can only be described as a parody of an election campaign—represented an abandonment of any pretense at impartiality and irreversibly undermined his credibility as Rada chairman. At the same time, President Leonid Kuchma's re-election altered the broader political context within which the Rada had to operate to such an extent that Tkachenko was transformed from a largely compromise figure into an anachronism.

After the December election, President Kuchma's administration joined with the pro-reform majority to challenge Speaker Oleksandr Tkachenko and his Communist-Left forces and succeeded in electing a new Speaker and many of the leadership positions in the Rada. The result is a newly constituted parliament with a majority now occupying key positions that is capable of responding to President Kuchma and Prime Minister Yushenko's reform agendas.

I would like to submit for the record and bring to the attention of my colleagues an interview with Grioryi Surkis, a prominent, businessman and member of the Rada.

IT'S TIME FOR TRANSPARENCY

(By Grigoriy Surkis)

It would be desirable if our Parliament did not have deep divisions between the majority and minority factions; however this is not possible due to deep-rooted ideological divisions in the country.

Former Speaker Tkachenko, leader of the Communists in the Rada, demonstrated his inability to work out a compromise even when the majority announced a willingness to work cooperatively with Communist leaders on a legislative program.

By the way, leaders of the Ukraine Communists should learn a lesson from their Russian counterparts, who recently made a deal with the pro-government factions in organizing the Duma and distributing assignments among party leaders. They have a difficult time understanding that Communist authoritarianism does not exist in post-Soviet societies, nor is it as strong after eight years of democracy.

However, it remains to be seen how the pro-government block in Russia will get the Communist Speaker of the Duma to act on progressive legislation and actually achieve results. I sincerely wish that this arrangement will work so that the people of Russia benefit from progressive changes that will improve living standards that make for a better society.

In my opinion, Ukraine has chosen the right path. In parliament, we formed a majority bloc by uniting the "healthy" forces who were committed to reform legislation. This is necessary to ensure speedy action on a range of progressive proposals to deal with the problems of our pension system, taxes, and the criminal and civil code. This will help us to clean house in the Rada and institute badly needed changes that, in the past, impeded our efforts to confront these needs.

Is compromise possible? Let's think about it. We want our people to live in a new environment but there are some who want to pull us back to the old Soviet system. To go back is to lose hope and confidence in our ability to improve our situation. The reformers want a government that will enable people to own property while the Communists want people to be the property of the state. We believe that the Constitution is the basic law, but they still believe the "Party" is the supreme authority.

Finally, in a democracy it is acceptable to have a compromise, which is how people work out their differences. But the old guard distrusts working with what they see as the "bourgeois" and reject efforts to resolve differences amicably. So we are not talking about compromise in terms of confronting the issues and resolving differences, but the Communists see any negotiations with reformers as selling out or imposing a kompromat on us. I am reminded of the words of the great Golda Meir, who was born in Kiev, who once said: "We want to live. Our neighbors want to see us dead. I am afraid that this does not leave any space for compromise".

The problem would not be so serious if we were talking only about Parliament. However, we are talking about society as a whole. The Leftists seem committed to destroying the Rada, the one institution that ensures representation of the people in government decision making. Perhaps they do not know about Abraham Lincoln's statement that a house divided cannot succeed and that their intransigence will prevent democracy from taking root in Ukraine. Every-

one knows what happens to the person if his right leg makes two steps forward and the left remains rooted in the same spot.

I want to stress again that after the 1999 presidential election, it became obvious that a divided parliament with a Communist as Speaker would prove unacceptable and only serve to obstruct the reform agenda of the government. Had the Communists prevailed, they would have taken the country down the back road of political fatalism. Yet there are some who worry that the unfairness of winners hides the guilt of losers. I can only say that if the Leftists had won the election, we would not be asking these questions.

I am afraid that if the majority had allowed a Communist to remain as Speaker, it would have proved to be a temporary solution, similar to what will happen with the Duma. In the United States, it is possible for the Republicans to control the Congress and the other party to have the Presidency. This is possible because America has 200 years of experience working within democratic system.

Our country does not have time to wait. For us, every day without enacting and implementing laws is a huge setback for a country that must accomplish so much in a critically short time. The majority knows that it is impossible to form a parliament without the opposition, and it is our intention to treat proposals from the opposition seriously. We have assumed political responsibility that gives us an opportunity to cooperate with the newly re-elected president who bears the main responsibility for society as a whole.

We recognize that it is the president who must provide the leadership and direct the institutions of government. Throughout the years of Ukraine's independence, there is not a single case when the three branches of power simultaneously worked together on behalf of Ukrainian citizens. Today we must take responsibility and are ready to be accountable for our actions.

Once again, we do not have time. The majority of Ukrainian citizens spoke very clearly in the recent election of giving President Kuchma a new four-year term. By this vote, they rejected the Communist Party and the idea of turning back to the old system where freedom and human rights did not exist.

The Communists, of course, feel threatened by the new democratic forces and their reform agenda. They do not want to relinquish power and recognize that a new generation of intelligent and resourceful leaders is taking charge. That is the promise of democracy and, if given a chance to succeed, the future of Ukraine in the new millennium.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, due to flu, I unavoidably missed 8 votes on April 13th. If I had been present, I would have voted as follows:

"Yes" on the Journal (rollcall No. 123).

"No" on the Rule to the Budget Resolution (No. 124).

"No" on the Budget Resolution because it sets up unworkable appropriations caps and cuts vital domestic spending too deeply (No. 125).

"Yes" on the Rangel motion to recommit the Date Certain Tax Code Replacement Act (No. 126).

"No" on the Date Certain Tax Code Replacement Act (No. 127). To say one is going to end a tax system without spelling out what the replacement will be is economic nonsense and, if anyone actually believed this nonsense, would lead to tremendous financial instability.

"Yes" on the Rural Local Broadcast Signal Act (No. 128).

"Yes" on Mr. BARRETT'S amendment to the Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act (No. 129), and

"No" on passage of the Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act (No. 130).

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, on April 13, 2000, this Member inadvertently voted "aye" on rollcall vote 127 on final passage of H.R. 4199, the Date Certain Tax Code Replacement Act. This Member is opposed to the bill and intended to vote "no" on final passage as his statement at that time on H.R. 4199 reflected his opposition to the bill.

IN TRIBUTE TO MAYOR BILL LEWIS OF ENNIS, TEXAS

HON. MARTIN FROST

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to a fellow Texan who is both a longtime personal friend and an outstanding civic leader in the 24th Congressional District, Mayor Bill Lewis of Ennis, Texas.

Mayor Lewis will be honored this Friday by his home community and many friends for more than 30 years as a dedicated public servant. He has recently announced his intention to retire after this term as mayor, opting to spend more time with his family.

He spent a quarter century in Oak Cliff, where he worked with and retired from TU Electric long before it had that name. His office was in the same building as mine more than two decades ago, so we were business neighbors who became friends. He was a man of endless energy in the Oak Cliff community affairs for 23 years serving an endless array of charitable and public organizations.

When he retired from TU, he and his wife moved back to her childhood home, the city of Ennis. And although retired from business life, Bill continued the strong tradition of public service that has made him one of the most respected men I know. He has tirelessly served his community as a strong and active advocate, as mayor and in countless other capacities.

Service has indeed been a key word in the life of Bill Lewis, whether in his business career, as a charity worker, a chamber volunteer, on the battlefields of World War II, or a father in his local Dad's Club. The organizations which have benefited from Bill Lewis' dedication are too many to mention individually.

As we honor him in advance of his retirement as mayor, I am extremely proud that this

man who has been a friend to so many is also a friend of mine.

GIRL SCOUT GOLD AWARD 2000

HON. RAY LAHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute outstanding young women who are being honored with the Girl Scout Gold Award by Girl Scouts-Kickapoo Council in Peoria, Illinois. They are Elizabeth Liddell of Girl Scout Troop #1000, Ann Schwingel of #301, Wendy Matheny of #581, Melissa Eman of #581, and Melody Blanch of #4. They are being honored on May 7, 2000 for earning the highest achievement award in U.S. Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout Gold Award symbolizes outstanding accomplishments in the areas of leadership, community service, career planning, and personal development. The award can be earned by girls aged 14-17 or in grades 9-12.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., an organization serving over 2.5 million girls, has awarded more than 20,000 Girl Scout Gold Awards to Senior Girl Scouts since the inception of the program in 1980. To receive the award, a Girl Scout must earn four interest project patches, the Career Exploration Pin, the Senior Girl Scout Leadership Award, and the Senior Girl Scout Challenge, as well as design and implement a Girl Scout Gold Award project. A plan for fulfilling these requirements is created by the Senior Girl Scout and is carried out through close cooperation between the girl and an adult Girl Scout volunteer.

As members of Girl Scouts-Kickapoo Council, Elizabeth, Ann, Wendy, Melissa, and Melody began working toward the Girl Scout Gold Award in 1996 and 1997. They completed various projects: Elizabeth built a short nature trail for a local elementary school, Ann organized games to be played during inclement weather, Wendy helped to make youth more aware of daily injustices and how they can respond, Melissa repaired and reorganized the books in the Kickapoo Council lending library and Melody rebuilt the fitness trail at the local Girl Scout camp. I believe all of these girls should receive the public recognition due them for their significant service to their community and their country.

IN HONOR OF BAYONNE ELKS LODGE NO. 434 STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the students selected as Bayonne Elks Lodge No. 434 Students of the Month.

Each year, the Bayonne Elks Lodge No. 434 selects students from a group of applicants to participate in Bayonne Elks Youth Day. On this day, young students from around the Bayonne community are provided a unique opportunity to interact with local government.

Students take on the role of a government official, and under the guidance of that official,

learn the process by which local government functions. This is an excellent chance to reward hard working students for their commitment to academics, while providing them with useful knowledge for their future as community leaders.

Today, I commend the Bayonne Elks Lodge for its commitment to our youth and for its support and recognition of young student's achievements in the classroom, reaffirming and strengthening the students' character and resolve.

I congratulate the students who have achieved this great success, and I look forward to a future in which the next generation proudly takes on the responsibility and commitment of public service.

I ask my colleagues to please join me in honoring the Bayonne Elks Lodge No. 434 Students of the Month, on their special day.

RED HILL COUNCIL RECEIVES THE "MAKING A DIFFERENCE" AWARD

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize an exceptional group, the Red Hill Council, who was honored by the Bureau of Land Management with the "Making a Difference" award. The BLM selected the Red Hill Council group because of their dedication to Colorado and to its outdoors.

The Red Hill Council is comprised of volunteers, neighbors and community partners. Their mission is to aid the BLM in preserving several aspects of the Red Hill area. For over two years, the Council has held public discussions, conducted assessments and overseen volunteer programs. They have raised over \$80,000 in contributions from the community.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious why the Red Hill Council was chosen for the "Making a Difference" award. I think we owe them a debt of gratitude for their service and dedication to Colorado and to its outdoors.

TRIBUTE TO RABBI ISAAH ZELDIN

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, we are greatly honored today to pay tribute to Stephen S. Wise Temple which will, on Sunday evening, May 21st, celebrate its 36th Anniversary. This anniversary has special significance in the Jewish faith. The Hebrew letter chai represents the number 18 and means "life." Thirty-six, then—is a Double Chai or "double-life" and an event of great importance.

Also on that evening, another event of great importance will be celebrated: the 80th birthday of the founder of Stephen S. Wise Temple, the distinguished scholar and nationally respected teacher, Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin.