

US

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Poroshenko receives International Statesman Award

By **Ulana Baluch Mazurkevich**



World Affairs Council of Philadelphia

President Petro Poroshenko with Ulana Mazurkevich and Craig Snyder at the entrance to the Union League in Philadelphia. In the background is Ambassador Valeriy Chaly.

PHILADELPHIA – President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine was honored with the International Statesman Award by the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia. The award ceremony, VIP reception and dinner took place on Wednesday, February 20, at the historic Union League of Philadelphia.

Past recipients of this prestigious award have included Mikhail Gorbachev, Yitzhak Rabin and Anwar Sadat.

President Poroshenko arrived at the Union League accompanied by Valeriy Chaly, Ukraine’s ambassador to the U.S; Volodymyr Yelchenko, permanent representative of Ukraine to the United Nations; Oleksii Holubov, consul general of Ukraine in New York; and Pavlo Klimkin, Ukraine’s minister of foreign Affairs.

The president and his delegation were welcomed on the doorsteps of the stately Union League building by the president of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, Craig Snyder; Kristi Scogna, executive assistant; and Ulana Mazurkevich, president of the Ukrainian Human Rights Committee.

Upon entering the reception area, the president was greeted by the acclaimed Ukrainian mixed choir Accolada under the baton of Bohdan Henhalo, singing, “O God, Grant Many Blessed Years” and “God Bless America.”

The award reception was opened with the singing of the Ukrainian national anthem by Sofiya Pitula and the American anthem by Yuliya Stupen.

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The Ukrainian choir Accolada with the president of Ukraine.

In welcoming the president of Ukraine, Mr. Snyder also acknowledged the presence of Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), who sits on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and is co-chair of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus.

Mr. Snyder spoke about the mission of the World Affairs Council, which was established in 1949, weeks after the creation of NATO, in hopes of preventing future world wars. Mr. Snyder also issued a stark warning that “nothing in human affairs is permanent, and we all know that the international order born after World War II is today under great stress, and quite perhaps, on its last leg.”

Mr. Snyder continued: “On the frontlines of these seismic events are the people of Ukraine... the leading edge of history has become a familiar, if not comfortable, reality for Ukrainians several times during the last century.” He further noted: “Ukraine has stood as a nation under assault by conventional and unconventional means, fighting against the first acts of foreign aggression.” Mr. Snyder then briefly spoke about the Holodomor, the Revolution of Dignity and about the Heavenly Hundred.

In presenting the award to President Poroshenko, Mr. Snyder stated: “President Poroshenko has led and is leading his country as it seeks to defend itself and to defend ideals America has long declared to be universal truths, against subversion and outright invasion.” He continued: “He is fighting a fight in a direct line of descent from the fight of America’s founders, here in Philadelphia, for national independence and popular sovereignty.”

In bestowing the award, Mr. Snyder stated: “In recognition of this valiant and vital work by President Poroshenko and the Ukrainian people, it is my high honor and personal privilege to present to President Poroshenko the International Statesman Award of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.”

Accepting the award, President Poroshenko thanked Mr. Snyder and the World Affairs Council saying that he considers the award an acknowledgement of joint efforts and the recognition of the progress that the Ukrainian nation has made. He went on to note that the award is a symbol of unity and solidarity with Ukraine, and spoke about the Heavenly Hundred and the Revolution of Dignity. He then referred to the words of President Abraham Lincoln: “Our task is to ensure that those dead, those who gave their lives, so that we might live free, shall not have died in vain.”

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The Ukrainian president highlighted the threat from the Kremlin, saying “the hand that manipulated the previous regime keeps on stretching its claws to our throats.” Mr. Poroshenko also spoke about the Holodomor and the Kremlin’s total disregard for human life, about Crimea as an occupied territory, and about the Crimean Tatars and Russia’s prisoners of war. He said that in today’s globalized world the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine is a challenge not only to Ukraine but to all democratic communities.



At dinner (from left) are: Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, President Petro Poroshenko, Craig Snyder, Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin and Ulana Mazurkevich.

President Poroshenko then thanked the United States for standing “shoulder to shoulder with us.” He expressed his gratitude to the U.S. Congress for passing a bipartisan resolution commemorating the Holodomor and recognizing it as a genocide. He thanked the Philadelphia Holodomor Committee for getting the City of Philadelphia to recognize the Holodomor as genocide of the Ukrainian people.

He concluded his remarks by stating, “It is absolutely true that peace and freedom are twin goals... It is our noble mission to achieve lasting peace through the support of freedom.”

After Mr. Poroshenko’s remarks, Mr. Snyder thanked Ms. Mazurkevich and her Ukrainian Human Rights Committee for many years of collaboration and called upon her to raise a toast to the president of Ukraine.

In her toast, Ms. Mazurkevich exclaimed: “You, Mr. President, took up the ideals of the Revolution of Dignity, ...you stood up to lies, to intimidation, to the Russian aggressor. We stood with you. ...We rallied, we demonstrated, we called upon the U.S. Congress to hear your pleas.”

Then, raising her glass, Ms. Mazurkevich declared: “To President Poroshenko, a true international statesman.”

After dinner, when the president and his delegation were ready to depart, Mr. Poroshenko commented to the attendees that it was truly a wonderful and warm event and that he felt he was part of a large family He promised to return to Philadelphia.

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Many of the attendees – members of the Philadelphia diplomatic corps, and major donors to the World Affairs Council – said they were impressed with President Poroshenko’s remarks, which were delivered in flawless English. The evening, one attendee commented, “was sheer

perfection.”

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