

# State Visit

While Ukrainian Prime Minister Lazarenko's state visit to Canada focused on economic ties and bilateral cooperation, it did not lack pomp and circumstance. From the moment the Air Ukraine plane descended into Ottawa, government officials and Canadians of Ukrainian descent were on hand to meet and greet the official delegation. Accompanied by his wife, Tamara, numerous senior ministers, officials and an entourage of businessmen, Lazarenko was warmly met by PM Jean Chrétien.

The highlight of his first day was a state dinner in the lavish hall of the National Gallery of Canada. He also met with representatives of the World Congress of Ukrainians.

At a National Press Club breakfast in Ottawa the following morning, Lazarenko explained Ukraine's changing situation in security, and political and corruption reforms. He emphasized the positive accomplishments: renouncement of nuclear weapons; domestic stability; adoption of the Constitution; membership in the Council of Europe; special agreements with NATO and, soon, the World Trade Organization; stability in the economy; slashing of the high inflation rate; and the successful introduction of the new currency, the hryvnia. Lazarenko acknowledged that, while corruption does exist in Ukraine, "It's a legacy of 73 years of totalitarian socialism... Ukraine has a class of rich people and poor people, but unfortunately we don't have a middle class," he said.

The second and final day saw meetings with Prime Minister Chrétien and various Ministers, a press conference and a wreath-laying ceremony at the National War Memorial.

## Westward Ho!

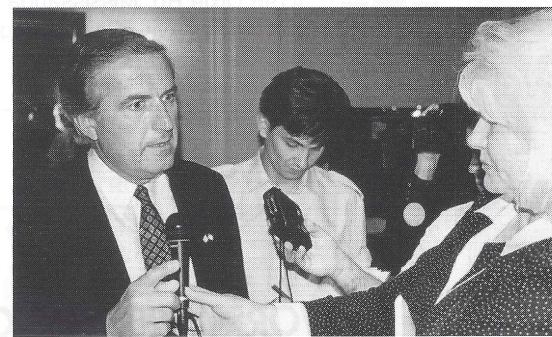
Lazarenko received a hero's welcome from the 160,000-strong Ukrainian community upon his arrival to Winnipeg and later, at an official banquet attended by some 500 invited guests. The next morning, the PM held a breakfast reception at which the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) transferred the title to the residence of Ukraine's Ambassador in Ottawa, purchased by the Canadian Ukrainian community, to the government of Ukraine.

The last stop on Lazarenko's itinerary was Calgary, site of the business component of his mission. Here he met the Premiers of the three Prairie Provinces in extended individual sessions: Alberta's Ralph Klein,

Saskatchewan's Roy Romanow, and Manitoba's Gary Filmon, the latter two being of Ukrainian heritage themselves. The Premiers told the PM that their businessmen, a large number of Ukrainian descent, particularly in these provinces, are eager to help Ukraine on its path to economic recovery and reforms with investment, technology and know-how. Each stressed his particular province's strengths. Premier Klein praised Alberta's oil and gas sector, with "some of the best technology in the world -- drilling, production pipelines, marketing, and petrochemical development."

Speaking at the CUBI gala banquet in Calgary, Minister Axworthy stated that, "the historic changes in the last month - such as the treaties with neighbouring countries and the NATO agreement, affirmed the integrity of Ukraine as a nation, and have firmly established a secure statehood - making possible a new era of economic cooperation." "Economics," he underlined, "means stability of society." This view was echoed by Ambassador Christopher Westdal, who pointed out that "the real security guarantees for Ukraine are investment, jobs, trade, fiscal capacity, and a better life for the people of Ukraine."

In his turn, PM Lazarenko emphasized that "CUBI '97 is a major activity in enhancing our bilateral relations, and our economic and political ties. This is exactly the type of initiative (needed) to strengthen the business relations between our two countries... With the help of the private sector and Canadians of Ukrainian descent, we will be able to further enhance the ties between our two countries."



Meeting with Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon (top) and Alberta Premier Ralph Klein (c). Bottom: Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow is interviewed by Ukrainian radio and television reporters (in Ukrainian!) following his meeting with PM Lazarenko.



Participants of the IEC meeting provided a resolution of bilateral priorities at the Ministerial level through broad agreements (see IEC Protocol on page 43). The CUBI Conference brought partners from Ukraine and Canada face-to-face to discuss and resolve issues on a sector-by-sector basis in energy, agriculture and construction.