

Ukraine in Brief

Volume VI, Issue 13

March 29, 2011



Enthronement of the new Patriarch of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Svyatoslav Shevchuk: Sunday March 27 in Kyiv

(Photo: Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church website)

New Patriarch of Ukrainian Catholic Church enthroned

Svyatoslav Shevchuk was formally elected as the new Patriarch of the Ukrainian Catholic Church last week by the Synod of Bishops. On Sunday March 27, he was enthroned at a ceremony at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv.

The service began with a procession from the Church of the Annunciation to the cathedral. Participating in the procession and the service were priests from all eparchies and exarchates of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, as well as bishops and metropolitans. There were more than 350 clergy members at the service.

After the Synod voted, Pope Benedict both confirmed and blessed their decision. In addition to the Pope's blessing, President Yanukovich congratulated the newly-elected Patriarch on his new position. According to the Presidential Press Service, the President wished peace to the Ukrainian Catholics and hoped that there would be understanding and cooperation between Ukrainians of all faiths.

After the ceremony, Patriarch Svyatoslav told reporters, "I give myself entirely into the hands of God, and he will guide me. So I'm very calm. I think the most important task is to continue the construction of our church, which we've

seen in past years, and to strengthen what has already been done."

Following his enthronement the Patriarch left Tuesday for Rome to meet with Pope Benedict, as it is customary for the newly-elected church head to make a visit. He also stated that the bishops had put together a number of proposals to share with the pope.

IMF to Continue Loan to only if Reform is Passed

The International Monetary Fund has stated that until Ukraine imposes reforms in the country they will not continue to lend money. Pension reform remains the largest issue halting cooperation between Ukraine and the IMF.

While Ukrainian officials such as Prime Minister Azarov have stated that Ukraine can manage without the IMF funds, he did note that "It is not advantageous for Ukraine." The Social Policy Minister, Serhiy Tyhypko said that the cabinet of ministers is prepared to work diligently on reforming the pension program in the next few months, and will update the current proposal if necessary.

The IMF believes Ukraine is falling behind economically in comparison to other countries in the region. IMF Representative Max Alier has said that part of the problem is structural weaknesses and a lack of reform.

In addition to pension reform, the IMF feels that Ukraine needs to have tariffs reach market levels, have a balanced budget, and ensure that Naftogaz is a prosperous company. Alier recognized that Ukraine will need to make these improvements a step at a time.

Last year Ukraine and the IMF came to an agreement on the stand-by loan program. The organization will be allocating over \$10 billion in funding for Ukraine, making it the third largest IMF program, after Greece and Romania.

In order to receive the next tranche of the loan, Ukraine must work out pension reform. According to reports from Tyhypko, Parliament will vote on the issue in late May or early June. Pension reform is such a key issue because there are no other ways to reduce the state budget deficit, which is a large part of IMF requirements.

Donors Conference for Chernobyl Shelter Fund

With the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster quickly approaching, and the recent explosions in Japan, Ukraine is carefully evaluating progress in the Chernobyl plant area. Experts are concerned about the rapidly decaying structure surrounding the damaged reactor and believe a new shelter needs to be constructed as soon as possible.

In order to achieve this Ukraine still needs and additional 600 million Euros. While there is disagreement among scientists in the area about whether or not a failure to build the new shelter soon would result in the collapse of the current shelter and the release of a cloud of radioactive dust into the environment, scientists are in agreement that a new shelter need to go up, and soon, because gaps in the current structure allow dust out and rainwater in to the containment.

Ukraine has called for a donors conference in April to try and close the gap between the funds received to date, and those still needed to complete the project.

Several donors have expressed concern over the slow moving project, but most understand that this is a difficult and time-consuming process. Officials in the office of Fuel and Energy in Ukraine explained that this is the first project of its kind, which contributes to the difficulty in building the containment structure.