
Conference Report

A Dangerous Game With Ukrainian Sovereignty

by William Jones

Speaking at a hearing of the House International Relations Committee on Dec. 7, Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.) called for a General Accountability Office investigation to determine whether U.S. funds had been used to benefit the election of former Prime Minister Victor Yushchenko in recent Presidential elections in Ukraine. Paul was specifically targetting the funding dispersed through the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the National Endowment for Democracy and its constituent bodies, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute.

“How did this one-sided U.S. funding in Ukraine come about?” Paul asked. “While I am afraid we may have seen only the tip of the iceberg, one part that we do know thus far is that the U.S. government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), granted millions of dollars to the Poland-America-Ukraine Cooperation Initiative (PAUCI), which is administered by the U.S.-based Freedom House. PAUCI then sent U.S. government funds to numerous Ukrainian non-governmental organizations,” Paul said.

“This would be bad enough and would in itself constitute meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. But, what is worse is that many of these grantee organizations in Ukraine are blatantly in favor of Presidential candidate Victor Yushchenko,” Paul said. He also targetted USAID funding for the Western Ukraine Regional Training Center, whose website, Paul said, “features a prominent USAID logo on one side of its website’s front page and an orange ribbon of the candidate Yushchenko’s party and movement on the other. By their proximity, the message to Ukrainian readers is clear: The U.S. government supports Yushchenko.”

Paul also scored George Soros’s Open Society Institute that funds the Ukrainian International Center for Policy Studies, on whose board Yushchenko sits. Paul pointed out that this institute also receives U.S. government funding through PAUCI.

The Intervention Into the Ukrainian Election

One of the key organizations involved in this “twisted tale” is the neo-conservative American Enterprise Institute. These stalwarts of “free market capitalism” were exuberant over the ruling of the Ukrainian Supreme Court not to allow the certification of the previous run-off election results,

which gave a slight edge to Yushchenko’s opponent, Victor Yanukovich, thus clearing the way for a rerun of the run-off, to be held Dec. 26. At a forum on Dec. 10 in Washington, entitled “Ukraine’s Choice: Europe or Russia?” the American Enterprise Institute organizers were almost ready to break out the champagne. The forum was sponsored by the Institutes’s New Atlantic Initiative, the “Trojan horse” it created to establish a presence in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Obviously some objections had been raised, perhaps by the delegates of the Ukrainian government also attending the conference, to the provocative title given this event, forcing conference moderator, Radek Sikorski, to publicly apologize for it. He assured his listeners that the real issue was not to force a choice in Ukraine between Russia and the West, but rather to assist the “election process.” In fact, most of the U.S. speakers at the event, aware of the coverage that Congressman Paul’s accusations were getting in the press, tried to bend over backwards in denying any political bias in the distribution of funds to non-governmental organizations in Ukraine.

Although the second round of elections on Dec. 26 may indeed propel Yushchenko into the Presidency, he will have a tough time bringing the country together after a very bitter election battle, a point underlined by many of the speakers at the conference. This task, however, will be considerably hampered by the various games being played by these neo-cons, whose only wish for the “sovereign Ukraine” is to use it as a battering ram against Russia. This policy has been most clearly delineated by that Grand Chessmaster of anti-Russian operations, former Carter National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his 1997 book, *The Grand Chessboard*. Although not a speaker at the conference (Zbig is preening himself as a “Democratic hawk” rather than a Republican neo-con), he was the chief guest speaker at a reception given the conference participants later that day at Freedom House.

The conference was opened by Paula Dobriansky, the Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs. And, together with Brzezinski, Dobriansky has been mucking about in Ukrainian affairs for quite some time. Being the highest-ranking Ukrainian-American in the Bush Administration perhaps gives her some authority in the eyes of Ukrainian officials, but that is not her sole claim to fame. Even before her appointment as undersecretary, Dobriansky was involved in a long and checkered connection with Ukraine. Her father, Lev Dobriansky, served in Army Intelligence and the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, and during the Cold War, he helped bring into U.S. Intelligence, right-wing Ukrainian figures who had been the chief collaborators with the Nazis. The senior Dobriansky had also been a major player in the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), as well as the Young Americans for Freedom. During the 1950s, he was also integral in setting up the Captive Nations

Committee, whose primary goal was to “roll back” Soviet Communism.

The same year that President Reagan appointed Lev Dobriansky ambassador to the Bahamas in 1983, Paula was taken into the Reagan National Security Council. From the time that the Berlin Wall came down, Paula has tended to follow in her father’s footsteps, both in government and through her work with the National Endowment for Democracy.

But at the Dec. 10 event, even Dobriansky uttered words of caution: “The Ukrainians have taken a stand for democracy. They can now take a giant step, but it is a very delicate situation,” she said. Dobriansky also rejected any claims that the United States was pushing the Yushchenko candidacy. “The United States neither proscribed nor promoted any particular candidate,” she claimed.

NGOs Used to Bring Down Governments

In reality, from the time that the Berlin Wall fell, groups like the NED, both in their Democratic and Republican mold, have used “voter support” NGOs to create the basis for those candidates likely to impose policies on Ukraine compatible with the draconian conditions mandated by the international financial institutions. These conditions included opening up Ukraine’s natural wealth to foreign ownership, and eliminating the social welfare net which had been guaranteed under the Communist governments, and which has not been completely scrapped. When Dobriansky travels to Ukraine (which she has done quite frequently in the last couple of years), she often meets with these “voter support” groups financed by the NED before she meets with Ukrainian government officials!

The NED and its constituent organizations, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, have a professional cadre of “voter support” groups who can travel from country to country in their attempt to unseat governments which have not “gotten with the program.” Ronald Asmus, a former Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and now a private citizen, was actively involved in some of these “get-out-the-vote” operations, and he commented during one panel at the New Atlantic Initiative event, that he was proud to be with the crowd on Independence Square in Kiev recently, with “the veterans from the Georgian and Serbian elections.”

And for the last few years, the NED crowd has been placing its money on Victor Yushchenko. When he was ousted as Prime Minister in 2001 after an unsuccessful scheme to privatize some major Ukrainian companies, Yushchenko was given the “red carpet” treatment on Capitol Hill, with many Senators and Congressmen encouraging him in his endeavors. Yushchenko had already become a darling of the IMF for his efforts as Prime Minister to open up the Ukrainian economy to foreign investment. The no-confidence vote which brought him down led to the stalling

of an expected IMF agreement with Ukraine. Then IMF Managing Director Horst Koehler commented at the time that Yushchenko has “gained a lot of credibility outside of Ukraine, and I think he also deserves support inside of Ukraine.” Later in 2003, when Yushchenko was grooming himself for a run for the Presidency, the International Republican Institute paid for his trip to the United States, where he again met with numerous Senators and Congressmen, as well as with Vice President Dick Cheney.

They may have a lot riding on this horse. As Brzezinski pointed out in comments at an American Enterprise Institute event on Nov. 24: “We can’t exclude Russia from the equation. If democracy succeeds in Ukraine, then Russia must move toward the West.” A more compelling interest for Brzezinski and his cohorts is the fact that Russian oil going to the West passes through Ukraine. If Ukraine could be used as a wedge to restrict that flow, this would directly impact the lifeblood of the Russian economy. In addition, many foreign companies are eager for a piece of some of the Ukrainian industries that might be on the chopping block in any new privatization scheme.

Indeed, given the way the Ukrainian economy has been integrated with the Russian economy, such Western resource grabs would also be a threat to Ukrainian economic interests as well as national security interests. It would be a highly risky venture on the part of a Yushchenko government to agree to such measures, in a situation in which the country has been so bitterly divided, with cries of autonomy coming from various parts of the eastern Russian-speaking part of the country.

Certain comments by Yushchenko’s chief of staff, Victor Rybachuk, in response to a question from *EIR* at the Dec. 7 seminar, give some reason for concern. When asked how his chief intended to bring the country together, were he to win the Dec. 26 run-offs, especially as regards his economic policy, Rybachuk praised Yushchenko as “the best macroeconomist in the country.” Although insisting that his boss is “still remembered as the best Prime Minister,” in spite of his ouster on a no-confidence vote, Rybachuk criticized the previous “privatization” of Ukrainian industry. “Yushchenko is in favor of an open and fair privatization,” Rybachuk said, announcing that Ukraine under Yushchenko would be “an open paradise for investors.” “In fact,” he added, “we have been talking to many mega-investors, whose only reticence towards investing in Ukraine has been the Kuchma regime.”

Many countries not far distant from Ukraine would bear strong testimony that what may be a “paradise” for investors often turns out to be a living hell for the subject population. Were he to be elected President, Yushchenko would be wise to look to the real crying needs of the Ukrainian people, before heeding the ill-starred advice coming from these Western political elements obsessed with the idea of using “Ukrainian sovereignty” as a pawn in their game of geopolitical chess with a thermonuclear power.