



President Encourages Ukraine's Fledgling Public Service

On May 30, 1996, President L. Kuchma addressed the Ukrainian Academy of Public Administration (UAPA) on the occasion of its first Anniversary. Following are excerpts from his speech.



President Kuchma greets Valentyn Malynovsky, Head of UAPA's Students Council, at the anniversary celebrations.

Our experience of the last few years clearly confirms a historic truth: that when the state and society are at a turning point, their development accelerates markedly... This has become especially evident as we are approaching the 5th anniversary of Ukraine's independence. Unfortunately, time is still flying by faster than the reforms for which we have been struggling and which are supported by our society as a whole. In fact, life is way ahead of some of our Ukrainian politicians, and society is more receptive to new ideas than they are.

A critical juncture (for Ukraine) is the introduction of human resources management which must be based on the experience of our past as well as on world practices. It is necessary to create a professional elite in an independent Ukraine. This is not just a project for one generation; it is a long-term objective. Although this is an urgent task for all post-socialist countries, this problem is especially pressing for us. In recent history Ukraine has not known independence, and during the last three centuries it did not even function as a state, being part of a larger political/economic system. Until August 1991, all policies were formulated and any decisions of importance were made by the central authorities. So in fact we are just now beginning to create a political, economic, and humanitarian elite. One has to take into consideration that, until recently, Moscow managed 95% of the Ukrainian economy, particularly its key sectors. Our managerial personnel was and

still is oriented to a great extent to implementing decisions made "at the top", although now this means waiting for instructions or decisions from Kyiv. It is no secret that our finest specialists were absorbed by the central government, by other republics.

Now we must address two fundamental tasks. The first is to establish an efficient functional system for the training of public servants. The second is to ensure a level of administration which is genuinely suitable to the state. This is only possible if the public service is capable of making and implementing decisions, and assuming responsibility for their results.

While the entire previous system of public service training was aimed at preparing administrators specializing in "re-transmission", if I may put it that way, what Ukraine needs today are initiators: specialists who can make competent decisions, see the consequences of their implementation, organize the work, and manage both groups and regions.

It was precisely to create such an integral system of training and professional development of public servants, and to address the problem of human resources, that I made the decision to open the Ukrainian Academy of Public Administration on May 30, 1995.

The Academy, with its branches in Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Odesa and Kharkiv, and the Professional Development Institute, have a crucial task before them - to truly become the main institution for public service training and professional development. I must remind you that you are the only institution training public servants under the "Public Administration" program -- which is a first for Ukraine, with graduates earning a "Master of Public Administration" degree. It has been pointed out to me that this specialization has not yet even been included on the official list of our institutions of higher education. The Academy is therefore in a way an elite educational institution.

This first year of the Academy's activity has been a period of organization and growth. The task at hand now is to concentrate these efforts to achieve our stated goals, namely, the training of administrative specialists who must be prepared for those conditions in which they will be working upon graduation. We must re-evaluate the qualifications and responsibilities of the instructors themselves. This faculty must include the most qualified academics, the most experienced professionals and politicians. The Academy's mission is to absorb the intellectual potential of the entire

nation and ensure that it is passed on in the training process.

We cannot ignore the fact that, being part of the union, albeit a big part, Ukraine actually did not have specialists in such key areas as international relations, including foreign economic matters; military concerns; customs and border issues; finances and currency - these matters were beyond its realm of responsibility. Imagine a state existing without authority over these matters!

Obviously, the Academy alone cannot assume responsibility for training the required number of specialists. However, the Academy should start assuming responsibility for academic and methodological coordination of the work which will be carried out by other educational institutions, according to the government contracts and requests. This requires the development of appropriate standards and methods of evaluating the quality of the educational process. This important consideration cannot be left unto itself, especially when considerable sums of government money are involved.

The retraining of specialists remains the main task of the Academy. The work in the area of upgrading qualifications currently being done by the Institute is invaluable. However, even this is already insufficient. In my opinion, it is time to move away from the "meeting" format and to focus on individual work, organizing on-site training of public servants within government offices - regional and central included. It is also necessary to ensure that programs which include training abroad should not merely become foreign excursions.

The fact that the Academy unites public servants and politicians, and people from academic and practical fields, creates a unique opportunity not only for enriching the educational process, but also for improving the political decision-making process, particularly in questions of national importance, or when dealing with the actions of government bodies. The current