

**“UKRAINE AND THE UNITED STATES ON THE VERGE OF
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP”**

**By H.E. Foreign Minister of Ukraine Borys Tarasyuk
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Distinguished Senator, Ladies and gentlemen, frequently visiting Washington in recent years I had many possibilities to exchange views with American politicians. I wish to apologize if conversations we had, did not impart for you much of optimism.

Statements of Ukrainian opposition leaders at that time were more akin to news from the battlefield, rather than political discourse. As presidential campaign was increasingly turning into a woeful unfairness, a ferocious political resistance engulfed Ukraine. That was the resistance of Government against its own people.

I am deeply moved and proud to announce - this resistance ended up as a victory of Ukrainian people. Neither corrupted politicians, nor influential tycoons, nor insidious political mercenaries from abroad, nor criminal circles have managed to kneel and silence Ukrainian people.

The everlasting wisdom that Abraham Lincoln has put once forth proves itself yet again – “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”

The main lesson of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution I can put in this way: a Government may seem eternal and invincible, but it is doomed to turn into a colossus on clay legs, if it does not rest on justice.

Many politicians foreshadowed that the year 2004 would be a turning point for my country, however few could predict that it would manifest itself as such a compelling triumph of justice. Some consider the Orange Revolution as a Ukrainian “political miracle.”

Being insider and participant of this “miracle,” I would like to briefly comment on what this revolution was about and how the new authorities try to meet people’s expectations.

The new Government inherited difficult legacy. Such notions as stability and democracy had been opposed to each other for a long time in Ukraine. The Orange Revolution has explicitly proved that “managed democracy” is not a choice of Ukrainians. I am convinced that the way to stability, welfare and safety of the citizens lies only through real democracy and introduction of universally recognized democratic values into the daily life of the people.

The priority of the person over the state, supremacy of the law, freedom of mass media, honesty and professionalism of the new Government team are at the cornerstone of our internal policy. We have the political will to make these changes.

Therefore, we have the moral obligation to fulfill expectations of the people who stayed at Maidan notwithstanding bitter cold and nasty weather conditions.

“Honesty is the best policy” - this saying to its best demonstrates a new norm of life in Ukraine which is also firmly taking root in the minds of all Ukrainian politicians.

The Government is striving to create an environment where our sufficient resources start to generate tangible benefits for ordinary people.

The world will be amazed to look at a different Ukraine - strong, sound, rich and truly democratic. There is still a lot to be done and of our responsibility.

Winding up this part of the statement, I wish to point out but one thing: Orange Revolution is one of those historical moments that instill the nation with the creative energy for centuries.

I believe that this victory is a milestone not only for Ukraine, but for the whole democratic world. For too immeasurable effect “Ukrainian experiment” bears on other post-Soviet nations. For too profound impression has invoked the revolution in the minds both of its supporters and antagonists. It has become fashionable to seek for Ukrainian tracks in any revolution today.

Dear friends, Developments in Ukraine revealed not only the intensity of human aspiration for freedom. They also exposed how some people could cynically resort to indiscriminate tools to suppress this aspiration.

While America was closely watching the revolution with astonishment and admiration, Ukrainian Government concocted a myth that revolution was brought from American shores. Absurd as this myth may look, it nevertheless insinuated into some minds.

Therefore, I would like to share with you some of my observations. Modern democracy indeed traces its roots to the United States. However, to say that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson are fathers of the Orange Revolution would be a slight exaggeration.

It is taken for granted that the United States being global player and democratic leader are important for any democracy in the world. However, this does not give the slightest grounds to think that developments in Ukraine have been masterminded by Washington.

What was the United States for Ukrainian people? It was a friend giving a hope that the democratic world would not turn a blind eye if undemocratic forces were hovering. It was a friend from whom we expected solidarity and support.

American idealists like John McCain helped the world to keep Ukrainian elections in close focus, while American pragmatics like Richard Lugar became immediate participants of the election process. They were not silent when the government attempted to rig the elections, and they did not make any concessions behind Ukrainian people backs.

As Ukrainian revolution was unfolding, the United States took a posture innate to world democratic leader. So, for this - and not for an imaginary “financing of the revolution” - I wish to extend my appreciation to all American politicians and American people.

I am exceedingly thankful to every senator and congressmen who despite difficulties of American election year have found time and opportunity to visit Ukraine with the noble missions. I am thankful to all who have taken the fate of my country to their hearts, and raised their voice against injustice sweeping the nation that is thousand miles away from your land. I am thankful to the International Republican Institute and his Chairman Senator John McCain for his consistent and uncompromising fight for democracy.

What are the United States for Ukraine now? We want to perceive it our strategic partner. Democracy, justice and faith are uniting Ukrainians and Americans.

We share the same values: global promotion of democracy, fight against terrorism, strengthening of European and Transatlantic security. We actually have no interests that are conflicting. Our views on future Europe are converging. Our economic relations could be harmoniously intertwined. Therefore, even if ideological issues were put aside, I can still see arguments only in favor of resurrection and elevation of our relations to strategic partnership.

No argument against this idea is in sight. I see the future of our relations as “partnership for democracy.” This is not an alliance against any third party. This is the alliance for promotion of high humane values that has become victorious for Ukraine in December 2004.

This should be the ideology to underlie our relations. As to its mechanism, it is obvious that we have to resuscitate a viable political dialogue on the highest political level. For this, we are relying great expectations on President Yushchenko's visit to the U.S. that will take place in less than a month from now.

American policy resides in the White House, but it is born on the Capitol Hill. Therefore, it is twice as much pleasant for me that the US Congress has turned into the driving force of Ukrainian-American partnership.

The most encouraging words in support of democracy were emanated from the Congress. The Congress sent unequivocal warning messages to those who wanted to subvert the democracy. Here in the Congress we have the most enthusiastic and influential friends of Ukraine especially when it is high time to make steps to each other.

We are interested in renewing the functioning of the Ukrainian-American Public Forum which would bring together the political elites of both our countries and help reinforce our official political dialogue.

It would focus on finding the ways to bring our nations closer and contribute a significant added value to our relations which would benefit from such informal exchanges between prominent public figures.

The IRI could play a key role in providing its intellectual resources for revitalizing this forum. Ukraine is ready to do whatever it can to remove the burden of the past from the shoulders of our partnership with the United States.

Ukrainian Government works hard to ensure that every investor could feel confident in Ukraine. Ukrainian parliament takes up the adoption of intellectual property protection legislation as the highest priority.

In the whole, it is high time to adopt totally new overarching agenda for relations between Ukraine and the United States that would encompass substantial short- and long-term purposes. I am visiting Washington to declare this aspiration of my nation and of our Government of national confidence, and share my views how to bring it into life.

I believe that our ideas find response and support.

And in a month when the President of Ukraine comes to Washington these ideas would be blessed on the highest political level.

Dear friends, It is with satisfaction that I observe increasing number of politicians in Washington who are supporting the graduation of Ukraine from the Jackson-Vanick amendment, establishment of normal trade regime relations, and accession to the WTO.

Normal trade relations are equally indispensable part of partnership as normal political relations. If you wish, our purpose is to start with PNTR (permanent normal trade relations) and end up with PSTR - permanent splendid trade relations. Beginning from 1999 when Victor Yushchenko was the Prime Minister, Ukrainian economy continues to lead in the economic development on the post-soviet area.

Last year the economy growth surged 12.5 percent. Market economy is the natural environment for Ukrainians with their inherent acumen and entrepreneurial skills.

Not much time should elapse before Ukraine turns into a natural environment for foreign investors.

Paradoxically as may be, our major economy problem was unattractive political image. The growing economy failed to attract investors, for “oligarchy” and “quasi-democracy” sounded for them as a diagnoses rather than national feature.

Now times have changed, and I am glad to see many investors make up for what they have been precluded to achieve. I believe that American companies will be among them.

Geopolitical considerations important as they are, will never eclipse economic dimension for it will be the main yardstick to measure the success of “Ukrainian experiment.”

The spirit of new Ukrainian Government is high and obvious - to convert “political miracle” into “economic miracle.” In the modern world the success of the nation is measured not in ideological slogans, but macroeconomic indexes.

Therefore, whoever wishes success to Ukrainian democracy should think in economic terms. The first question that comes to my mind in this regard is the accession of Ukraine to the WTO.

We hope that together we can make this hope a real one till the end of this year.

If our partners in the Congress could succeed in getting upper hand over skeptics, and support both the resumption of normal trade relations between our nations and accession of Ukraine to the WTO, that could be a positive and righteous step.

If this could be achieved at the presidential visit to Washington, it would be a splendid political gesture.

Dear friends, speaking about precious time, I would like to briefly reflect on yet another aspect of Ukrainian-American relations - I mean historical one.

Those closely watching the relations between Ukraine and the United States can confirm that we have already heard the abundant rhetoric on partnership.

That was ten years ago, when independent Ukraine voluntarily renounced its nuclear arsenal, and was celebrated in the United States for this step.

What happened next was abysmal disappointment both for the United States and democratic pro-European forces in Ukraine.

In the nineties we fumbled with many opportunities, but that lesson did not pass unnoticed. New Ukrainian Government believes that in the modern politics the main virtue is not simply adroitness in saying what you are expected to say, but honesty and consistency.

For instance, we do not keep in secret the fact that Ukraine is going to withdraw its troops from Iraq this year. This is a demand of the Ukrainian voters. This is the promise of the Ukrainian President to his people.

However, there are many aspects that we are constantly keeping in focus. I would like to assure you that Ukraine will remain in Iraq and you will have Ukraine as your reliable partner.

Secondly, Ukraine remains the US partner in the global war against terrorism. Being influential nation on the post-soviet area, Ukraine consistently supports the US efforts to prevent proliferation of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and other types of the weapons of mass destruction.

I address these words not only to the U.S. Administration but also to the Senator Richard Lugar, who I met today and who has made this issue the cause of his life.

Thirdly, we shall not take any step that might let down our brothers in arms in Iraq. The United States and Poland that are Ukraine's most consistent western partners rely on coherency of Ukrainian troops' withdrawal.

We shall do our best to eliminate any circumventing consequences of such withdrawal.

Dear friends, recently speaking in Brussels, the President George Bush called the European revolutions of 1989 “victories of conscience.”

Fifteen years have passed since that European democratic breakthrough.

Europe has turned less romantic, more pragmatic, and, I would say, cold. Europe came to believe that the volcano of great transformations finally extinguished.

Ukraine has disproved this illusion. The era of changes will not finish, unless there is at least one nation whose aspirations for freedom and democracy are yet to be realized. Ukrainian 'victory of conscience' is even more valuable, since firstly it has been unexpected, and secondly, non-violent and peaceful.

I strongly believe that it has enriched Europe and the world. And it would be just, if Europe would recognize this victory by opening for my country the door to the European Union. I am pleased that in the United States we find increasingly more supporters of European and Euro-Atlantic choice of Ukraine.

Realizing that our path to European house is going to be long and strenuous, we gladly enjoy the support of such a unique ally as the United States, and such prominent figures of American establishment as Senators McCain, Lugar, Levin, the Senate Majority Leader Frist, Representatives Hyde, Lantos, Kaptur, Levin, Wexler and many others. These statesmen were the first stars to appear on the horizon of new Ukrainian-American relations. I am sure that in a short while our partnership will resemble the August night sky with myriads of stars - large and small.

Just a couple of months ago Ukrainian-American partnership was developing under influence of so-called 'fatigue from Ukraine' perception. Now it has been supplanted by the “Ukrainian enthusiasm.”

I personally know quite many political scientists and diplomats trying to predict when this enthusiasm wears thin. Bearing in mind the experience of 2004, when prophecies of political Cassandras failed to come true, I would put no trust into their new predictions.

I believe that “Ukrainian enthusiasm” will not vanish. It will be a source of inspiration and strength to build what Ukraine has long been striving for - stable, powerful and forward-looking strategic partnership with the United States.

In the old times Ukrainians had a tradition to build a new house together with the whole community. I imagine our partnership as such a house. For it to be solid, we shall need each pair of hands both Ukrainian and American. We shall need your political influence, experience and moral strength. I thank you for all this, dear friends. And let this new house stand forever.

Thank you for your attention.