



# CANADA JOINS UKRAINE'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

by Marta Dyczok, Special to the Monitor



PHOTOS: SERHIY DOLZHENKO

President Kuchma opens the festivities at a gala concert at the Ukraina Palace.

Ukraine's fifth anniversary of independence was celebrated in grand style. President Leonid Kuchma proclaimed, "Ukraine exists and Ukraine is here to stay!" [Ukraina ie, Ukraina bude, vidnyni i nazavzhdy!]

Events catering to all tastes were held throughout the weekend. Festivities began on August 23rd with a ceremonial meeting and gala concert at Kyiv's newly renovated Palace of Ukraine. President Leonid Kuchma, Members of Parliament, the Government, Ukraine's olympic champions, international dignitaries and special guests mingled in the glittering concert hall, sipping champagne and exchanging best wishes. Representing Canada was the Honourable Gildas Molgat, Speaker of the Senate, who travelled to Kyiv with his wife to mark the special date in Ukraine's history.

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Governor General Roméo LeBlanc, Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy and Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine, Christopher Westdal, sent greetings to Ukrainian leaders congratulating them on their Fifth Independence Day. "Canada is proud to have supported Ukraine's transformation since gaining independence," wrote Mr. Axworthy. "We are pleased to celebrate Ukraine's fifth anniversary of independence and its success in implementing its political and economic reform.

Canada looks forward to an even closer relationship with Ukraine in the years ahead."

As the first Western country to have recognized Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991, Canada enjoys a special relationship with Ukraine. Senator Molgat's visit was filled with activities aimed at further developing Canadian-Ukrainian links.

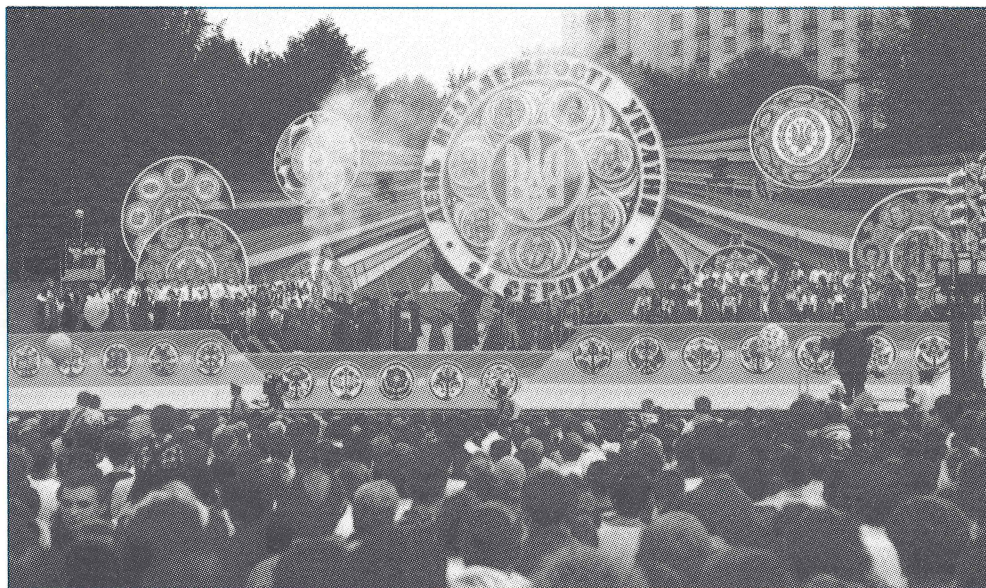
In the country's capital city Kyiv, adorned for the holiday with banners, flowers and flags, his schedule included formal meetings with President Kuchma, the Speaker of Ukraine's Parliament, Oleksandr Moroz, and Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko.

During the meeting between the Canadian and Ukrainian Speakers on August 23rd, Senator Molgat noted that "there is a practical possibility to establish closer cooperation" between the lawmakers of the two nations. His Ukrainian counterpart,



Celebrations in Kyiv's Independence Square.

Mr. Moroz, agreed and said he was in favour of more active cooperation in the field of organization of activities of joint inter-parliamentary groups.



Pomp and splendour befitting the occasion.