
Interview: Dmytro Ponamarchuk

One-party apparat will not build Ukraine

Dmytro Ponamarchuk was press spokesman for the presidential campaign of Vyacheslav Chornovil, leader of the Ukrainian independence movement Rukh. Rachel Douglas interviewed him on Aug. 28 in Kiev. The forum mentioned took place Aug. 21-24.

EIR: The World Forum of Ukrainians just ended here in Kiev. What were the high points of this event?

Ponamarchuk: The main task of the forum was to pull together all the representatives of Ukrainians abroad, both from the West and from the East, and to unite them around the main idea, of building an independent Ukrainian state.

EIR: How many people participated?

Ponamarchuk: There were from 300 to 350 people from each of these areas—from the West, from the East, and from within Ukraine itself. This was more than had been expected, so that around 900 people took part in all.

EIR: I understand that something of a sensation struck, after the forum. What was this about?

Ponamarchuk: Actually, there were already sensational developments during the forum itself, on its opening day. This was when the President of Ukraine [Leonid Kravchuk], at the most representative meeting in the last 70 years on the subject of independent Ukraine, in his main speech attacked the opposition and the leader of the opposition, Vyacheslav Chornovil. So, such a high-level forum, where what was under discussion was the problems of building an independent state, how to get out of the economic crisis, and the further prospects for cooperation of Ukrainians throughout the world, was exploited by the President for his struggle against Vyacheslav Chornovil as the leader of the opposition. He even descended to the level of personal attacks, calling Chornovil an enemy of independent Ukraine and blaming him for a schism in the democratic movement.

EIR: How did the attendees react to this, and how did they greet Chornovil?

Ponamarchuk: There were many shouts of “disgrace!” from the hall. People whistled and stamped their feet, and didn’t allow the President to continue. He said: I’ll just wait until you calm down. Then he continued, and the audience again interrupted and would not let him speak. This was the

very biggest sensation, since nobody would have expected—also considering that this was the first anniversary of the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine, and a holiday for Ukrainians worldwide—that the tribune would be used to settle personal accounts with the opposition. This was a real shock. For the first time, a large part of the Ukrainian diaspora understood what kind of a person the President really is, although of course from the beginning, and before the forum, a very big image had been created for Kravchuk, as the leader of the new state, as a thoughtful and progressive leader, so that people’s sympathies were on his side.

When Chornovil finally got the floor, being a speaker on the forum agenda, late on the evening of the first day, it was obvious from the prolonged applause that greeted him, whose side sympathies were on now.

What they differed on, could be put this way. Kravchuk said that the most important thing is that he is running into interference in building an independent Ukraine. But Chornovil was able to show just how independent it is. Nobody is building independent Ukraine, if you still have that one-party, Communist Party apparat, which has simply merged now with mafia structures, bureaucratic, *nomenklatura* structures. This is what Kravchuk is relying on, in fact, although in his speech he said he would like to rely on democratic forces and unite them around himself.

EIR: After the conclusion of the forum, then, there was a special statement from the President through the official news agency Ukrinform?

Ponamarchuk: There was another event that occurred there, which deserves attention. On Aug. 24, the very anniversary of the proclamation of independent Ukraine, there was what we call a *viche*. This was a huge meeting, at which it was planned for the leaders of all the major movements and parties to speak, as well as representatives of the government. And despite the fact that the leaders of almost all parties spoke, no place was found on the agenda for Chornovil. And the *viche* from the outset was demanding that Chornovil speak. The event had to be shut down early. The people who organized the meeting, and it was organized by the state structures, did not want Chornovil to be there.

As a result of all this, many Ukrainians from the diaspora, such as for instance Slava Stetsko, the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and Zhisnevsky from Toronto—Ukrainians, the goal of whose work and activity in their lives has been to see Ukraine independent—were pained and felt justified in expressing their opinion that Ukraine is not independent under this leadership. Zhisnevsky openly stated, as did Slava Stetsko, that the current authorities in Ukraine have merged with mafia structures. Mrs. Stetsko especially emphasized this. Other delegates, in a softer form, not quite as frankly, talked about the situation in the economy as a factor showing how Ukraine is still dependent on former Soviet structures.

Then Kravchuk instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to distribute through the government news agency an announcement, that a citizen of any country can be deported from Ukraine on 24-hours notice, and stripped of the right ever to return, if he in any way sows divisions amongst the forces committed to building an independent state, or enmity in national and social relations. It is cleverly formulated, being aimed at whoever would stand against the idea of building independent Ukraine. But the idea of building independent Ukraine, in Kravchuk's opinion, is incarnated in the person of himself and in the current government and the structures opposed by the Ukrainian opposition today.

EIR: Tell us how you assess the relations between Kravchuk and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, and with Russia, and what you think about the possible tendency toward rebirth of an imperial Great Russia policy from Moscow.

Ponamarchuk: This is a very acute problem right now, because the [Russia-Ukraine] talks in Dagomys and then in Yalta showed that Kravchuk in effect is pursuing a covert policy of coordinating with Yeltsin the future relations of Ukraine with Russia. There is evidence that Kravchuk actually initiated the draft treaty on further relations and cooperation with Russia.

Also, information about this draft treaty has been leaked in a very clever fashion. Its provisions are made known, so that they will then be attacked, and there will be a show of "revising" it. But it's being said that even if 99% of the proposed treaty were thrown out, the 1% that remained would suffice to make Ukraine a province of Russia, rather than a sovereign, independent state.

EIR: How do the difficulties between Russia and Ukraine show up in the economic and political spheres?

Ponamarchuk: In the political realm, you have these scantily publicized, practically secret, negotiations I was just talking about between Kravchuk and Yeltsin. Political, economic, and military questions are being decided there, in such a way: Russia presents its draft of a treaty for Ukraine to sign, even though Ukraine was the initiator of signing such a treaty. From this you can see, how dependent Kravchuk is on Yeltsin. Russia is preparing the treaty. And the treaty draft talks about a single customs space, a single information space, a very broad single economic space, and a strategic space. It talks about Russia being able to use military bases on Ukrainian territory free of charge. Juridically there is no Russian army on Ukrainian soil, with the exception of the Navy, but the agreement on the Black Sea Fleet and the introduction of a dual command for it, shows that Ukraine is making concessions with respect to its sovereignty, since the command headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet is located at bases on Ukrainian territory. Whereas it would have been possible to divide the Navy itself, proportionally, according to who had contributed what to building the fleet. Ukraine provided

25% of the resources for the entire Navy of the former Soviet Union.

EIR: And the situation with the economy, overall?

Ponamarchuk: Judging by the situation today, Russia's economy for some time already has been ahead of Ukraine's economic development. You can see this in decisions adopted, and in Russia's behavior toward Ukraine with respect to the economy. Take currency questions. While earlier the Ukrainian government announced that its kupon would be as strong or stronger than the ruble, now for 1 kupon you can get 70 kopeks, or less—60 kopeks.

Furthermore, Russia effectively controls the military-industrial complex in Ukraine.

EIR: I understand differences in economic practice have developed, between the western and eastern regions of Ukraine; that western Ukraine has developed ties with neighboring countries, finding this easier than dealing with the industrial managers in eastern Ukraine, where the heavy industry has been closely tied with Russia's.

Ponamarchuk: Yes, mainly these are barter relations with neighbors like Hungary, Poland, the Czech Lands, and Slovakia. For example, this past winter there was an agreement between Lviv [Lvov] and Hungary, on the exchange of television sets produced in Lviv, for Hungarian potatoes. Eastern and southern Ukraine, by contrast, are basically controlled by Russia through the ruble; they are ruble zones. The close proximity of these areas to Russia makes it possible for Russian goods to be brought in for sale on the territory of Ukraine, not for Ukrainian national money, but in rubles. Then take into account, that Russia's inflation is spiraling to colossal levels. A miner can have a wage as high as 40,000 rubles, while an intellectual worker in Kiev gets 3,000 kupons per month. And a kupon is worth 60-70 kopeks. In the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, people receive their wages in kupons, which are effectively worthless, so they have a big material interest in receiving rubles—since for the ruble, one can buy goods.

EIR: Are people here aware of the ruinous results "shock therapy" had in Poland? How do you view this?

Ponamarchuk: We had as economics minister Lanovoi, who was talking a lot about the Polish example. He was a reformer with a Russian inclination, however, for which reason Chornovil criticized him.

But I would say that for Ukraine, application of "shock therapy" would be the last blow for our young independent state. Consider that over 90% of the population voted for Ukrainian independence. In so voting, they voted against any rebirth of the Soviet Union. But given the situation now with the standard of living of the majority of the population, shock therapy could lead to extreme impoverishment, leaving people completely defenseless.