

Ukraine in Brief

Volume VI, Issue 33

December 6, 2011

Hunger Strikes and Protests across Ukraine

All across Ukraine veterans of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster cleanup and Afghan war veterans have been rallying with many of them standing outside the walls of the Ukrainian parliament. Nineteen of these protestors have initiated a hunger strike in front of the Ukrainian parliament building in Kyiv while twenty-two protestors continue a hunger strike in the city of Donetsk. Those maintaining the hunger strike have taken to wearing white bands with the word "Hunger Strike" on their hats.



*Protestors rallying outside of government buildings all across Ukraine
(Photo: AP)*

These protests and hunger strikes are in response to a government decision in September to cut the pensions of Chernobyl cleanup workers and Afghan war veterans and of the elderly who receive additional financial help for either working or being children during World War II. The largest protest was on November 29th when 3,000 protestors stood outside Parliament demanding the annulment of all legislative amendments cutting back pensions and social allowances. Police have barred protestors from erecting tents and have recently closed off many public

facilities. Protestors claim that they will continue to rally outside of government offices until their demands are met.

Ukraine Can Earn EU Membership in the Future

According to a European Parliament resolution adopted in Brussels on December 1, 2011, Ukraine has a possibility of joining the European Union. The resolution states that "Ukraine is a European state and, pursuant to Article 49 TEU, may apply for membership of the EU, as can any European state provided it adheres to the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, minority rights and the rule of law." The approval of the resolution was due to the recommendations of the EU Council, the European Commission, and the European External Action Service, all which were supported by the European Parliament's Committee of Foreign Affairs.

According to European politicians, Ukrainian political and state leadership have shown commitments to European integration and the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine is the first step. However, Ukraine must observe principles of democracy if it has a chance of joining the European Union. The associate agreement is seen as a tool to help modernize Ukraine and help it implement democratic domestic reforms such as strengthening the rule

Chornobyl Soon to be Open to Tourists

Tourists may soon be able to visit the Chornobyl exclusion zone for up to five days. Earlier this year Volodymyr Kholosha, head of the Ukrainian State Agency for Management of the Exclusion Zone, stated that Ukraine would not permit tourists to visit Chornobyl. However the District Administrative Court of Kyiv stated that the declaration was unlawful. The Emergencies Ministry approved rules that would allow for visitors to enter Chornobyl. In order for tourists to travel to the city they must submit a written request to the Ukrainian State Agency for Management of the Exclusion Zone within ten days before the trip.

Included in this request, those wishing to visit Chornobyl must include their contact information, citizenship, and purpose of the trip. However, requests for visiting the exclusion zone may be refused if applicants are under 18 years old, research or repairs are occurring during the time of the request, bad weather conditions, if requests are improperly filled out, or if law enforcement agencies have blacklisted a person, or on days of commemoration of the victims of the Chornobyl disaster.