

Moscow furthers its imperialist plan to gobble up Ukraine

by Konstantin George

A serious blow was dealt to the ability of Ukraine to continue to exist as an independent state at the Clinton-Yeltsin summit on Jan. 14, in the "tripartite" Moscow declaration which Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk was forced to sign, agreeing to the surrender to Russia of all nuclear weapons on the territory of Ukraine. Implementation of the accord would strip Ukraine of its only effective military deterrence against reconquest by Russia, which is planned by the Moscow leadership to occur in 1994.

Ukraine, the largest of the non-Russian former Soviet republics with a population of 51 million, enormous resources, and a rich national history and culture, declared its independence in 1991. Whether it survives 1994 in independence against the "Third Rome" imperial winds blowing in Moscow, could well determine the fate of Eurasia as a whole.

The complicity of Washington in Moscow's plans to reabsorb Ukraine into a Russian superpower ruling the territory of the old Soviet Union was effectively admitted when the latest U.S. National Intelligence Estimates concerning Ukraine were leaked to the press. As portrayed in the lead article of the Jan. 26 *International Herald Tribune*, these "estimates" are reported as a "consensus" arrived at by the various U.S. intelligence agencies: the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the National Security Agency (NSA).

The estimates, to quote from the article, predict that: "Ukraine's worsening economy would spark ethnic conflict that would split the country and create a new dispute over the fate of the nuclear weapons it has just agreed to give up. . . . A significant minority of Ukraine's population of 51 million would favor reunification with Russia—which for all its economic and political troubles is considered better off than Ukraine. . . . The Ukrainian populace would then swiftly divide along ethnic and geographic lines, with the Russian minority in the country's eastern regions pressing for secession and the Ukrainian majority in the western region seeking not only to remain independent but also to prevent the eastern territory from returning to Moscow's control. The result could be violence, possibly with Russia's military involvement."

These estimates are self-fulfilling prophecies of what will probably happen in Ukraine, if the policies of Washington and Moscow continue unchanged.

Crimean elections hoax

Immediately after U.S. President William Clinton left Moscow, the Jan. 16 "presidential" elections were held in the Ukrainian autonomous region of Crimea, a region which has a two-thirds ethnic Russian majority. The sole issue in the elections was whether Crimea will remain part of Ukraine, or secede and unite with Russia. The majority of the vote was split among the three candidates who campaigned for union with Russia; Yuri Meshkov led the field with 40% of the vote. This was the first election on Ukrainian territory since the near-complete breakdown of Ukraine's economy, and since the onset of a winter of despair, in which privation has reached levels not seen since the postwar years.

In the run-off election on Jan. 30, Meshkov will face Nikolai Bagrov, who came in a poor second with 18% of the vote on a platform calling for Crimea to stay in Ukraine as an autonomous region. If Meshkov wins, as appears certain, he will call a referendum for March 27, to decide whether Crimea remains in Ukraine, or secedes and joins Russia. The date March 27 was shrewdly chosen to coincide with the date for parliamentary elections for all Ukraine.

The problem has been compounded by the appeasement policy of the regime of Leonid Kravchuk in Kiev. Under the Ukrainian Constitution, no region, "autonomous" or not, has the right to elect a "President." The Crimean "presidential elections" were flagrantly unconstitutional, but despite repeated appeals by the Ukrainian national-patriotic opposition party, Rukh, to President Kravchuk to declare the Crimean "election" null and void, Kravchuk did nothing. Ukrainian sources maintain that the Ukrainian President has been privately told both by Washington and Moscow to "accept the inevitable," that "Crimea is lost" and will "revert" to Russia. These sources also assert that Kravchuk has been misled into believing that Moscow will be assuaged by taking Crimea, and will not press further territorial claims, i.e., against eastern Ukraine.

Otherwise, there are reports of a broad, short-term "deal" between Moscow and powerful sections of the Communist *nomenklatura* (the old, privileged party and governmental bureaucracy) which still dominates in Ukraine, whereby in exchange for swallowing the loss of Crimea, this clique will benefit from Moscow's influence to crush the Rukh opposition in the March 27 elections. One of the ugliest sides to this "deal" is a massive pre-election campaign of terror against

Rukh figures.

As to the secession threat being limited to Crimea, all evidence points to the contrary. In eastern Ukraine, especially in the coal and heavy industry regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, pro-secessionist forces have successfully stirred up popular rage over the horrendous economic conditions, and a broad majority blame the crisis on Ukraine for having broken with Russia and having become independent. The outcome of the Crimean election and the paralysis of Kiev have fueled the secessionist dynamic.

The reign of terror

In formal terms in Ukraine, there is the government, led by the former Communists, and there is the patriotic opposition, led by Rukh, under the chairmanship of Vyacheslav Chornovil. In real terms, there is a strong third force drawn from the Communist *nomenklatura*, which permeates the government and parliament, and whose mission is to soften up Ukraine for partition and reconquest by Moscow. The method is to engineer a head-on clash between the regime and Rukh, in order to prevent the only political combination that could save the nation: a Rukh heavily strengthened in the coming elections, working in alliance with the factions among the former Communists who are committed to the integrity of the Ukrainian nation.

Central to the scheme is an escalating terror wave against Rukh candidates. Since last autumn, local Rukh candidates have been regularly subject to assaults, beatings, and in several cases, arrests on bogus charges. The terror campaign went into high gear, timed with the Crimean elections, immediately after the Clinton-Yeltsin summit in Moscow.

On Jan. 15, a group of armed men attacked the Rukh headquarters in Kiev, and abducted Rukh Deputy Chairman Myhailo Boichyshyn, who also heads the Rukh Secretariat and was the director of the Rukh election campaign. As of Jan. 26, there was still no word concerning his fate.

Western media behavior indicates that the operations against Ukraine benefit from the complicity of the Anglo-American intelligence services. The election campaign leader of the main opposition party was kidnapped and has been missing for 11 days (as of this writing), and in this entire time there has not been one single report of the abduction in any major western media.

The *nomenklatura* in Ukraine did its best to suppress news of the abduction internally. Ukrainian TV's main evening news program continually blacked out the story, confining coverage to a brief mention once in another news slot. It wasn't until Jan. 19 that Rukh Chairman Vyacheslav Chornovil was interviewed by Ukrainian TV on the matter. He declared that the attack was the most outrageous in a growing pattern of "political terror unleashed by the Communist authorities of Ukraine prior to the March 27 parliamentary elections," and that the attacks were clear evidence of "an intimidation campaign against the opposition to prevent a victory

of the democratic forces" on March 27.

Rukh issued a statement protesting that Ukrainian TV had blacked out the story in its 9 p.m. primetime news programs, saying: "Any TV and radio company in the world would have broadcast as a top story in the news program the news of the armed assault on the headquarters of the main opposition party and the disappearance of the head of this party's secretariat."

Within Ukraine, the Rukh campaign protesting the abduction has at least broken the news blackout. The powerful "third force" in the *nomenklatura*, however, had a handy reserve option to excuse its inaction. Officials of the Interior Ministry, led by the deputy minister, Gen. Valentyn Nadrygailo, and of the security services, manufactured a story that the kidnapping was a "normal" crime, and "not political," citing vague "reports" that a ransom was being demanded, as in any "ordinary" kidnapping. Well-placed Ukrainians in exile, who fear to be identified, have told this author that the "ordinary kidnapping" and "ransom money" line was already being circulated by persons from sections of the American and Canadian intelligence communities, being conveyed to diaspora Ukrainians, concerned and outraged over the abduction, before the line was then picked up by officials of the Kiev Interior Ministry.

The Kiev Interior Ministry and security services, who are larded with "ex"-KGB personnel, didn't merely pick up the line, they added a few embellishments of their own to it. In actions which Rukh vehemently protested, on Jan. 25 security investigators began warning businessmen who had contributed to the Rukh election campaign to stop engaging in "illegal dealings" with Rukh and "stop giving bribes" to Boichyshyn. This "story" was a desperate attempt to give a shred of "credibility" to the "ransom money" lie. Something had to be conjured to "prove" that Boichyshyn had money to pay a ransom.

The "ransom money" fairy tale provided the final excuse for the Ukrainian parliament and government to refuse repeated calls by Rukh for a full-scale government and parliamentary investigation into the political kidnapping of Boichyshyn. The affair has all but extinguished any possibility for an effective teaming up of all Ukrainian forces committed to the nation against the Moscow-allied *nomenklatura*, especially since other acts of terror continue to multiply against the Rukh and to build up the climate of confrontation.

On Jan. 19, the son of the local Rukh leader and candidate for parliament in the town of Bilgorod-Dnistrovsky in Odessa region, Pavlo Otchenashenko, was beaten and hospitalized with severe head injuries. On Jan. 20, in the city of Vinnitsa, the local Rukh candidate for parliament, Serhiy Budko, former head of the social and psychological department of the Ukrainian Air Force, was assaulted by unknown persons. The evening before the attack, Budko had received a phone call threatening his life unless he withdrew his candidacy.