

---

## Interview: Vladimir B. Bakumenko

---

# Kharkov deputy discusses outlook for Ukraine on eve of national elections

*Mr. Bakumenko is the vice president for the production and trade concern Dvizhene. He is also a leading member of Rukh, the Ukrainian national movement, a member of the recently founded Ukrainian Republican Party, and has been elected as People's Deputy of Kharkov Oblast (regional) Council and to the Kharkov City Council. He was interviewed by Luba George in Kharkov.*

**EIR:** Could you give us your own recollections, as one of the leaders of the anti-coup resistance in Kharkov, of what it was like in your city when the news of the August coup was broadcast?

**Bakumenko:** On Aug. 18, I returned from the south that night and on the morning of Aug. 19, I heard the announcement on the Ukrainian radio and television that, in Ukraine, the so-called State Committee for the Emergency had seized power. It became immediately obvious that what had been expected for some time—that an armed putsch would try to take power—was now taking place. The junta took power and all of us who had been involved in the democratic process and movements realized it would not be easy to survive under their rule. In the morning, I ran to the city council, together with several other deputies, including Henryk Oganyan, a man not only known here in Ukraine. There, we met with the head of the council, Yevgeni Kushnar. We discussed and planned what to do at this time. When I passed by the Communist Party Oblast Committee (Obkom) building, the people who worked there greeted each other, with smiles and happiness written on their faces. They opened their windows and doors, because, up until this time, they were always being picketed by the residents of Kharkov. Such happiness, congratulating each other. . . .

The city council members proceeded to Feliks Dzerzhinsky Square (that's what it still was called), on the way to the City Council Building, to see if the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag, which was flying before the putsch, were still there. Our flag was still there, but on Aug. 20, an emergency session of the Main Council took place, and when the deputies returned to the building this time, we were prevented from entering. So, we went to the so-called political education building, which belonged to the Obkom. There was a row of militiamen who prevented us from entering, shouting at us

that our time had passed. The militia used all kinds of abusive language, telling us, "We're going to tear out your tongues for using your \*\*\* language"—that's what they call our Ukrainian language. . . .

More than 50 of us deputies then held our own session. I took the decision to have a meeting of the democratic deputies. We appealed to the people of the city of Kharkov and of Kharkov Oblast (region), and other regions. We printed an appeal, using our, so to speak, underground press, and distributed it throughout Kharkov. Many of us didn't sleep in our homes, thinking arrest could happen any minute. . . .

As early as Aug. 19, we were in the square, talking to people, although such gatherings had been banned by the putschists in Moscow. From Aug. 20-21, no fewer than 15,000 people were on the streets at any time, from morning to night, and through the night, at times tens of thousands. We defied Moscow, and held a session of the city council.

In Ukraine, the Communist Party supported the putsch; not only supported it, they were its organizers. I was on a commission to investigate the putsch. Together with four other men, I opened one of the Communist Party's secret archives, where we found documents which revealed that they had taken part in the organizational plans for the coup, plans which were aimed at a roundup of us "extremists," plans to take "emergency measures" against those who opposed or refused to go along with the coup. . . .

However, we refused to give up, and we continued resisting until the coup had failed. The Russians in Ukraine, by the way, supported us. The people of Ukraine were united. We were victorious.

**EIR:** Can you describe the political situation in Ukraine since the failed coup?

**Bakumenko:** As to the political situation in Ukraine, we're waiting for the Dec. 1 referendum. A large majority of the people will vote for independence: Yes, we expect a large majority to vote in favor of the economic and political independence of Ukraine. But, Communist Party forces, their families and friends, have started to agitate very actively—to carry on, as it were—an underground battle against our drive for independence. A very active fight is under way.

---

---

*We refused to give up, and we continued resisting until the coup had failed. The Russians in Ukraine, by the way, supported us. The people of Ukraine were united. We were victorious.*

---

---

Political tactics were launched, such as trying to separate from Ukraine the so-called "Russian Republics," meaning the Donetsk and Kharkov Oblasts [regions of eastern Ukraine], and the Crimean Oblast to the south. So, as a result, our Ukrainian Parliament was forced to pass strict, concrete measures dealing with these activities, to combat separatism and moves to undermine Ukrainian national unity. Our Parliament passed a law with penalties against separatism, which may seem tough, but we have to defend the unity of Ukraine.

The most important thing now is that Ukraine not be allowed to be divided, so that those in Moscow will never again be able to rule over us. Despite the agreements we have signed with Russia, these tendencies to reassert Moscow's rule still exist, even with the Russian democratic government. For example, from within the Russian democratic government, there have come official statements, citing the well-known chauvinist historian of nineteenth-century czarist Russia, Karamzin, that these are not Ukrainian lands, but purely Russian areas. This type of disinformation has been and continues to be used by Russians to give credibility to their territorial claims against Ukraine. They rely on these tainted, imperial historical sources, even though people know that what was said by Karamzin and others is not true. The main source of separatism in Ukraine is not the people of the Russian minority, but the Communist Party. For example, meetings of the Communist Party go on to this day in Donetsk, with the purpose of trying to truncate Ukraine, even though the Communist Party has been outlawed. But, we are holding out. . . .

What is most important, is that after the referendum, the international community recognize Ukraine, and give us the help needed to rebuild our Ukraine, so it can enter the European community of nations, and work with the Americans as well. As I began by saying, we're waiting for the referendum. My prognosis is that 75-80% will vote "yes" for independence.

Every day, Russian press and television are carrying articles and disinformation regarding Ukraine, saying that Ukraine cannot survive alone without Russia, and that for Russia it would be difficult. They are pushing the chauvinist Solzhenitsyn, to say that Ukraine is a Russian land, to incite people against each other. But, I must say, I know the mood of the people in many oblasts, and they are paying very little attention to this propaganda. Our people simply turn off

these Russian programs and tune in to our programs and programs from other republics, like Belorussia and Armenia.

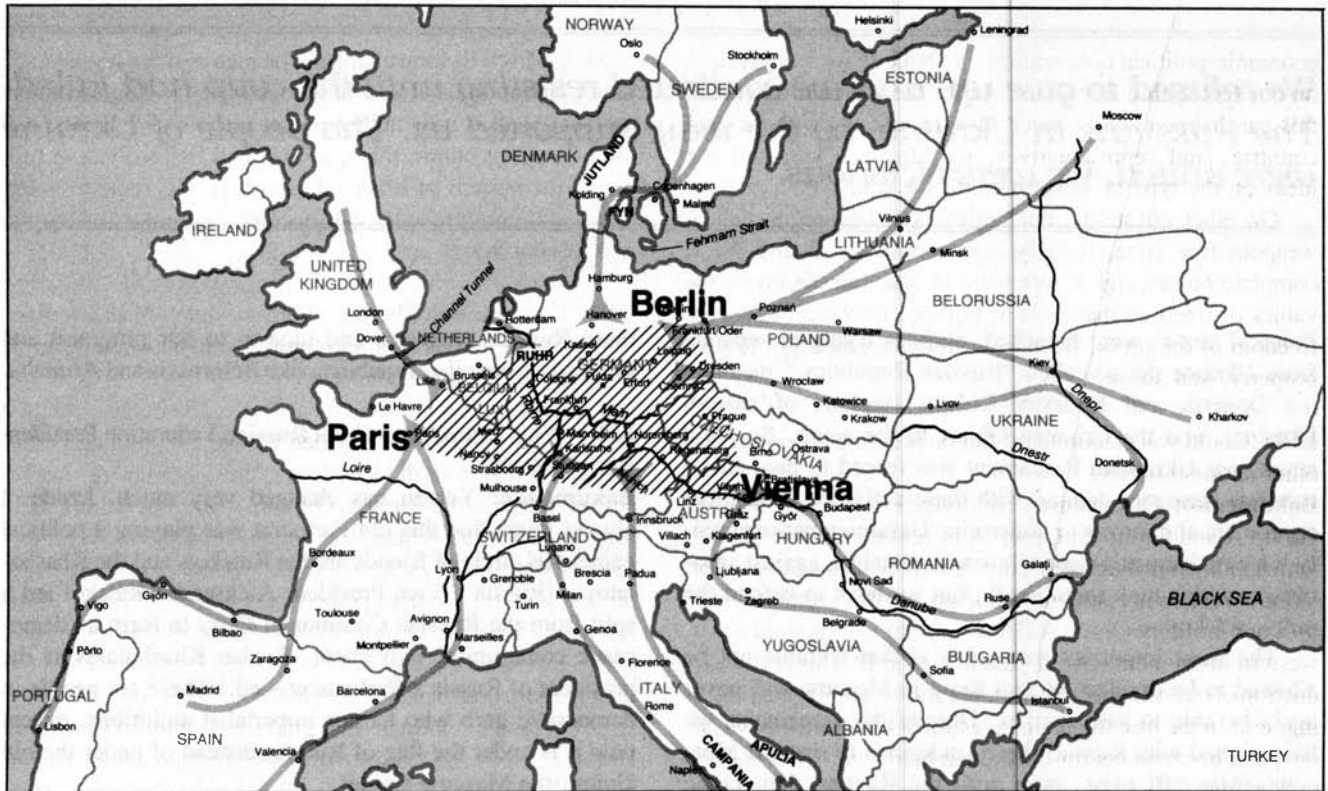
**EIR:** What can you say about Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin?

**Bakumenko:** Yeltsin has changed very much. Inside, I always knew that this old Partocrat was playing a political game. His circle of friends are the Rutskois and the Khasbulatovs. [Russia's Vice President Aleksander Rutskoii led a split from the Russian Communist Party to form a "democratic communist" movement. Ruslan Khasbulatov is the president of Russia's Parliament—ed.] These are people in democratic garb who harbor imperialist ambitions, except now it is under the flag of Russia, instead of under the old Union, the Moscow Center.

**EIR:** How do you envision cooperation with the republics, and could you describe the problems Ukraine is still having with the Moscow Center?

**Bakumenko:** For Ukraine, economic cooperation with the republics is absolutely necessary. Negotiations regarding what we call horizontal agreements, or bilateral accords between the republics, are under way. Agreements have been reached, and others are being revived, and all this without the Center. Under these agreements, for example, Russia and Ukraine are trading, because each of us has things the other needs. For example, in exchange for the oil and fuel we are getting from Russia, we are shipping them what they need—food, sugar, and other things.

But, there are problems: There are Gorbachov's policies, and now it's evident that it's also a problem with Yeltsin. They want to revive again an imperialist Center, they're Muscovizing—permit me to coin this word—their position. For example, our Parliament President Leonid Kravchuk and our Prime Minister Vitaly Fokin directly questioned Gorbachov and Yeltsin regarding past West German credits to the U.S.S.R. of up to DM 40 billion [\$23.5 billion], asking them to tell us, please, where all the money went. The response we got was total silence. They didn't give any answer, but, at the same time, had the nerve to say that Ukraine has to pay "its" share of the U.S.S.R. foreign debt, starting on July 1, 1992. Now, Moscow has gone even further and wants Ukraine to start paying "its" share before Dec. 1. They want us to pay for credits, not one kopek of which ever reached Ukraine, and Ukraine has no idea where



The "Productive Triangle" with part of its "spiral arms" of development, including, rail links to Ukraine.

the money went.

Ukraine was not the recipient of any credit and aid. This Moscow policy is pure robbery against our republic. There are many such examples, such as western aid for victims of the Chernobyl disaster, where most of the aid sent never reached Ukraine.

It is also important to resolve the question of how the U.S.S.R. gold reserves are finally divided up. As I said before, money from western credits is being spent, and we don't know for what. In Moscow, they are not allowing Ukraine any say in this, or giving us any information.

Otherwise, our participation in building the Baikal-Amur railway line (BAM) and in the space program have to be accounted for, and a proportional share of the expenses has to be repaid. Ukraine has never refused, and doesn't intend to refuse, to pay its share of the debts the former Soviet Union incurred, because, if we don't pay, unfortunately, the western powers won't recognize us. This is understood. We have political leaders who are working on these questions. We want to enter the European Community, to cooperate with the Europeans. We have a lot to offer Europe. We have our rich black earth; there's a great potential for agriculture. We have our people, our workers, who are highly qualified.

Our industry, even though by western standards, it is not up to date and lacks modernization, it is important to stress that, compared to industry as a whole through the entire former Soviet Union, we are at the top of the scale, in substance and in terms of potential. Deutsche Bank gave an

evaluation of our industry, including sectors like engine manufacturing, machine building, etc., comparing our potential, productivity, and capabilities on a scale of 1 to 10 with those of other republics. Even compared with the Baltic republics, which scored the next highest, with a range from 3.5 to 5.5., we received a rating of 9 on this scale. This is a very important rating indication, coming from a leading, prestigious bank like Deutsche Bank. From all over the former Soviet Union, we got the highest score, achieving ratings of between 8 and 9 per industrial sector.

**EIR:** Ukraine is creating its own national bank. Can you describe how it will operate?

**Bakumenko:** After the referendum, where our people will have voted for economic and political independence, our main goal will be the privatization of enterprises and collective farms. We know it will have to be done gradually. We know that the process of privatization cannot proceed overnight. It will be a gradual de-nationalization, and on this basis the national bank will attempt to assist the entrepreneurs in industry and agriculture. Such programs have been drafted and will continue to be worked out. We don't like the credit policies of the West. I don't think we need this so-called "humanitarian help," as handouts to a beggar. We are not beggars. What we want is: We ourselves want to produce. We need technological aid, we need credits with low interest rates, in order to, ourselves, produce. That's the kind of aid we want from Europe. With such types of

economic-political cooperation, we believe we can get back on our feet within five years. As for the agricultural sector, this can happen even sooner. In our contacts with western countries and representatives, we already expressed our ideas on the type of western credit we want.

On other questions, our policy is to become a nuclear weapons-free zone, to have open borders with the West, complete human rights. We want to base our nation on the values of freedom that exist in Europe, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the right to own property, and so on.

**EIR:** Could you elaborate further on pressing economic and other national needs?

**Bakumenko:** Our industry is divided into what we call Group A and Group B. Group A is heavy industry, 80% of which today is military related. We have to change this orientation. Western investment should go into this sector, to build up a non-military Group A. However, most important of all, western investment should go into Group B: This is the production of consumer goods, durable goods, appliances, clothing, etc. In the past the main investment has gone into weapons, and investments for the human being were only second or third place. We've reached the point where, in all the republics, there's nothing to be found in the stores. In food, we're better off [in Ukraine]. Our harvest was only 6% lower than last year; but in Russia it was 26% lower.

We urgently need a national currency to protect ourselves against robbery, against the ruble being used to buy up and ship out our goods. We don't mean putting tanks and barbed wire on our borders. No, we will protect ourselves in a civilized manner, with our own customs, with our own Army, which has been voted for by our Parliament. We will keep what we need to defend ourselves. Every country in Europe has its army. Ours will be based on a strictly defensive doctrine, and no atomic weapons whatsoever, not even tactical. After 10 years we will have, in relation to our size as nation, a small Army. Nuclear weapons are still on our soil. They will be scrapped, and in no way transferred back to Russia, which has no need for more nuclear weapons. I'll say it again: We ourselves don't need them either. We don't want them.

**EIR:** How soon will the Ukrainian national bank be operative?

**Bakumenko:** The way things stand at this moment, we have decided to create a national bank, but until now the national bank has not been functioning in a financial sense, because our financial obligations continue to go through the Center. That is why, together with a national bank, we need a national currency. Everything we get is still going through the Center, that is, through the central bank in Moscow. The financial transactions it contracts are robbery. Also, from other republics, earnings still go through the Center. The monetary and financial operations this central bank in Moscow conducts are tantamount to robbery, and it is the republics that get

robbed. This will soon change. The idea of our national bank is not just an idea. It is a functioning body. The Ukrainian national bank is now taking power into its own hands, and after the referendum, this question will be resolved in full. Then, the system of financial credits it will issue to enterprises and entrepreneurs will become the motor for our national economy.

**EIR:** Can you describe the religious situation in Ukraine? Is the situation overall a harmonious one between different religions, or are there conflicts?

**Bakumenko:** For Ukraine as a whole, the biggest religion is, of course, Orthodox, divided between Ukrainian Orthodox and Russian Orthodox. In eastern Ukraine, the largest single church is the Russian Orthodox Church, belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate. But already a process of returning to our own Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, returning to its property and parishes, is under way. In Kharkov, our Ukrainian Orthodox churches are being renovated, and Ukrainian-language services being held. We have our own priests, liturgies, and services.

Concerning conflicts, these have only existed in western Ukraine, where the majority of Ukrainians are Greek Catholic, and otherwise Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox. Here there have been some problems, and even some physical clashes. Vyacheslav Chornovil [the Ukrainian nationalist presidential candidate from Rukh, opposing Leonid Kravchuk in the Dec. 1 election] revealed that documents had been found after the putsch in the office of the Communist Party first secretary of the Lvov Obkom, giving instructions to party cadres on how to pit one church against the other. This is the work of the Communist Party: They've always been involved in poisoning relations between Greek Catholics and Orthodox. They were, I stress *were*, successful, up to a point, because some people, unfortunately, can easily respond without thinking when the flag of religion is raised.

**EIR:** What is the situation concerning the Jewish citizens of Ukraine?

**Bakumenko:** As for our Jewish citizens, the emigration has been mostly, but by no means only, economically motivated, with many of these very qualified and talented people seeing no hope for their lives. From Kharkov alone, many Jews have emigrated. One can speak of a "brain drain." Many were part of the scientific-technological and cultural elite. Many of my old friends are among those who left. The motives were different—some economic, some political—but there were also those who were afraid they would be beaten up tomorrow as a result of KGB provocations. For example, one and a half years ago, widespread rumors circulated, spread by the KGB and the Communist Party, that pogroms against Jews would begin. There was a meeting on Feb. 25, 1990 of Jews. Some said, "Don't go on the streets, don't let your children out." Nothing ever happened. It was all a total

KGB disinformation operation. I'll never forget that day. My friends and I decided we would go out to the main square, where, according to the rumors, the pogrom would occur; and, what happened? Nothing happened. Their objective was to poison relations: They were so naive and dumb to think that we couldn't see through this.

The kind of things that happened in Baku, in Vilnius, in Central Asia, all steered or conducted by the KGB, cannot happen here. We are wise to their tricks and methods.

By the way, in my capacity as a democrat, I was present at the reopening of the synagogue in Kharkov. There were more Ukrainian Christians there to celebrate than there were Jews, and there were of course a lot of Jews there. We in the new Kharkov administration relocated the sports club that had been occupying the synagogue building, so that the synagogue could reopen.

I must also say, and this I know from friends, it's very difficult for the Soviet Jews in Israel. My friend Semyon returned to Kharkov, and said that jobs are hard to find there, and to send his daughter to university costs a lot of money. Imagine, there he is down there sweeping the streets, even though he holds a doctorate in science and is a university lecturer. I think, in about five years, they'll start returning to Ukraine. We certainly hope so. Our best assets are our people, Ukrainians, Russians, and other nationalities. We don't go around asking one another, "Are you Ukrainian, are you Russian?" There's no such problem here.

**EIR:** What about the history of pogroms, and above all, the overall incredible levels of repression and slaughter that Ukraine has suffered under Bolshevism?

**Bakumenko:** In modern times, pogroms are a product of Bolshevism. It's Bolshevik propaganda that Ukrainians attack Jews. Real history exists to disprove the myths, if people choose to read it. Historically, pogroms have always been provocations organized by the security organs of the Russian or Bolshevik empire. First it was by the czarist secret service, the Okhrana, then by the KGB predecessors, the Cheka and the NKVD, and the NKVD extended this into western Ukraine in 1939, when western Ukraine was united with eastern Ukraine [following the September 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland—ed.]. People in western Ukraine received our soldiers with bread and salt (naively believing that they had been "liberated" from a Polish occupation that had, indeed, not been very pleasant). Then, on the third day, the NKVD came, and with it the arrests and deportations to Siberia. In response, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) [which waged a bitter, protracted guerrilla war through the 1940s and early 1950s] was created, to resist the Bolshevik occupation. Our nation handed the Bolshevik plague a major rebuff. The crimes of Bolshevism against our people are immense. Stalin eliminated millions of Ukrainians through famine. But, we have survived, with an incredible will of our people to be free and independent.

**EIR:** Back to the question of religion and ethnic groups. How do the presidential candidates stand?

**Bakumenko:** On the religious question, all our candidates agree. It is the program of Chornovil, Kravchuk, and others: We need to build a unity for the Ukrainian nation by all the churches. Look at the situation in western Ukraine since August, when the party and KGB were swept out. All these atrocities suddenly stopped; you see, maybe, an odd outbreak by someone now and then, but ever since the party was ousted—no more conflicts, no more clashes. To give you an example of how multi-religious Ukraine is, here in Kharkov, we have a Jewish synagogue, the Ukrainian Orthodox church, the Russian Orthodox church, a German Lutheran church, and even a Tatar mosque.

In Ukraine, there are no such conflicts among nationalities as you find in the Transcaucasus or in Central Asia. Unlike these regions, which have long histories of ethnic conflicts, our ethnic groups have no tradition of ethnic violence and conflict, and all feel themselves as belonging to and sharing the abhorrence to war common to all civilized nations in Europe. Therefore, our rebirth, which is taking place now, has deep historical roots. We have what it takes to revive our historical, cultural, and scientific traditions, all of which we can be proud of.

All this disinformation regarding conflicts is coming from Moscow. They would always speak of Ukraine as always having been Russian-speaking; and then, after saying "we're all Russians," they contradict themselves with their next lie, that Ukrainians, who according to the previous lie do not exist, have to "protect" the "Russian brothers" living on their territory. This idea that we have to "protect" our "Russian brothers" is absurd. Just look around in the streets, everyone is walking together, talking together, laughing together, and complaining together—all suffering the same problems, the shortages of food, clothing, and so on.

**EIR:** How is the language question being handled?

**Bakumenko:** In every country there exists a national language. If you hold a government job, you have to know or have to learn the national language. If you're a simple worker and want to learn Ukrainian, that's up to you. The process of non-Ukrainian Ukrainian citizens learning Ukrainian is, of course, a long-term process. You have to start with children in kindergarten, and that's what we are doing. In many Russified cities like Kharkov and Donetsk, we know it's difficult to make the jump into another language. We understand that. There are also problems among Ukrainians. In the villages where the Russian language was forced on the people, people continued to speak Ukrainian, though not on a high level, and the same is true concerning their mastery of Russian. It is important to raise the standard of Ukrainian spoken in the villages.

**EIR:** What about the question of Russian as a second lan-

---

---

*The Schiller Institute has put forward a very interesting plan, very far-reaching and rich in perspective. . . . We see prospects of cooperation with European nations through the concept of the Productive Triangle . . . with its great core of productive forces. Ukraine has things to contribute.*

---

---

guage, especially in science?

**Bakumenko:** This idea that Russian should remain as a second language is just a way of not allowing the development of our own language in these areas.

**EIR:** How does Ukraine envision relations with its neighbors?

**Bakumenko:** We are going for close economic ties and good relations overall. With Czechoslovakia, once we're independent, we'll have direct ties, as with Hungary and other countries. We have politicians who are only turning their head to the "right," meaning to the East, that is, to Russia. But as Kravchuk has said, we have to turn to the other side, to the West as well. Yes, ties with Russia do exist, we have economic integration, but my personal opinion is that our orientation should be westward. That's where you find high technology and culture, and that's where we feel the closest to. Our main goal is to build a national economy and to improve our livelihood.

**EIR:** How do you view the plan of the Schiller Institute and American economist Lyndon LaRouche for developing the European "Productive Triangle" as the motor for Eurasian and world economic development?

**Bakumenko:** The Schiller Institute has put forward a very interesting plan, very far-reaching and rich in perspective. Ukraine has been included in the Productive Triangle plan as a zone not separated from Europe, and I am personally pleased to see that Kharkov has been integrated in the plan. We see prospects of cooperation with European nations through the concept of the Triangle, that is, developing the Berlin-Paris-Vienna Productive Triangle, with its great core of productive forces. Ukraine has things to contribute to the West, and not just raw materials. We want to activate our own production of goods, and be able to sell them. In the first phase, perhaps we can settle for the sale of raw materials, semi-finished and finished products. We very, very much like this Productive Triangle plan, and this model for development has been much discussed with and among our scientists. Remember, that even from a European standard, we have very advanced technology, for example in the radio-electronics industry, almost all of which here, currently, is military related. Our chemical industry is also advanced. These plants can already, on the basis of their existing tech-

nology, produce products of a European and world-class quality. Furthermore, what is very important, is that these advanced industries be transferred to civilian production. That's the most important thing.

In the field of heavy industry, there is for example, tank production. What can we do there? In one-half to one year, we can start producing tractors in these plants with the help of western technology. The work force is highly qualified. To give you a comparison, if the West starts to invest, let us say, in Kazakhstan, it will take 10 years before they develop energy sources, for among other reasons, the lack of qualified labor there. In our case results will be immediate for any investor. No republic can do this on the large scale we can.

**EIR:** What are your views on the "shock therapy" economic policies, adopted, for example, in Poland—the so-called "Polish model"?

**Bakumenko:** I'm an opponent of this type of economic thinking, which is aimed at cutting down the basic, essential parts that define the essence of a national economy. What happened in Poland was that borders were opened, they started to bring in products from the West, but their own productive activity, which was already low, fell even further—by half, if not by 70%. People abandoned their industrial and agricultural sectors and turned to speculative activities. So, in other words, business went in the wrong direction. And that's no good.

A country must first be able to produce to feed and satisfy the needs of its population. But, simply bringing in goods from abroad, that's very dangerous for the economy. This "Polish model," we in Ukraine will never follow. They should be producing their own goods and selling them, not importing them. Ukraine will never go in that direction. What we can learn from the Polish experience is that they took quick measures regarding privatization of enterprises, and setting up their own customs authorities, whereas in Ukraine this is going much slower. We're now only plodding ahead, but this winter everything will be launched. We can't go backwards, but we won't go "forward" like the Poles did. We went to Poland to have a look. Productive industry is not going up, it's going down. What kind of an economy is this? I blame the U.S. in part for bringing their so-called "recovery program" there. They didn't do anything good for Poland.