



numbering more than 826,000. The government wants to reduce that number to 400,000 by 1995, and then to 220,000 by the year 2000. Cutting the army at that rate could cause a lot of social tension as the soldiers return home without jobs to a weak economy.

In response, the International Renaissance Foundation has sponsored a program to retrain discharged military officers. The program had a budget of \$1.8 million for 1994 and has received comparable funding in 1995. The program, established in 1993, is run by Gennady Aksionov, a retired colonel.

"Part of the problem is to retrain these military service-men with new labour skills," said Aksionov. "But an even tougher problem is teaching them to adjust psychologically to civilian life." Fifteen to 20 percent of the men in the program seek psychological counseling, he added.

The program has already placed 1,000 military men in both the state and private sectors; 5,000 have completed the program, and Aksionov estimates that 60,000 will have benefited from the program by the end of 1995.

TEACHER TRAINING

Olena Sichkar is the foundation's coordinator for the regional Health Education Program, which retrains grade-school teachers to help them educate students on the importance of a healthy life style, and to discover a new teacher-student relationship.

"We offer workshops for teachers on AIDS education, on the hazards of smoking and drinking, on psychology, biology, and ecology," explained Sichkar, who coordinates seminars for teachers throughout Ukraine. The program has trained over 300 teachers, who in turn have passed their knowledge along to more than 10,000 students.

"And, I've noticed that teachers in their 30s, 40s, and 50s also learn about themselves at our seminars. You know, we never discussed human sexuality in our classrooms," she added. "After all, there was no sex in the Soviet Union," piped in a colleague recalling a 1990 Vladimir Pozner/Phil Donahue show, where a Soviet citizen made that absurd declaration.

Traditionally, the IRF has concentrated on education and research projects, including a strong English-language program (it funds three International Houses in Ukraine), a management training program, the military

retraining program, and a variety of independent media projects. Currently, however, the emphasis seems to be on youth programs.

"We want to influence the processes which form an individual as soon as possible," said Bohdan Budzan, the 50-year old director of the foundation in Kyiv. "The sooner you start, the better your chances are to create an open society,"

"Youth programs have a very big impact," said one program coordinator. "They give a big bang for the buck."

"You have kids who write their own projects. You give them \$500 to \$1,000 and that's when you see eyes opening up, attitudes changing, because these teenagers are still impressionable," added Trylowsky.

"But, by no means do we want to cast aside any segment of our population," said Budzan. "All 53 million of Ukraine's people are the human resources of this nation. We're out to prove that by working toward an open society, we can guarantee people here a better life. But we want to

talents and then give something back to society."

"The foundation recognizes that Ukraine can be seen as a strategic geopolitical force in the world which can become a stabilizing force in the area," Budzan said. "It is this kind of understanding that has been an inspiration to some of the foundation's grantees."

"The IRF was the first foundation in Ukraine, and this was a challenge to me," explained Ilko Kucheriv, 39, director of Democratic Initiatives, an independent research and polling center whose projects are now supported by a variety of non-profit organizations.

Designed to issue grants on a competitive basis, the IRF has proven to individuals that they can fulfill their ambitions by having a bit of initiative and the desire to work. "We're breaking down barriers. There is a realization that you don't have to know the director of a school, or be connected to a party official, or pay a bribe to get ahead," said Nick Deychakiwsky, 35, the deputy director of the IRF. "Here, on the basis of objective criteria and competition vis-a-vis other grant proposals people can see their dreams come true."

"Although the money comes from the West, we are not a typical western donor organization," said Deychakiwsky, an American who worked for three years at other Soros-funded organizations in Ukraine before being tapped as deputy director of the IRF.

"We have a policy of accepting grant applications only from Ukrainian citizens or organizations. And although we encourage cooperation with Western organizations, it is the Ukrainians themselves who are the ones to decide what programs they need. That is the strength of our foundation," Deychakiwsky, explained.

In 1992, the Soros Foundation gave Ukraine roughly \$1.5 million. For the 1994 fiscal year, approximately \$15 million was disbursed. "I guess it means we're doing things right," Trylowsky said. "And who could ask for a better job? I get paid to help people."

Extracts of article from OPEN SOCIETY NEWS: The Soros Foundations. Marta Kolomayetz is a freelance journalist based in Kyiv.



*IRF Directors visit Ottawa.
L-r: Oleksander Sofii, Exec. Dir., Lviv Region,
Dr. Bohdan Budzan, Exec. Dir. for Ukraine, and
Andrij Hluchowewy, Editor, C-U Monitor.*

prove this by our actions, not just in words."

THE SOROS PHILOSOPHY

Budzan, who had the opportunity to train in the West when he attended the London Business School in 1989, wants others to have similar opportunities. "We invest in people," he said. "Perhaps the creation of a truly open society is an unattainable dream, but along the path to that dream, we can do a lot of good. We can teach people to live up to their potential to develop their