



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Karlo Mankiwskyj (from left), Jerry Andrushko and Mary Andrushko listen to a speech by Guennadi Oudovenko, Ukrainian ambassador to the United Nations, during a reception at Rochester's City Hall. The Dec. 8 event celebrated Ukrainian independence.

## Local Ukrainians mark freedom

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The local Ukrainian community marked Ukrainian independence with a series of events surrounding the visit of Ukraine's United Nations Ambassador, Guennadi Oudovenko, to Rochester Dec. 7-9.

Those events included a reception attended by approximately 300 Ukrainian-Americans at Rochester's City Hall Dec. 8. Oudovenko also toured Ukrainian churches and organizations, attended a Dec. 8 concert by St. Josaphat's School students, and was the featured speaker at a noon luncheon Dec. 9 at the University Club of Rochester.

Oudovenko's visit marked the first time that the Ambassador had traveled beyond the New York City area, according to Marta Shmigel, one of the organizers of the City Hall celebration.

The visit came just one week after the people of Ukraine voted overwhelmingly for independence in a Dec. 1 referendum. That referendum confirmed a declaration of independence made by the Ukrainian government Aug. 24, Shmigel said.

The visit also coincided with a decision Dec. 8 by the governments of Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Russia to form a "Commonwealth of Independent States" — essentially dissolving the former Soviet Union.

In a communique released Dec. 8, the leaders of the three republics declared, "As founding states of the U.S.S.R. ... we declare that the U.S.S.R. is ceasing to exist as a subject of international law and a geopolitical real-



Canandaigua resident Mylosiva Salisnjak, M.D., reacts tearfully to the singing of the Ukrainian national anthem.

ity." Shmigel, a St. Josaphat's parishioner who was voted Ukrainian Woman of the Year in 1991 by the Ukrainian-American Business and Professional Association of Rochester, noted that independence had been in the works for many years. But, she said, Ukrainians had to pursue a more cautious path than the residents of the three Baltic republics — Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — which declared inde-

pendence in late August.

"Ukraine chose the more cautious route for the single reason we've been under Russian control longer than the Baltics," observed Shmigel, who has visited Ukraine four times in the last year.

During centuries of Russian domination — and especially under Soviet control — the Ukrainian language, culture and literature were forbidden under a policy known as 'Russification.'

Shmigel pointed to RUKH — an international movement for Ukrainian independence of which she is a member of the organization's national board of directors — as one group that has been working for independence.

In July, Shmigel said, the organization created a press information bureau in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, to provide a non-Soviet source of information about what was happening in Ukraine.

In preparation for the Dec. 1 referendum, the organization had sent over a printing press to help disseminate information about the independence proposal. The organization has also begun sending over computers and other equipment, purchased through donations from Ukrainian communities in the United States and Canada — including Rochester.

Nevertheless, Shmigel said, Ukraine faces a number of problems — especially economic uncertainties.

"If the people do not see a very real change in a relatively short time, if they don't have food on the table and relatively stable prices, then there is going to be a very real problem for the



Oudovenko toured Ukrainian churches and organizations in the area, and attended a Dec. 8 concert by students at St. Josaphat's School.

Ukrainian Parliament," Shmigel said.

Thus Ukraine will need international aid in the coming months, she noted, adding — in an interview before the announcement of the Commonwealth — that the republics, too, will have to cooperate.

One of the fears is that in an independent Ukraine tensions might arrive due to the various ethnic and religious groups in the nation, Shmigel said. She noted, however, that Ukrainians were aware of possible problems and would seek to avoid outburst of bigotry. She added that RUKH was comprised of Catholics, Orthodox, Jewish, and Russian Ukrainians.

In an interview Dec. 2 with the Catholic News Service, Oudovenko said church leaders in Ukraine will have to work together to create religious tolerance the country. He also said that the rights of minorities will be maintained as well.

"What we are going to do in democratic Ukraine is observe very strictly the rights of ethnic minorities," Oudovenko said. "We do not want to force 'Ukrainianization' as was done to us when we were forcibly Russified."

Shmigel noted that the Rochester celebrations were among the first in the nation. But they won't be the last, she added.

"I think there are going to be many victory parties across the United States," she predicted.

This article contains information from Catholic News Service.

## City students debate possible condom distribution

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Not many years ago, condoms were considered only as a method of birth control.

But the spread of the AIDS virus changed all that. And since Magic Johnson's November announcement that he had tested HIV-positive, the word "condom" has appeared in more news stories than ever before.

Responding to fear of the AIDS virus, high schools in New York City began distributing condoms to their students last month. In June of this year, Monroe County Health Director Dr. Andrew Doniger proposed that the Rochester City School District adopt a plan similar to the one being used in New York.

An open forum at East High School Wednesday, Dec. 4, gave city school students an opportunity to discuss their feelings about the prospect of local condom distribution.

The daylong session was conducted by Rudy Rivera, manager of the Adolescent Resource Network/AIDS Education Program sponsored by Action for a Better Community.

"I think something like this was long overdue," Rivera said in an interview with the *Catholic Courier*. "I've seen the AIDS epidemic move right into our youth population here."

The event did not promote promiscuity, and Rivera emphasized repeatedly that the best way to prevent AIDS is to abstain from sexual activity.

Yet he acknowledged that the best way may not be the most popular way among teens. "Contrary to what people want to believe, young people are having sex," Rivera said. "I wish it were so easy to tell them not to."

Most of the approximately 60 students attending the forum were female. And most of those who spoke up favored free distribution of condoms in their schools.

The bulk of discussion at the forum

centered on ways in which schools might distribute the condoms.

One teenage speaker proposed a course to educate children on condoms and on AIDS itself. Following such a course, she said, condoms should be placed in bathrooms "instead of having to ask a teacher or nurse for them because that can be very embarrassing."

Another student, who didn't agree with having condoms in the schools, asked, "If you can pick them up free elsewhere, why go to a school for them?"

According to Rivera, teenagers and others can obtain free condoms at more than 60 health centers around Rochester.

Rivera plans to conduct similar discussions at other city schools in the upcoming months, and he said he hopes other Monroe County schools will follow suit.

"I think, if nothing else, we'd like to

create recognition of the magnitude of the problem in our community. I don't know if condom distribution is the total point as much as the fact that young people are becoming HIV-positive," said Rivera.

Rivera, who is Catholic, acknowledged that any proposal that appears to promote contraceptives will meet with opposition from the Catholic Church.

"They're going to look at me as someone who's probably not a Catholic in good standing," he said. "But on the flip side, while we do promote the abstinence message, I also feel compelled to promote the message about safe sex for those who don't abstain."

In June, 1991, the Diocese of Rochester issued a statement on proposals to distribute condoms in the schools. The statement opposed such proposals and reaffirmed Catholic teachings that youths should "abstain from non-marital sex."