



## NEWSLETTER

CUPP NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1, MAY 2001

### HISTORY OF CUPP



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On July 16th, 1990 the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty which declared that Parliament recognized the need to build the Ukrainian state based on the Rule of Law. On August 24th, 1991 the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the Declaration of Independence which the citizens of Ukraine endorsed in the referendum of December 1st, 1991.

Also in 1991, Canadians celebrated the Centennial of Ukrainian group immigration to Canada. To mark the Centennial, organizations planned programs and projects to celebrate this milestone in Canada's history.

**The Chair of Ukrainian Studies Foundation** of Toronto decided to mark the Centennial by establishing the **Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program** for undergraduate university students from Ukraine.

The Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program gives Ukrainian students an opportunity to work and study in the Canadian Parliament, and gain experience from which generations of Canadian, American and West European students have benefited. On the basis of academic excellence, knowledge of the English or French and Ukrainian languages, and an interest in the parliamentary system of government, undergraduate university students from Ukraine can apply for a CUPP scholarship. It is hoped that CUPP will contribute to the education of future leaders of Ukraine.



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### CONTENTS

History of CUPP .....	1
Address by Bohdan Vitvitsky ... 'Self Respect, Speaking Ukrainian and Creating a Better Future .....	3

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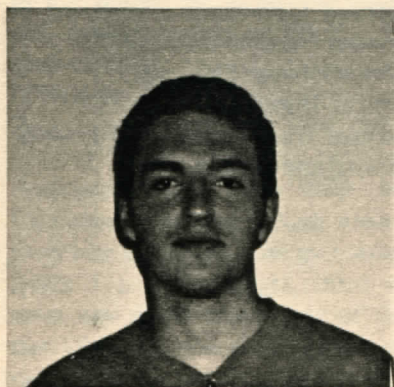
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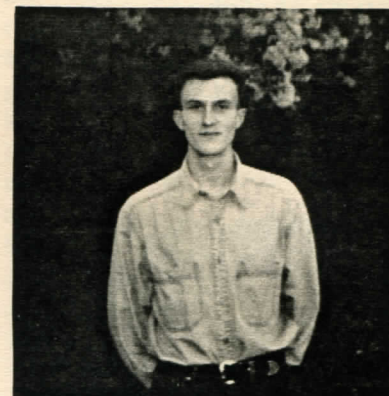
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Address by

**BOHDAN VITVITSKY**

**Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies and the 10th Anniversary of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program (CUPP) in Toronto on Saturday, October 28, 2000**

*(In the audience of over 200 persons, were 41 undergraduate students from 21 Ukrainian Universities who were participating in the 10th CUPP program. Also in the audience were 16 graduates of the CUPP program who attended the celebration in Toronto, and participated in the Symposium at the University of Toronto on the topic of, "As a Minister in the Cabinet of the Ministers in the Government of Ukraine I would implement the following policies to improve the standard of living and unite the country.")*

**Self Respect, Speaking Ukrainian and Creating a Better Future**

I am pleased to be with you at this celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program. What I would like to do this evening is to invite you to join me in giving some thought to why, at this point in history, we Ukrainians are the way we are, why we think the way we do and why we do some of the things we do. In order to do this, I am going to ask you to reflect upon three different sets of observations.

Observation #1: A number of foreign intellectuals who have traveled in Ukraine during the last several years have remarked on the strong sense of political apathy, inertia and passivity that one feels in Ukraine. The apparent conviction that many contemporary Ukrainians seem to have that nothing can be done to change things, and that there's no point in even trying to change things.

Let me give you a couple of examples. During a private conversation, a Russian ethnographer told his Ukrainian friend that the trouble with Ukrainians is that they still think they are a national minority, that is to say, an oppressed group - in their behaviour, they do not act as though they realized that they now have a state. A prominent Polish commentator, Tomasz Jastrun, wrote

the following after returning from a trip to Kyiv: "The Ukrainians are so overwhelmed by the thought that they have nothing, that they have not noticed that they have freedom, that everything is in their hands. But for them, empty hands is nothing. They are waiting for someone to put something into their hands. But empty hands do not have to be a curse - they can also be an opportunity."

Observation #2: A ten-year-old Ukrainian-American boy is travelling throughout Europe for the first time with his father. After several days in Kyiv, he scratches his head and asks his father, "Tatu, why is it that when we were in Paris, the French all spoke French, when we were in Prague, the Czechs all spoke Czech, when we were in Krakow, the Poles all spoke Polish, but here in Kyiv, most Ukrainians seem to be speaking Russian?"

Observation #3: During the last decade, since the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the extraordinary explosion in the use of computers and the Internet, the world has undergone dramatic changes. One of the most important of these is that, as never before, nations today can choose to become prosperous. For many centuries, the power and wealth of a nation

depended upon things beyond its control, such as location, size, and natural resources. Today, however, the standard of living in Singapore, Taiwan or Finland is much, much higher than it is in Russia or China. As Michael Porter, a Harvard University Business School professor has explained: "A nation's wealth is [now] principally of its own collective choosing. Location, natural resources and even military might are no longer decisive. Instead how a nation and its citizens choose to organize and manage the economy, the institutions they put in place and the types of investments they individually and collectively choose to make will determine national prosperity."

You may be sitting there and thinking to yourselves, OK, we know that we Ukrainians seem immobilized by our own lack of confidence about our being able to bring about any change; many of us speak Russian rather than Ukrainian; and, all of us may now be living in a new era in which, in contrast to the way in which things have always been, if people collectively choose to make wise decisions as regards the organization of government and the economy, it may be possible to live in a prosperous, well ordered country. But what, if any, is the relationship among



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these three sets of observations? Let me suggest some to you.

Let me begin with the issue of language. Why is it that, nine years after independence, so many of us speak Russian? Why is it that so many seem to continue to think that it doesn't make much difference what language we speak? Why is it that so many seem to have accepted the view, long propounded by our Russian friends, that : "e to vs'o ravno" whether it is Russian or Ukrainian that is spoken in Ukraine? But perhaps we ought to begin with the more elementary question of whether it is really true that it doesn't make any difference whether we speak Ukrainian or Russian.

Ladies and gentlemen, young brothers and sisters from Ukraine, it matters a great deal whether we speak Ukrainian or Russian. Why? Well, to begin with, it's normal for people to speak their own language. As even the ten-year-old boy about whom I spoke could not help but notice, in Paris the French speak French, in Prague the Czechs speak Czech, in Warsaw and Krakow the Poles speak Polish, and, of course in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Russians speak Russian. Furthermore, is there any Russian in Moscow or St. Petersburg who thinks that it would be "vs'o ravno" if Russians spoke Russian or some other language? I don't think so. The Russians worship their language. Are there any Poles who think it would be "vs'o ravno" if Poles spoke Polish or some other language? I don't think so either. The Poles also worship their own language. Are there any Frenchmen who think it would be "vs'o ravno" if the French spoke French or some other language? If any of you know anything about the French, you know that the answer is obviously not. How is it, then, that we Ukrainians were fooled into thinking that of all of the peoples in the world and all of the languages in the world,

it only was "vs'o ravno" whether Ukrainian or Russian was spoken in Ukraine?

Is it because we were told and taught that Ukrainian was somehow inferior to Russian? Is it because we were told that somehow Russian was a more universal language, and Ukrainian a local language? Is it because when some of us spoke Ukrainian in Ukraine, we were told by our Russian friends "gavarity chelovyicheskim yazikom?"

Stop and think for a minute. Does it make any kind of sense to say that one language is superior to another? How can the language of my nation be superior or inferior to the language of your nation? It's something like saying that a child should recognize a mother not on the basis of who gave that child birth but on the basis of which woman is the youngest or most beautiful or the wealthiest. Languages are not interchangeable as though they were nails or screws. Each language has imbedded in it a particular view of the world, a certain set of cognitive values and attitudes. Some poets have suggested that a language is or reflects a nation's soul. How is it we have allowed the Russians to convince us to be indifferent to our own language?

Some of you may still be unconvinced. You may be thinking that the Ukrainian situation is different. You may be thinking that it is, of course, true that Russians, both under the Czars and the Soviets, artificially constrained the use and perhaps the development of the Ukrainian language and that this may have been a crime of imperialism, but today, the fact of the matter is that Russian has a larger vocabulary or a more modern vocabulary and, therefore, perhaps it really isn't so bad if Ukrainians use Russian.

If you're still thinking that, let me direct your attention to two examples that should convince you, once and for all, that a normal nation does not trade its own language in for another one, for the same reason that a normal human being does not trade his or her mother in for another one, just because the other one is a younger or better looking or richer.

What is today the Czech Republic was until the end of W.W.I a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For a long time in Prague and in the other Czech cities, German was the language of prestige spoken by most. German was the language of Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Hegel and so on. Kafka, a native of Prague, wrote in German, not Czech. Czech was considered the language of Czech peasants and was held in great contempt. Yet, the patriots among the Czechs resolved to speak Czech instead of German, so that when Czechoslovakia came into existence at the end of W.W.I, most people in Prague spoke Czech, not German. Why is it that what was obvious to the Czechs as to what should be done has not been obvious to us today?

A more telling example is provided by the use of Hebrew in Israel. When Israel became an independent state in 1948, it contained some 700 to 800,000 Jews. They spoke various languages, among them Yiddish and English. Yet even before independence, they had all agreed that Hebrew should become their official language. What is remarkable is that at the beginning of the 20th century, Hebrew was a dead language. That is, no one except for the rabbis who used it in religious ceremonies, spoke it. Yet, the future Israelis decided that it should be Hebrew - not English, not German, and not French - that should be the official and everyday language of Israel. And so they adopted Hebrew, modernized it, developed a terminology of knowledge and it





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became the normally functioning language of the Israelis in all spheres of life. And not just the Israelis. A week ago I was in Miami, Florida, and I heard advertisements on the radio for Hebrew lessons. The advertisements said, come and learn the language of the Jewish people, come learn the language of the Jewish soul.

If it was obvious to 700 or 800,000 Jews in Israel that they should revive a dead language, modernize it and adopt it for official and daily use because it was the language of their people, the language of their ancestors, why hasn't it been obvious to tens of millions of us Ukrainians that Ukrainian should be our language?

Let me suggest at least two reasons. First, one of the greatest triumphs of Russian cultural and intellectual imperialism was to convince us that what was normal for others was abnormal for us Ukrainians, and that it was OK that what was abnormal for others was normal in Ukraine. The normal desire for at least some Ukrainians simply to be Ukrainian was denounced as manifestations of "Ukrainian particularism." What would, in the rest of the world, be considered a normal interest in one's own history was, in Ukraine, treated as some sort of subversion. What would, in the rest of the world, be considered a normal desire to develop one's own culture was, in Ukraine, treated as manifestation of bourgeois nationalism. What would, in the rest of the world, be considered a normal desire to speak, read and write in one's own language was, in Ukraine, treated as an exercise in some inferior medium, and so on.

Second, we allowed ourselves to internalize the inferiority complex that the Russians have been feeding us for decades reaching into centuries. How else can one understand how it is possible for us Ukrainians to

voluntarily speak the language of those who for centuries have tried to make us disappear? Those who for decades reaching into centuries have treated us with contempt? Those who have murdered or caused the murder of millions of our countrymen and women? Those who even to this day deny that we are a nation? Those who to this day cannot bring themselves to create a single program of Ukrainian studies at a single one of their many universities? And those who lied to us and taught us to lie to ourselves, about our history, about who our heroes really were, who we really were, and so on?

Our failure to understand that we should be speaking Ukrainian and why it is obvious that we should be doing so is a reflection of a lack of national self-respect. This lack of self-respect and self-confidence is important because it breeds in us the national passivity and inertia that I spoke about at the beginning of my address to you, this inability to understand that independence is an opportunity, an opportunity to begin building and creating a normal country, normal politically, culturally and economically.

Am I suggesting to you that if we all begin to speak Ukrainian rather than Russian, everything would magically become OK? That the economy would instantly revive? That foreign investments would pour in? Of course not. Language is not some magic talisman. But it does serve as a kind of barometer of national mental health. If, like the first Israelis who embraced Hebrew, we had immediately embraced Ukrainian, we would have done so because we would have exhibited the same kind of self respect and self confidence regarding who we are and why what is ours must be cherished. If we had the same self respect and self confidence that the first Israelis had, we would not now be overwhelmed by the thought that we

have nothing, that we are powerless, that nothing can be done, and that nothing can be changed.

I have thus far suggested to you how the Ukrainian language use issue may have a connection to the current mood of social and political helplessness in Ukraine today. Let me now suggest to you how those two issues may relate to the third observation that I spoke about earlier, namely, the observation that we may today be living in a very different world from the one that existed for centuries, because in this world, countries may have a much greater opportunity to choose national prosperity and well being.

It is always harmful to lack national self respect and self confidence, because such a state of affairs twists and contorts the national psyche and may lead to wrong choices and actions. But if we are indeed living in a new era, and I think that we are, an era in which it is possible to choose national prosperity and well being, then a lack of self respect and self confidence is positively fatal. Our own lack of self respect and self confidence will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Since we are confused about who we are, we lack national self confidence. Because we lack national self confidence, we are convinced that we are powerless to change things. Because we don't even try to change anything, nothing is changed, except by others for their benefit. And because nothing is changed, that further confirms our conviction that nothing can be changed and that we are powerless to effect change.

Ask yourselves how and why was it possible for 700-800,000 Israelis to build such a strong state on a desert while surrounded by tens of millions of enemies? There are many answers to this question, but I would suggest to you that the most important of them



was and is a very strong sense of Jewish self respect and self-confidence.

Is it possible for Ukrainians to develop a similar kind of national self respect and self confidence? Let me suggest to you that in the recent past, there once lived a tribe of Ukrainians that in fact possessed a full compliment of national self respect and self confidence. The tribe was called Halychany. They lived in what are today the three oblasts of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil. The people about whom I am speaking lived between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The people about whom I am speaking were a comparatively small tribe, and except for a small intelligentsia, most of them were peasants, and most of them were poor. Yet, despite all this, and despite having lost a war for Halychyna to Poland at the end of W.W.I, and despite having to live during the Great Depression, and despite having to survive two years of Soviet occupation, three years of Nazi occupation and then a second Soviet occupation, they were full of national self respect and self confidence. They knew they were Ukrainians, and even though some of them who graduated from gymnasiums spoke 5 or 6 languages, there was never any doubt among any of them that Ukrainian was their primary and mother tongue.

The Halychany of the first half of the 20th century disagreed with one another about various issues; they fought with one another and in some extreme instances they even killed each other for political reasons. There were among them socialists, democrats and nationalists. But the one remarkable feature they all shared in common was the fiercely held belief that they could make a difference. And boy, did they ever make a difference. They made a difference at the beginning of the 20th century by forging voting and political coalitions with Jews in the Austro-

Hungarian Parliament; by forming the Sichovi Striltsi to fight for Ukrainian independence; by forming the OUN to fight Polish domination; by forming the UPA to fight the Soviets and Nazis; by revitalizing the North American diaspora and helping to keep the idea of an independent Ukraine alive - even at a time when everyone in the United States and Canada told them that there was no such thing as Ukraine, that it was all Russia.

I have not spoken to you about the Halychany of the first half of the last century in order to draw invidious or critical comparisons between them and us today. No, that was not the point at all. The Halychany were the way they were because of a whole host of political and historical circumstances, such as the luck they had in living in the comparatively progressive and enlightened Austro-Hungarian empire, the luck they had in its being possible for some of their brightest sons, such as Ivan Franko, to travel and study in Vienna and so on. The point of speaking to you about the Halychany was simply to remind you that it is possible for Ukrainians to possess full national self respect and self confidence under all kinds of difficult circumstances.

Ladies and gentlemen, young brothers and sisters, let me begin to conclude by reminding you about what two of our most precious Ukrainian geniuses tried to teach us. The first quotation relates directly to our discussion about language:

**Uchitesia brati moyi,  
dumayte, chitayte,  
I chuzhomu nauchaytes'  
Ale svoho ne tsurajtes'**

That means, ladies and gentlemen having the self respect to speak our own language.

Taras Shevchenko also tried to teach us that:

**Strashno vpasty u kaidany,  
Umyrat' v nevoli,  
A shche hirshe - spaty, spaty,  
I spaty na voli ....**

But isn't that exactly what we are doing today when we become paralyzed by our own lack of self confidence and self respect, by our lack of conviction that we can make a difference?

And lastly Ivan Franko tried to teach us that:

**Kozhniy dumaj shchto na tobi  
Mil'ioniw stan stoit'  
Shcho za doliu mil'ioniw  
Mayesh dati ti obvit.**

Ladies and gentlemen, young brothers and sisters. Those of us who are here today are among the privileged, in terms of education, in terms of what we've had an opportunity to see, learn and experience. We all have an obligation to apply that privilege towards some good. Ladies and gentlemen, young brothers and sisters, let's take what Taras Shevchenko and Ivan Franko, two of the wisest and most wonderful teachers that any nation has ever been fortunate to have, have tried to teach us and let's go out and make a difference. Let's go out and make the two of them proud of us. Let's go out and make the kind of difference that will make our children and grand children proud of us.

Lastly, an Italian American priest named Father Gino Baroni once made a very important observation. He said that the two most valuable things we can teach our children are that they have roots and that they can reach for the sky. Ladies and gentlemen, let's not let our roots rot away from neglect. It is not vs'o ravno. And, ladies and gentlemen, let's not be afraid to reach for the Ukrainian sky no matter how temporarily cloudy or overcast it may sometimes seem to be.