

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In an advertising supplement to the Post's September 28 issue, the distinguished Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko presented the Ukrainian Danube Waterway project currently under construction to link the Danube Delta with the Black Sea. The piece left out, however, some key facts:

The Ukrainian authorities launched construction work without prior consultation with the Romanian neighbors along Chilia (Kilia) Branch of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, which forms the border between Ukraine and Romania. Furthermore, Ukraine has planted an array of buoys inside Romania's territorial waters, in violation of Romania's sovereignty and border inviolability. The project involves digging within the channel, with military might on display. The diplomatic demarches of Romanian authorities have been left unanswered by Ukrainian counterparts. Inviolability of borders is a principle that Romania takes very seriously as a sovereign country, responsible US ally and NATO member. This situation is as if the U.S. America's neighbor Canada would start digging in the St. Lawrence River in the marvelous 1000 Islands area, and planting buoys in American territorial waters, without even consulting with or responding to U.S. authorities.

The article also failed to mention that, along with Romania, specialized international organizations as the Danube Commission, UNESCO, World Conservation Union, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, have all urged Ukraine to stop construction work, pending completion of a study on this project's ecological impact on the Danube Delta's unique natural habitat, and to consult with Romania and in a spirit of good-neighborliness.

In an August 23 statement (following up on a previous one), the State Department expressed the United States' "deep concern over this project and over Ukraine's failure to meet its obligations under various international agreements.... The United States remains deeply concerned about the environmental impact of this construction project as well as by the Ukrainian Government's unresponsiveness to its treaty obligations and to the positions stated by other countries and the international organizations. We continue to urge it to ensure that this very important wetland area and ecologically sensitive resource be fully protected and preserved".

Romania and Ukraine share a common responsibility for the region's stability and welfare. They are partners in numerous regional and international organizations and projects. We have consistently pursued a good-neighbor relationship and we fully support Ukraine's European and Trans-Atlantic aspirations. It is in this spirit of responsibility, mutual respect and friendship that Romania understands to promote its good neighborliness relations with Ukraine. Romania's friendly and responsible attitude should not be, however, misinterpreted, nor should its deep respect for territorial inviolability and international legality be underrated. We therefore urge our Ukrainian neighbors that any further action on this border project should only be pursued on the basis of bilateral consultation and agreement, with the full observance of international law.