



# THE SPEAKER

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## PRESENT UKRAINIAN-ARMENIAN RELATIONS AND UKRAINIAN POLICY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

### OLEXANDR BOZHKO

Ambassador of the Ukraine in Armenia

Armenian-Ukrainian relations have a centuries-long history. As far back as the 12th century, Armenian communities existed on the territory of the Ancient Kievian State. These communities developed, over time, into both large and small Armenian settlements. Their apogee of development occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The evidence for this is the existence of many examples of Armenian architecture and the presence of ancient Armenian manuscripts. These can be found all over the Ukraine and have reached to us from the distant past. Such Ukrainian cities as Lvov, Kamenets-Podolsk, Hotin, Brodi, Lipesk, Lutsk, are home to many generations of Armenians for whom the Ukraine has become a second homeland. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a famous Armenian historian and public figure, Meenass Bshkian, had occasion to write: "This country is not only peace-loving and as fertile as the Armenian, but its people are similar to the Armenians, with their traditions of hospitality, generosity, and benevolence".

The modern history of Ukrainian-Armenian relations begins from 1991 12 25, when diplomatic relations were established between the newly independent countries.

The foreign policy of every country proceeds from the situation in the country. That is why, in order to better understand the natural development of bilateral relations, it is necessary to dwell on the main and recent achievements of the Ukraine.

The results of the Ukraine's socio-economic development from the beginning of the transformation process to the present gives reason to predict that before long, the country will overcome the crisis and will continue its



stable development of the first nine months of 2000. The real growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to the same period of time last year is 5% (at that time, there was a 3% decline of the GDP). The growth of the industrial production is 11.6% (last year we had a 1.1% decline). Consumer goods' production increased by 24.8%. The growth in production was strengthened by the rise of all the principal industrial branches. In 2000, there is a positive tendency to increase the budget income of the GDP. From January to August, the budget income was 28.6 billion grivna, just 67.6% of the annual plan. Savings held by the population (in national and foreign currency) have increased by 31.2%.

The government's consistent performance of its duties vis-à-vis the population was a decisive factor that promoted a 9.4% growth rate of the population's real income as compared to last year.

Outstanding debts in the form of unpaid wages have decreased by 8.9%. Pension payment debts were removed over the last four months. The number of districts that have no debts to pay has increased to eleven; from seven at the beginning of the year.

Between January and August 2000, the volume of foreign trade (goods and services) of the Ukraine was US\$17.9 billion -- an increase of 23.4% compared to the same period last year.

An important and inseparable component of the reform policy (the most important factor in the resolution of the main problems -- the economic growth of the country and the well being of the Ukrainian citizen), is foreign policy.

The experience that the Ukraine has had in the nine years of its independence shows that foreign policy is a reliable way to protect the national interests of the country. Such a policy promotes international development and the further strengthening of the position of the Ukraine.

Since gaining independence, one of the main achievements of Ukrainian foreign policy was its membership to the Security Council of the United Nations in October 1999 for the 2000-2001 term.

The results of the Ukraine's participation in the United Nations Organization Security Council's work demonstrated the ability of our country to pursue an independent and balanced foreign policy. This policy is based on the basic standards of international law and clear and impartial criteria that constitute the roots of the UN Charter's principles and goals. An example of this ability was the fact that on the initiative of the Ukraine's President Kuchma, the UN Security Council decided to hold a high-level meeting within the framework of the UNO Millennium Summit on 2000 09 07.

The Ukraine continues to pursue a consistent strategic policy aimed at its integration with the European Union. This is one of the cardinal and primary issues for our country's foreign policy. Co-operation with CIS states, namely with Russia, is very important. The bilateral commodity turnover amounted to US\$ 5 939 696 over the last eight months.

The Ukraine's collaboration with NATO also acquires a particular significance within the context of regional stability and the maintenance of security in Central and Eastern Europe. In the past ten years, following its Declaration of Independence, the Ukraine became a full participant in the area of international relations, an influential element of regional stability, as well as an active participant of international communication.

Armenia and the Ukraine are friendly countries. We

have no problems that could sow discord into our relationships.

Undoubtedly, the political and economic presence of the Ukraine in Armenia is consistent with its national interests. This, on the other hand, also meets the political interests of Armenia, as well as its internal market needs.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia and the Ukraine inherited an almost identical import-export system within their economy. They also were left with a mutually complementary industry, which substantiated their interest towards each other's production. Thus, the interests of our countries coincide on the issues concerning the stabilization of specific acquisitions in local industry and economic growth. Our interests also coincide regarding the need to increase our products' competitiveness, as well as the development of our export development potential.

Armenia and the Ukraine are united not only by common historical and cultural events, but also by common initial positions, occupied by them in the solution of international problems of paramount importance. Both countries are implementing widespread transformations in their societies and are solving issues related to the security of stable socio-economic development. All these activities require not only an internal, but also an international and multilateral, congruence of forces.

Our countries, therefore, are interested to see that the activity of international organizations takes our needs (and that of other countries with economies in transition) into account. We wish to ensure that double standards are not applied to our aspirations for global cooperation.

The striving to prevent the drawing of new European demarcation lines unites Armenia and the Ukraine. Our states are most willing to have a very significant impact in the establishment of Europe's new security system.

Our countries advocate similar multilateral and complementary principles of foreign policy. Their main foreign policy position is their integration within European structures. Both countries strive to approximate the level of their economic development to European standards and have

**The Ukraine continues to pursue a consistent strategic policy aimed at its integration with the European Union.**

**H.E. Ambassador Olexander Bozhko** - Was born 1946, in the Kiev region.



After service in the Soviet Army in 1968, he attended the Philological Faculty of Shevchenko Kiev State University. He studied the Armenian language and literature at Yerevan State University.

1973-75 - Researcher of Yerevan State University.

Since 1975 - Correspondent, head of the Division of Literature of Brotherly and Foreign Countries of the "Literaturna Ukraina" ("Literary Ukraine") newspaper. Was trained in a post - graduate course of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Science of Armenia.

Since 1979 - Editor of the magazine "Vsesvit" ("All World").

Since 1990 - Elected Executive Secretary of the Kiev section of the Ukraine's Writers Union.

1992-93 - Head of Division of Information and Scientific Editions of the Orientalism Institute of the Academy of Science of the Ukraine, Editor of the magazine "Shidny Svit" ("Oriental World").

Since 1993 - Counselor, Head of the Department of the Countries of the CIS of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Ukraine.

Since 1996 - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Ukraine to the Armenia.

Is married, has two daughters.

Knows Armenian, Russian and French.

Authored about a hundred publications, dedicated to Ukrainian-Armenian cultural and historical relation, more than ten books of translations from Armenian to Ukraine language.

He is a member of the Ukraine's Writers Union.

adopted the course of close co-operation with the European Union.

Both the Ukraine and Armenia effectively participate in the activities of the Euro-Atlantic Collaboration Council, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's "Partnership for Peace" program.

Both states announced that the economic potential of co-operation amongst the states bordering the Black Sea - as a regional unit with good prospects -- needs further strengthening.

The Commonwealth of Independent States has a beneficial, multilateral mechanism for economic co-operation. The Ukraine and Armenia, therefore, are making concerted and collaborative efforts to implement their ideas concerning free trade, the illegal transportation of goods, as well as the realization of their multi-faceted investment programs aimed at the creation of conditions to use capital, services, and labor.

The present relations between the Ukraine and Armenia are based on agreements that include all the spheres of the two countries' economic and cultural life. Forty documents are in force and they govern bilateral co-operation. Ten more are in the preliminary stages of negotiation or ratification. The most important political document, the Agreement on Friendship and Co-operation, was signed between the Ukraine and Armenia on 1996 05 14.

Of all the agreements recently signed between Armenia and the Ukraine aimed at the regulation of economic relations and the promotion of imports, I would like to emphasize the agreement on Co-operation between the Cabinets of the Ukrainian and Armenian Governments. This document relates to the spheres of pharmaceuticals and railway transport. Moreover, one should also note the Agreement on the Collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade of the Ukraine and the Armenian Ministry of Industry and Trade. Another noteworthy document is the Agreement on Co-operation and Information Exchange as signed between the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety of the Ukraine and the Armenian State Committee.

The parties share a common viewpoint concerning the contractual relations uniting the Ukraine and Armenia. These do not yet fully meet the current needs of the two states. Firstly, taking economic issues into account, one of the primary directions of our bilateral relationship is the expansion of the contractual-legal basis.

Consequently, the present agenda includes the completion of the contractual process. This involves an Economic Co-operation Agreement and Program for the next ten years. We are also discussing co-operation of production and collaboration related to the energy field. Discussions are under way aimed to increase the safety of operating nuclear power plants.

Trade and economic bilateral relations between Armenia and the Ukraine are developing at present -- both at inter-branch and regional levels. These relations are firmly grounded in the important legal texts governing this bilateral relationship.

The following important documents deserve attention: mutual aid agreements signed in the field of

taxation and aimed at the issues of free trade, industrial co-operation, and the elimination of double taxation.

Last year, we managed to overcome the reduction of intergovernmental commodity turnover volumes that were observed over the past three years. This year, there are grounds to state that these positive changes have acquired a constant character. This can easily be shown by the fact that from January to September, the two-way foreign trade turnover increased, as compared with the same period last year, by 35.6% and amounted to US\$9.9 million. Moreover the increase in the volume of trade in this nine-month period (19% of imports from the Ukraine to Armenia and 240% increase in exports from Armenia to the Ukraine), was achieved mainly by the agricultural and chemical industries.

Wheat is the lion's share of goods imported from the Ukraine. This year's volumes tripled as compared to two years ago. The volume of imported wheat was 50 000 tonnes at an average price of US\$ 90 per tonne. As for Armenian goods entering the Ukrainian market, special emphasis should be placed on the successful activity of Armenian brandy suppliers in Kiev and Odessa. The amounts of brandy in 1999 were valued at US\$ 600 000. Thanks to active marketing, this year's monthly indicators of the Yerevan Brandy Company's production held steady within a range of between US\$ 50 000 and US\$ 60 000.

The establishment of the Ukrainian-Armenian Intergovernmental Commission far back in 1996, promoted progress in bilateral trade. The commission dealt with trade and economic co-operation comprising the whole complex of the two states' relationship in these spheres. The planned sitting of this commission successfully took place last year in Kiev. Besides this, the "Ukrainian-Armenian" business session, held in Yerevan in 1998 with the assistance of the Union of Manufacturers and Businesspersons of the Ukraine and Armenia, was a substantial contribution to the program aimed at improving direct economic co-operation between the two countries. More than thirty agreements and protocols aimed at co-operation in different spheres were signed in the course of this session.

The Ukraine develops trade and economic co-operation with Armenia at the regional level as well. An appropriate agreement was signed between the capitals of our states, and productive dialogue continues between Odessa and Yerevan, Sumsk and Kotayk Province, as well as Donetsk and Lori Province.

Positive tendencies, observed in trade last year, testify to the increasingly efficient service of the Potilychevsk ferry crossing. This is the shortest way to transport Armenian and Ukrainian goods to the markets of either country. In this respect, future collaboration of the Ukraine and Armenia within the framework of the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) regional project has a promising future.

I would also like to draw your attention to the Interstate Oil and Gas Transmission to Europe (INOGATE) program. This is implemented to promote mutually beneficial co-operation amongst suppliers wishing to transport their energy resources. The conference, dedicated to the implementation of its goals and conducted with the active participation of Armenia, took place last year in Kiev. In this

**The contractual relations uniting the Ukraine and Armenia do not yet fully meet the current needs of the two states.**

respect, the Ukraine is extremely interested today in its contribution to the planned construction of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline. In the future, it could carry this blue fuel through the territory of Georgia to our country, and then on to Europe.

Today, in the context of Ukrainian-Armenian trade and economic relations taken as a whole, there is no problem more important than selecting the most promising directions for further collaboration, the co-operative reestablishment of former links, as well as the utilization of mechanisms involved in the supply of national traditional goods to the markets of both countries. In the given context, we hope to conclude the agreement aimed at the implementation of economic co-operation between Armenia and the Ukraine for the next ten years. The agreement is to be signed by the President of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, in the course of his visit planned for the beginning of March 2001. It is expected that this document will stipulate the regulation of certain standards and promote bilateral trade. It will be initiated at the regular sitting of the intergovernmental trade-economic commission, which is to be held in Yerevan soon.

The Ukraine also renders active assistance to the implementation of the two countries' new businessperson's ideas to establish the Ukrainian-Armenian House of Commerce.

Both the Armenian community in the Ukraine and the Ukrainian community in Armenia must play an important role in international co-operation, as well as make a significant contribution to the strengthening of friendly relations between the various peoples of our countries. According to the Constitution, the Ukraine has secure provisions for the language and national-cultural demands of the Ukrainians resident abroad, as well as the unique development of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious aspects of the indigenous nations and minorities living on the territory of the Ukraine. With the purpose of fulfilling that constitutional norm, the Ukraine's cabinet of ministers adopted complex measures aimed at the cultural development of the Ukraine's national minorities. Thanks to the state's assistance, the "Aragats" newspaper is published in the Ukraine in both Armenian and Ukrainian. The "Masyats Aghavnee" newspaper and the "Soorp Khatsh" magazine are published in the Crimea. There are Armenian television and radio programs. Several books of tales and the alphabet were published in accordance with the publishing program of the state national minorities. Sunday schools and choral clubs are open in many cities. The religious needs of Armenians are also satisfied: fifteen communities of the Armenian Apostolic Church function in the Ukraine.

The 2000-strong Ukrainian community of Armenia is active too. It includes the "Dnipro" choral club and the "Zvinochki" children's ensemble. The "Verbichenka" vocal ensemble is in Vanadzor. The "Dnipro" newspaper is issued in both Ukrainian and Armenian, and a Sunday school has opened in Yerevan.

The Ukraine's State program entitled the "Ukrainian Diaspora till the year 2000" allows for assistance to the community with the aim of satisfying cultural-educational needs. It would be desirable that the Armenian side attended to the Ukrainian community at all levels of authority to the same extent that the Armenian community is favored in the Ukraine.

**The Ukraine believes that it is inappropriate to turn its back on the South Caucasus.**

The policy pursued by the Ukraine in the South Caucasus is related to our national interests. Firstly, considering the close unity of the former Soviet states, both the economic and cultural presence of the Ukraine in this region has existed for several decades. Although the former links were destroyed owing to well-known historic reasons, the Ukraine believes that it is inappropriate to turn its back on the South Caucasus. Moreover, all the pre-requisites exist for us to view that region as one of the factors providing our own energy security in the process of discovering diverse energy sources. It is also viewed as a traditional market for the sale of our own products – a market that the Ukraine would like to reopen for itself. Proceeding from the necessity to achieve these goals, the Ukraine strove to pursue a balanced, multiform policy in the South Caucasus. It

includes:

- 1) The bilateral relationship of the Ukraine with the region's states: Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Iran. Our country plans to have mutually beneficial trade and economic programs with each of these states.
- 2) Significant regional collaboration programs such as the Georgia Ukraine Uzbekistan Azerbaijan Moldova Union (GUUAM) and the Black Sea Economic Council (BSEC).
- 3) Co-operation with the region's states to implement the TRACECA project and the INOGATE project (mentioned above), for the transportation of energy supplies.

In the given context, we should dwell on the issue of the Ukraine and GUUAM Union. The association of Georgia, the Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova was established in October 1997. Two years later Uzbekistan joined that association. The main motivation for establishing GUUAM was its member-states' striving for political and economic integration.

GUUAM has a uniquely economic character and is not against the states not entering the union. On the contrary, it is open to new participants. Moreover, the Ukraine continues to show its active orientation towards being involved in the above-mentioned transport program implemented in Armenia.

It should be noted that the Ukraine generally strives to play one of the pivotal economic roles in the region. That means that transport programs offered by our country are economically advantageous for all countries of the region -- irrespective of their political co-operation.

The governments of the Ukraine and Georgia, for example, signed -- in August 2000 -- an agreement, stipulating a 35% reduction of the prices on services rendered by the port of Poti with the aim of gaining a larger profit for the Poti-Ilyichevsk ferry crossing. As a result, the Ukrainian navigational company "Ukrferry", which runs the service, started to receive a great number of offers from foreign firms that are interested to explore new naval routes for Eurasian transport.

The Armenian part may derive direct benefit from all the above-mentioned, because this transportation is developing to be the shortest and cheapest way of exporting Armenian goods to European markets.

These are the main directions of the Ukraine's foreign policy in the South Caucasus. The Ukraine's leadership believes that the Armenian factor is of paramount importance for reaching peace in the South Caucasus.

Failing to take this into account means that all the above-mentioned programs are doomed to failure. The Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma's initiative in bringing peace to the region is based on the theory that no progress can be obtained unless all the regional countries harmonize their main principles. He is also willing to help mediate, on behalf of the Ukraine, in finding a mutually acceptable peace formula to solve the long-lasting Karabagh conflict.

Another important issue the Ukraine would like to contribute to is the implementation of the idea that calls for signing of a Caucasian Stability Pact. Moreover, the Ukraine considers that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) must act as the leading player to create and apply a regional stability system, as an international mediator agreed to by all the regional countries.

**The Ukraine generally strives to play one of the pivotal economic roles in the region.**

This approach of the Ukraine is based on the idea that working out a stability system for the region should not result in setting aside the Karabagh issue. This is the reason why we not only encourage the ongoing face-to-face meetings between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan aimed at seeking peace, but also try to act as an active mediator. The Ukraine is ready to take the role of the organizer of both bilateral and multilateral meetings for the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides; the leaders of the Caucasian countries; the representatives of GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova), the Russian Federation, and Armenia. The Ukraine believes that mutual accords, as well as the preparation towards a decision on peace and stability in the South Caucasus can be reached through the organization of multilateral negotiations, in the first instance, through the OSCE.

## Questions and Answers

**-Does the Ukraine have political priorities in the Caucasian region?**

*-It surely does. We shall have to make every effort so that all current questions are solved.*

**-What is your attitude to the Karabagh conflict's settlement in the context of securing both territorial integrity and respect for the right to self-determination?**

*-Negotiations and various meetings are being now held and I am confident and hope that in the end a way out, a solution (to be acceptable both to Armenia and Azerbaijan) will be found. As regards the principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, I think, it is possible to come to an agreement on opinions.*

**-What is your assessment of the future prospects for cooperation within the framework of the CIS countries and the Russia-Belarus Union?**

*-Of course, we are trying to find different approaches that would be in line with our needs. We are working to make the CIS as effective as possible and wish to find solutions, through CIS structures, to difficult problems. However, we have not been very successful. The most important problem the CIS countries are facing is the creation of a free trade zone. If goods do not freely enter from one country into another; if some countries impose high duties on imports and strangle commodity turnover; we can hardly call it cooperation, can we? It is my opinion, and of the Armenian leadership as well, that the establishment of a free trade zone is the main instrument that will make industry work. As to the Russia-Belarus Union, I think this model is acceptable to both of them. As regards the Ukraine, it is looking for another model that would enable it to integrate with Europe and be counted as an equal partner. As you can see, Armenia is also moving in the same direction. There is a kind of competition among the countries as to which one will be integrated within European structures sooner. There is just one point: Europe requests that our standards be a little higher. The Ukraine's*

*approach towards the Russia-Belarus Union is quite positive and we are cooperating with it.*

**-How did the Ukraine solve the issue of energy distributing and telecommunications systems ownership?**

*-I would not like to appraise issues closely related to Armenia, but I will have to say that monopolies should be excluded.*

**-Does the Ukraine favor a mono-polar or multi-polar world?**

*-Of course, we want to cooperate with all countries, but we shall have to proceed from realities and not create models. We have to take realities into account.*

**-Are you now engaged in translations?**

*-Sometimes, when I have free time, I do translations -- with some yearning! Now, I am translating Gregor Zohrab's short stories. I hope there will be time when I shall be more actively engaged in it.*

**-Has the Ukraine undertaken any steps to be compensated for the millions of deaths caused by the artificially created Great Famine of 1933?**

*-Last year, here in Armenia when I gave an interview on April 24, the Genocide Day, I said that many people in Armenia did not know that up to six million people died in the Ukraine from the artificially created famine. I said it so that people would be informed about it, but no one believed me. They asked for proof. I have brought a textbook on the Ukraine's history published in the USA, which contains very valuable information. I must say it was a heavy blow for the people. Thousands were deported to Siberia, Kazakhstan, and other countries. Then there was the war. One can hardly find a family in the Ukraine that did not suffer from all this and we are still feeling the after-effects. I just do not know where one can raise this issue. Chernobyl is the same kind of issue. The nuclear power station was constructed without asking the Ukrainians' permission. It was*

the Ukrainians who suffered most from the reactor's explosion. The state responsible for all this ceased to exist and we do not know who to call to account or ask for compensations. I think the party that has ceased to be the ruling one must be called to account.

**-Are there any international conventions or internal obligations with respect to the victims of Chernobyl?**

-After the collapse of the USSR we have agreed that the new independent states have to contribute to the issue of compensation. We have done a lot in the Ukraine. Thousands of people have been transferred to other settlements, but this does not seem to have settled all the problems. They were used to living in their former native villages and towns, which they regarded as a paradise. There is some compensation, but it is closely linked to the state's possibilities and economy.

**-What is the Ukraine's attitude to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide?**

-I have already said that just as in Armenia few people know about the 1933 famine, so also few people in the Ukraine know about the Armenian Genocide. To make more people aware of the atrocities that occurred at the beginning of the century, we have to teach more actively about the Genocide. We have to make information on it available to millions. Refugees from Western Armenia settled in the Ukraine at the beginning of the 1920s. In Kharkov, there used to be an Armenian theatre and a school.

**-Does the Ukraine have any concerns regarding the expansion of Pan-Turkism?**

-The Ukraine is a multi-national country and various faiths freely function there. Everything is in place for all to profess his or her religion. We are not faced with the problem you mention. If you mean the Crimean Tartars or other Muslims I would not say there are such tendencies among them.

**-The Ukraine is now blockaded, but the economy**

**is in a good state, how can you explain it?**

-There are some positive trends, with socio-economic indicators to prove them. The real GDP growth over the first nine months of this year reached 19%, (last year, a 3% drop was reported). The increase in the volume of industrial production was about 12% (last year, a 1% drop took place). A 25% growth in the sales of consumer goods was also reported. The population's savings in foreign exchange and national currency have increased by 32%. I can provide some additional data proving positive tendencies in all branches of the economy and social life. We have built an aviation plant in Iran, which produces technologically advanced planes. Our production needs markets and we also need to have raw material sources. Gas supplies are coming from Russia at \$70 per 1000 cubic meters, whereas in Russia the price is just \$13-\$15. Russia is making efforts to block the entry of Ukrainian goods into its markets by imposing high duties. As a result, we are losing markets there. We need new production lines and alternative gas pipelines. Blood and a common history closely connect Ukrainians and Russians. In the future Russia, the Ukraine and Armenia must become full-fledged members of the United Europe where unified laws, rights and standards are in effect. This is a long process and we cannot just jump and pass that long road in a minute. We need to have political will and wisdom for it. There is word that the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline may be extended up to the Ukraine and from there to Europe. Now there is another discussion about laying a gas pipeline from Norway and Poland to the Ukraine. Europe is paying special attention to this issue. Armenia has a huge experience in this respect. Let us just recall the times when gas supplies were regularly halted in the early 1990s. To avoid this in the future, Armenia has now decided to construct an alternative gas pipeline. I think every human being must always have alternatives.



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**-and**

**Merry Christmas**

**2001**



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