



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

New Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521

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CONTACT: BOB WAITE
(202)224-8953

DOLE NOTES SIXTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF UKRAINIAN INDEPENDENCE

WASHINGTON -- "On January 22, 1918, the people of the Ukraine proclaimed their independence and sovereignty, marking the end of centuries of oppression and persecution by the Czars of Russia. On this January 22, 1979, 61 years after their declaration of independence in Kiev, Ukrainians throughout the free world, including many Ukrainian-Americans in the United States, are celebrating the anniversary of that most important historic event," Senator Bob Dole said Tuesday.

"Those in the Ukraine itself, however, cannot celebrate so openly and freely. Despite the fact that Soviet Russia, along with many other large nations, officially recognized their independence and sovereignty from the beginning, the leaders of Russia continued their attempts to prevent the people of the Ukraine from exercising their national right to self-determination. The Soviets did not honor their promise to respect the independence of the Ukraine and have since then tried through brutal military strength to break the spirit of the Ukrainian people. Even though the Ukraine has all the form and structure of a strong, independent nation, virtually all their domestic and foreign policy is dictated from Moscow," said Dole.

"Persecution and suppression of the Ukraine's national consciousness has taken place for hundreds of years and has peaked under Soviet domination. Under Stalin, millions of Ukrainians lost their lives, including an entire generation of Ukrainian intellectuals and creative talents. Now with less brutality, but more insidiously, the Russians have tried to erase the Ukraine culture and ethos, with the result that russification has become institutionalized. Ukrainian culture, tradition and history are subverted. The language of the Ukrainian people has been suppressed as the Russians mutilate their orthography and require all lecture materials in institutes of higher learning to be in the Russian language," said Dole.

"In similar fashion, the religious beliefs of the Ukrainian people are constantly undermined. Religion is the most logical area for attack because it is the last storehouse of their folk customs and ethnic identity. Strict supervision of religious activities has led to the destruction of both the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches. Students are given Sunday sessions to prevent their attending church. Holy days, such as Easter and Christmas, are declared work days. Churches are forced into disrepair and new priests are not allowed to replace old ones. Even more alarming is the growing number of arrests and persecutions of the churches' clergy and their faithful members," added Dole.

"Despite the suffering they had had to endure, and the attempts to smother the Ukrainian culture and national identity, the Ukrainian people have persevered and continued the struggle for human rights and national independence. National self-determination has been the cause and inspiration for many who have joined the ranks of the Ukrainian dissent. Perhaps one reason why they have been so active and steadfast in their efforts for freedom is that this issue holds special significance for them. The goal for them is the preservation of their one thousand-year-old heritage and culture.

"They have come to be some of the most outstanding advocates of human rights and have been among the most active and largest groups formed under the Helsinki Accords to monitor the principles of human rights violations. They have, unfortunately, because of their degree of activity and outspokenness, also contributed the largest amount of martyrs into the "clutches of Soviet justice". Among the more well-known dissidents and political names

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are Vins, Moroz, Rudenko, Stus, Romaniuk, Matusevych, Marynovich, and Lukyanenko. Each of these names has become a symbol of this struggle for human rights. However, these are just a handful of the many Ukrainians fighting and suffering for their rights. They deserve the praise and high respect of everyone.

"It is important that the United States recognize and support the efforts of these people. We must join them in their continuing struggle to make the signatory nations of the Helsinki Accord account for their observance of human rights and adherence to the great principles of the Helsinki Final Act, and to show this support and concern through concrete diplomatic efforts toward realization of these goals. These goals and the struggles for human rights can be strengthened only by sustaining those same principles abroad. People in all parts of the world look to us for moral support. We must not let the people of Ukraine down and risk witnessing the destruction of a great nation's heritage and culture. If we do, we will be denying an essential part of our own heritage and moral strength," said Dole.

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