
Interview: Taras Chornovil

'LaRouche played important role for us Ukrainians' seeking freedom

Taras Chornovil is a 27-year-old leader of the democratic movement in Ukraine. He is the editor of the youth newspaper Molodaya Ukraina in the capital city of western Ukraine, Lviv [Lvov]. His father, Vyecheslav Chornovil is one of the most famous political prisoners in Ukraine, having been imprisoned on and off for about 15 years—first in 1967, then during 1967-69, 1972-79, and 1980-85. In between prison sentences he edited The Ukrainian Herald, an underground (samvydav) journal. In 1988 he became one of the founders of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union and in the elections in March 1990 was elected People's Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine and to the Lviv Oblast Council of which he is chairman. Last October, Taras Chornovil traveled to Canada to speak on behalf of the Ukrainian freedom movement. This interview was conducted at that time by Irene Beaudry and has been translated from Ukrainian.

EIR: Your father, Vyecheslav Chornovil, is a very well-known Ukrainian political dissident who was sentenced to 15 years of internment. What motivated you to follow in your father's footsteps and become active in the political life of Ukraine?

Chornovil: How can I answer you? To begin with, I was very well informed about the history of Ukraine, about the oppression first under Stalin and continued through, and past, the Brezhnev dictatorship. Nothing was a revelation to me. I knew what was happening. I felt a moral necessity compelling me to stand up against the regime. Not only I, but many other children of dissidents, felt the need to resist. Firstly, knowing the crimes committed against us, and secondly, I really had no other choice considering that until 1986 the road to higher education was blocked for me by the regime. That, among other reasons, forced me into political activity.

EIR: Here in the U.S.A., there too are political prisoners. One in particular is Lyndon LaRouche. He is the author of the Strategic Defense Initiative. To what extent were people or the media in either Ukraine or the U.S.S.R. aware of the SDI? And had you personally ever heard of LaRouche?

Chornovil: Yes, I have indeed heard of the name thanks in particular to the press of the Soviet Union. And to the degree that the Soviet press covered primarily major developments of the West, such as the SDI program, then the name of

Lyndon LaRouche was portrayed in a severely negative light. We, however, have learned to read between the lines of the official press and understood that if the name of a political dissident is caricatured in such a very negative way, then the individual must have serious political views.

If I remember correctly, Lyndon LaRouche's SDI program played a very significant role in the earlier years of the Reagan government in providing strong pressure on the Soviet Union and in providing the opportunity for the countries of Eastern Europe to escape from the military boot of the Soviet Union and become democratic nations. The strength that the SDI provided the United States caused many important changes in the Soviet Union. I don't think that the start of the democratic process in the Soviet Union was the result of Gorbachov's initiatives. He was forced to come to terms with the West. I also view the SDI program as contributing to the strength of the United States at the time.

However, the deviation from the SDI doctrine in the second term of the Reagan government caused a shift. Gorbachov, who was used to talking from a position of strength, or for others to regard him in a position of strength, started carrying out a different kind of politics. And the processes which started in the first years of Gorbachov's rule became stronger. I think that if people in the West view Lyndon LaRouche literally as a political dissident, then it is very sad, because he played an important role in international politics at the time for us Ukrainians. Perhaps the West cannot fully appreciate the impact the doctrine had on us.

EIR: What about the referendum to take place in 1991? We hear that Moscow won't allow it to be an expression of free choice in Ukraine.

Chornovil: The upcoming elections to the Ukrainian Parliament shall also include a referendum. Personally, I do not feel that we are thoroughly prepared for it, and the date may have to be moved back a little. Do not misunderstand me: The people are ready, but the rules, the guidelines, especially a comprehensive long-range program, in all its details, need more work. As things are now, Moscow's laws for our referendum are designed to allow the artificial creation of results, obviously favoring Moscow's plans. Naturally, such manipulative rules are not acceptable to the Ukrainian political body and present Ukrainian Parliament. I feel that, even if

the date is set for the end of 1991, Ukrainians are determined to express their will, even when they have to resort to strikes and demonstrations. The conditions in Ukraine can be compared to those prevailing last year in Eastern Europe, particularly in Czechoslovakia. We call their revolution a "tender" one. There are, however, some differences. At the present time we do not have a Ukrainian army stationed on our soil, even though there are over 1 million Ukrainian soldiers serving in the Soviet motherland. It would not be difficult for Moscow to stage some kind of incident or conflict like the Azerbaidzhan-Armenian situation, bring in distant military reinforcements with unfriendly attitudes, and eliminate the more educated and politically mature levels of the Ukrainian population by execution, imprisonment, or resettlement to distant corners of the Soviet Union, thereby eliminating a potential threat of separation of the second largest and the richest republic in the Soviet Union. I should like to underline the fact that presently in Ukraine, the accent is on strikes and civil disobedience. All in the spirit of manifesting national will through the old established democratic process of self-expression and self-determination. The drive for independence and sovereignty is gaining momentum and the people's will to choose democracy over the dictatorship of communism is becoming increasingly stronger.

EIR: How seriously are Rukh and other pro-democratic groups approaching the economic situation in Ukraine? How do you view recent events in Germany, particularly discussions on constructing a high-speed rail system to link into Ukraine and other regions in the East?

Chornovil: We are pleased with the fact that currently in Ukraine there exists a very deep understanding of our economic situation. When the political uprising began in recent years, it did get a clear political focus. Luckily, however, we were able to make use of many individual initiatives and resources to put forth many serious economic doctrines. And today, although these doctrines are not yet fully developed, they are sufficiently well formulated to show their viability even at the level of the Supreme Soviet and the Communist government. Now when opportunities have been created through the election victories by pro-democratic forces in various provinces (*rayons*) especially in western Ukraine, provincial councils realized that after the positive results of political change there has come a time to seriously contemplate economic changes as well.

For example, in the provincial council of Lviv, whereas the first session was totally political, the second session was totally preoccupied with economic debate. We started a dismantling of socialistic economics and began considering economic alternatives which were much closer to the various Western types, including agricultural reforms, privatization of grain production, privatization of land ownership, privatization of small-scale entrepreneurship which would lead to the privatization of large-scale businesses. Unfortunately,

the success to date has been limited to only some sessions. To carry this out on a full economic scale throughout Ukraine has been difficult because of the limitations imposed by the contrary interests of a centralized Moscow. In Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, decisions of the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine up to now have had the position of not opposing the Moscow government. But even with such a situation, due to Moscow's inability to carry out a normal course of development toward an economic trading system, Kiev is being forced to take severe and concrete steps on its own. Serious consideration is being given to a new financial system. The thinking is far from complete, but in some ways it can be the forerunner to the creation of a banking system with a foreign exchange in Ukraine, with the creation of a new Ukrainian currency. These recently issued, so-called coupons in Ukraine, which are to slowly eliminate the dominance of the central Moscow ruble and to replace it with a future Ukrainian currency: They are not based on gold or on any elementary economic potential, but this is a first step and seems to me a very timely step. I would add that Kiev took these steps a week after similar initiatives were undertaken in Lviv. Thus we see that where pro-democratic forces have been elected, even though they still cannot exercise a national full-scale effort, they can play a very important role as initiators of serious economic reforms.

With respect to what is happening in Germany, the reunification of Germany for us is a very interesting and intriguing event. We never anticipated such a fast political resolution, and the fact that it occurred so quickly was a very pleasant surprise. We are counting on a realistic and strong Germany in the future and mutually beneficial cooperation between Germany and a future independent Ukrainian nation, although to talk about an independent Ukraine now is difficult, for although Ukraine has been a member of the United Nations, unfortunately, this has only been a symbolic sovereignty. When the vertical ties with the central economic command structure of Moscow end, we will be able to choose by ourselves with whom we wish to conduct economic trade and exchange.

If there are economic advantages to trade with the West, then so be it. Especially with Germany, where there is a very, very realistic opportunity. Germany is now at the forefront of economic activity in Europe as is Ukraine within the Soviet Union. The world forgets that Ukraine has a population of more than 50 million people who know how to work, want to work, and haven't forgotten their love of humanity. Thus, I think that economic cooperation between Germany in Western Europe and Ukraine in Eastern Europe could be a good and positive factor in our time.

With respect to foreign capital investment, we, as Ukrainians, are not counting on it. We see that, politically, Western countries are interested in propping up and preserving the Soviet Union. We can understand, in principle, that for objective reasons, it is easier for the West to have dealings

with one large, but weaker nation, than with many young nations that are just beginning to establish their economic mechanisms and political directions, and that are not yet inherently stable, and with which one has to reorient one's economic and political dealings. Therefore, until the breakup of the Soviet Union becomes a final reality, the West will not be seriously supporting the young republics. This is very sad, but we are prepared for it. Looking further into the future, as the economic conditions in Ukraine become more severe and a general strike becomes unavoidable, the economy will reach a crisis. To survive this crisis, Ukraine will require more than one year. When the Soviet Union no longer exists, and Ukraine's development begins to help her get on her own feet, then the opportunities will be ripe for foreign investment.

EIR: Why do you say that Ukraine is not expecting Western capital in the short term?

Chornovil: My thought here is that the West is continuing to support the structure that continues to fall apart. The West continues to support the Soviet Union. This is not just moral support but also includes monetary support for Gorbachov's monopoly. It includes the creation of joint ventures and businesses. I am convinced that to invest into that which is falling apart is very short-sighted.

With respect to Ukraine itself, I don't think the West will be very interested in throwing money into a country which continues to have a tendency for a more severe depression. We, in fact, have a depression now and there is a very strong possibility that it will worsen. Obviously this will take time. From a strictly economic consideration, the significant economic aid will only come to Ukraine when we ourselves become more economically stable. No one wants to throw money into the wind. Nevertheless, if the political thinking in the upper echelons of the United States, Canada, and other Western countries is able to overcome the tendency to artificially support the Soviet Union, which has run its course and shown its lack of, not only political, but economic viability, then we would anticipate more likely, though not large, financial support from the budgeted government funds of Western countries. We have seen such examples of aid to the Eastern European countries which assisted in stabilizing their economies.

EIR: Despite the terrible economic hardships in Ukraine, what is the mood of the people? Are they hopeful?

Chornovil: The prevailing atmosphere is of a high optimism and a high degree of accomplishment when compared to the dictatorial oppression throughout and after Brezhnev's reign. Much has been achieved, and everybody works very hard, but we have no illusions and we know that it is far too early to celebrate victory. There is much danger and much fear of the return to oppression and persecution. However, our anticipation is that should the process continue developing at

the pace of the immediate past, barring any sudden return to a Stalinist slave-style rule, a full autonomy and independence could be achieved in a year or so. Obviously, we cannot count on the democratization process taking hold in Ukraine within the structure of the Soviet Union, and a number of possible and foreseeable developments could put the brakes on the wheels of the Ukrainian drive to independence.

One powerful factor working against the historical, moral, and politically justified movement toward freedom, self-determination, will of the people, and sovereignty, not only of Ukraine but of other conquered republics as well, is the naive and immature insistence of the Western powers to support the Kremlin and the present party apparatus, which by the way, is kept in line primarily by the KGB and secondarily by the threat of the military. I know they support Gorbachov and his perestroika, glasnost, and political reforms. They feel that if he is replaced, someone more dangerous would take over. But why is it so difficult for Western politicians to comprehend that the President, general secretary, or whatever other titles are yet to be chosen in the future, are only figureheads? The law is the party's ideology and overall, long-range plan for the world order.

Yes, the means and the methods are modified as the international conditions may require. But the plan of the party does not change, neither does the emblem: hammer and sickle superimposed on the globe. However, as long as Gorbachov remains in his position, and continued immense Western economic support may prolong it, for how long—nobody knows—internal disintegration and the collapse of the economy will continue. The old guard of apparatchiks will see to it. They will provide an excuse for a number of internal measures to be taken, beneficial for the few and nightmarish for the rest of the population. Much money and effort go into internal propaganda, trying to convince the population of the Soviet Union how much the West likes Gorbachov's plans and changes. It works for a while. But reality paints a different picture. Our eyes cannot be deceived for long. We witness first hand the events within the Soviet Union. We are not blind. We are convinced that the worsening of the economic-political conditions will continue, whether Gorbachov remains in power or not.

We know that only an independent Ukraine will be able to return prosperity and a balanced peaceful life to our citizens. We see how much we have evolved, how mature we became, how much more aware of our needs, our rights, and our destiny we are becoming, how much more informed and educated we are, and how politically determined and disciplined we have resolved to become. Radical change now could and very likely would lead to bloodshed. Gradual steady movement toward free thought, continued education to strengthen the spirit of democratic ideals, and permeate the souls and hearts with the vision of more peaceful and independent tomorrow, would bring about the inevitable with less sacrifice, agony, suffering, and pain.