

**Yalta European Seminar
July, 2nd 2004**

Introduction, by Victor Pinchuk

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

I would first like to sincerely and warmly thank you for having accepted the invitation to the YES seminar.

I know that you share with me the pleasure of being at the Livadia Palace in Yalta, in the same room where the famous Yalta Agreements that shaped the 20th century were signed.

To open this seminar, I would like to frankly answer three very simple questions, which many of you have considered.

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First question: why this initiative?

Because I think that it is in my country's best interest.

I belong to an exceptional generation. Old enough to have known the world before the fall of the Berlin wall. Young enough to be able to fully participate in building the future.

I also belong to an exceptional country, a country that is born and truly independent for the first time in its long history.

I am therefore able – and it is rare for this to take place in a man's life – to take part in an extraordinary adventure: not only building my country's future but also building my country.

I am obviously not alone in this position. However, I am one of the few, who can take the initiative to organize a seminar such as the one for which we have gathered today.

Saying this, I am not only thinking of material resources. I am thinking of something else: thanks to my professional activities, I am permanently in contact with the countries of the European Union, with Russia and with the United States.

I am fully aware of the importance, for Ukraine, of the bonds that it will succeed in forging with the other countries, of its image, and of the reforms that it must undertake.

This is another reason why I am happy to be here with you.

I told you I was going to speak frankly. I will therefore continue to do so. Some have wondered about the deeper meaning of my approach.

There is no connection with the fall elections – that is why I insisted for the seminar to be held at the beginning of July and not in September.

There is, in fact, no connection with domestic policy: I clearly stated my personal intentions and I wish to devote myself to my undertaking.

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Second question: why bring us together, at this point, to discuss the European Union's new borders and partnership strategy with its neighbors?

Because I know that this is a critical issue.

I have the feeling that we are at a key point in time.

This is true for the European Union. There was the May 1st enlargement. There is the future enlargement to include Bulgaria and Rumania. There is the fall debate on negotiations with Turkey. The European Union is examining, perhaps for the first time, the issue of its final frontiers.

However, Ukraine too is at a key point in time. It is about to enter a new political phase. It is regaining economic growth. Ours is a large country due to size and population, with important assets but also great difficulties. Ukraine is examining the question of its development model.

On Europe's side, we have the risk of 'glaciation'. On Ukraine's side, there exists the risk of disappointment. I want to avert these two risks.

Hence the two round tables of this seminar, concentrating on a single theme:

- the first focusing on the short term and the new partnership, which can be initiated between Europe and Ukraine;
- the second, which opens onto the medium term and the possibility of Ukraine's integration into the European Union.

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Third question: why organize this seminar in this form and with you?

I told you that I believe this to be a critical question.

Well, I have no answer to it.

I know that I will not find it alone.

We represent a great diversity - a diversity of countries, experiences and professions.

I believe that this diversity provides a wealth that can help us.

In order to make sure that discussions are informal, open and free, I propose the following rules:

There will be no cameras filming our progress.

Similarly, we will have no statements attributed to their authors in articles that some of you may write about this seminar.

There will only be interviews, for those who agree, outside the seminar room.

I will now leave the floor to Stephen Byers, who will lead the first round table. I hope that you will all enjoy this seminar.

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