

Memories of Taras V. Muranivsky (Feb. 3, 1935-July 17, 2000)

by Felix Beleyubsky

Prof. Taras Muranivsky, president of the Moscow Schiller Institute of Science and Culture and a frequent contributor to EIR, died one year ago. In December 2000, these recollections of the earlier years of Professor Muranivsky's life were offered by his close friend for over 40 years, the Russian scientist and journalist Felix Beleyubsky, at a joint seminar of the Schiller Institute and the Lebedev Institute of Physics of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Konstantin Cheremnykh and Rachel Douglas translated the speech from Russian.

This happened a long time ago, in 1958. Taras and I were walking under a blazing sun, on a road winding through the boundless and sparsely populated fields of the place where he was born—the Tarashcha district of Kiev Province. A truck caught up with us, and the driver stopped and called out (in Ukrainian, of course), “Who are you?”

“I’m Vasyl Muranivsky’s son,” Taras replied.

“Okay, get in!”

We happily climbed into the back of the truck, taking refuge from the heat under a tarpaulin. When we got where we were going, I tried to give the driver a ruble, as was my habit from Moscow, but he proudly said,

“I won’t take money from Vasyl Muranivsky’s son.”

And he didn’t take it. I asked Taras in surprise:

“Do you know him?”

“No. But the whole area knows my father. In 1932, he was the director of the local collective farm. When he found out that the whole grain harvest was going to be confiscated from the barns on the farm, my father woke up the men from the village during the night. They hid the grain. He was expelled from the Party, and spent some time in prison. He didn’t take anything for himself, but he saved two villages from starvation—our Antonovka, and Kosyakivka, the next one over. Now Vasili Filonovich is permanent chairman of the farm’s control commission. They won’t let him be elected director again. . . .”

Thus, Taras was born with the conviction that honorable behavior is one of the highest human values. He received his first lesson in humanism, and independent behavior for the sake of those for whom one is responsible, for the sake of whom one must stay with his people, in the most terrible times the country faces.

The Krasnopevtsev Affair

The final year of his uneventful time as a university student was marked by serious trouble. In the Autumn of 1957, Taras was summoned for interrogation by the KGB in Moscow. They demanded that he give evidence against our friends, who had already been arrested. Investigator Shchebenko and a man in civilian clothes, who introduced himself as U.S.S.R. Deputy Prosecutor General Samsonov, especially insisted that Taras Vasilyevich incriminate Vadim Kozovoy, who had already blabbed too much in custody.¹ Taras Vasilyevich withstood this test with honor, only partially confirming a number of facts already known to the investigators, but concealing the most important compromising evidence—the manuscripts of Lev Krasnopevtsev and Leonid Rendel, the two persons, already arrested, who were the major target of this KGB case—which he had in his possession.

“I hid the manuscripts of Krasnopevtsev and Rendel in the loft at my aunt’s house in Kosyakivka,” Taras told me. Now that archive will never be found!

I was impressed with his confidence in me, as we had only just gotten acquainted. We met in the waiting room of the Moscow City Court on Kalanchovka, where the trial of a group of young historians from Moscow State University was going on behind closed doors. It was known as the Krasnopevtsev Affair, after our chief. This was in February 1958. I knew of the existence of Taras Muranivsky, and he recognized me. He approached me, asking, “Are you Felix Beleyubsky?” I said yes, and he invited me to drink some beer. With a certain winning openness, he started to talk about the interrogation, and asked whether I thought he had conceded

1. Vadim Kozovoy, son of an official of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), lived in the same dormitory with Taras and me, and was the one who introduced us to the members and the ideas of Lev Krasnopevtsev’s group. During the investigation, he was somewhat demoralized and let out some information that damaged others. But he did not strike a deal with the investigators, and, therefore, was sentenced to eight years imprisonment. In custody, he fell in love with a woman who appeared to be the daughter of the last, common-law wife of the writer Boris Pasternak. He died in Paris, where part of Pasternak’s archives remain. Vadim never knew that at the most troublesome time of his life, when he was looking for a job after jail, he was assisted by Taras Muranivsky, through his friends at the Progress Publishing House.—F.B.



The late Taras Muranivsky, speaking at a Schiller Institute conference in Bad Schwalbach, Germany in 1998, showed the audience one of his many articles about Lyndon LaRouche in the Russian press.

too much to them. I was worried about the same things. As two witnesses in a closed proceeding, we had plenty to talk about.

Eventually, it came time to pay. Taras Vasilyevich was expelled from the Party, and I from the Komsomol. It was only 40 years later, that we could see the letter of Gen. Ivan Serov, then-chairman of the KGB, requesting the imposition of Party discipline on some 20 persons, including the two of us.² With a certain feeling of pleasure, we read the clear signatures of Politburo members Bulganin, Kosygin, Kuusinen, and Suslov, confirming that they had reviewed the matter, and made out the scrawls of Khrushchov and Brezhnev, who were also informed about this case. At that time, in 1958, we couldn't even imagine on what a high level our "ideological aberration" was discussed.

The story we landed in at that time, the prosecution of the Krasnopevtsev group, deserves serious and thorough analysis, not hasty treatment. But it made us friends for life, and so I should say something, if only briefly. Historians of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union usually do not write about the Krasnopevtsev Affair, because this was a group of reformers—or free-thinkers, *volnodumtsy*, as they were traditionally called in Russia—who did not set out to overthrow socialism, but saw their task as the repair and improvement of socialism. One of the issues the group raised, in disagreement with the official theoreticians of the CPSU, was the notion that the law of value functions without limitation

2. KGB Chairman Serov's directive of Feb. 17, 1958 can be viewed in Russian in the Electronic Human Rights Bibliography, at www.hro.org/editions/karta/nr1718/kgb.htm

under socialism. Nine of the theoreticians received prison terms of 6 to 10 years, for such ideas.

Marat Cheshkov, the most clever person in our group, said at a 1994 reunion of the "conspirators" in the case, held at the editorial offices of the journal *Voprosy Istorii* (*Questions of History*; see 1994, No. 4, p. 115): "Our opposition was, to put it in modern language, 'systemic,' that is, it contained arguments within the framework of the system, and was designed for its improvement." Today, M.A. Cheshkov is a Doctor of History.

As Taras and I worked through that 1994 material in *Voprosy Istorii*, I was steamed. "But they were not talking about the 'total elimination of Bolshevism,' as Krasnopevtsev says now.³ Was he a hypocrite, back then? Was he deceiving us?"

"Take it easy," my wise friend Taras advised, "There is a kind of irresponsi-

ble person, who sincerely believes what he says at a given moment, and forgets what he said yesterday. Or, maybe," he added with a touch of irony, "Krasnopevtsev joined a 'colony council' for struggling against Bolshevism.⁴ In any case, just forget it, work on something else."

I really valued in Taras, the fact that he never tried to use his association with the Krasnopevtsev Affair, as a tool to gain recognition in the post-Communist period—although he had excellent formal grounds to demand compensation. The black mark on his record had seriously disrupted his career, closing the doors of respectable scientific institutions for him. My own experience, that I could have never become a scientist without help from some close friends, makes me admire Taras, and the persistence that allowed him to get his scientific degrees, and a job at an institution of strategic importance.

A Career, with Political Baggage

We had learned something, during the "brain storm" of 1955-57, and the accompanying debates. We set out into the productive, creative phase of our lives. General Serov's letter was our invisible constant companion.

3. Unfortunately, the talented social scientist Lev Krasnopevtsev was seduced by morally crippled figures who surrounded him in the early 1990s, and transformed from a profound scholar into an ordinary stooge of the globalist task force of Russian "liberal reforms." The names of those who parasitized on his personal tragedy should be remembered by decent historians of the future.—K.C.

4. By "colony council," he meant a form of labor "self-management," set up in Potemye by the prison camp's administration.—K.C.

T.V. Muranivsky was reinstated in the Communist Party, with a severe reprimand recorded on his card. The first job he was able to secure, carrying that kind of political baggage, was night tutor at a boarding school. Landing that job was a near miracle. Two wonderful fellow students of ours from the class ahead of me—Galya Alekseyeva (now she is G.D. Alekseyeva, Doctor of History) and her friend the late Olga Sokovikova—had traipsed around half of Moscow to find a school director who would hire Margarita Menshikova, the wife of Vladimir Menshikov, who was imprisoned in the Krasnopevtsev Affair. She had been left with no means of sustenance, and an infant in her arms. We all thought that trying to conceal the obvious fact that her husband had been convicted, was not an option. But her two girlfriends found a daring school director, near the Voykovskaya subway station. He was Boris Shirvind, himself the son of an earlier victim of political repression. He hired Margarita, on the one condition that she use her maiden name, Rogova. Margarita Ivanovna Rogova, in turn, saw the chance to obtain a job for Taras Muranivsky. As the school year began, he could walk in his own country, with the confident step of a law-abiding employed person.

Taras Vasilyevich excelled. He succeeded Shirvind as the school's director. After half a dozen other jobs, he rose to the position of scientific consultant at the All-Union Institute of Scientific and Technological Information. He worked in the information department of the Ministry of the Construction Materials Industry, and then at the Ministry of Machine-Building for Light Industry and Food-Processing. The peak of his administrative success was the job of Information Department head, at the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (ISCan).⁵

In 1976, the talented scientist Taras Muranivsky was fired from ISCan without explanation. "They remembered the old business," we said to ourselves—and to this day, there is no other way to explain what happened.⁶

5. ISCan, which was at the forefront of comparative political and social science, was able to take advantage of having such a mind as Taras in its ranks. By that time, he had defended his *Kandidat* thesis, on the economics of the information system in the United States. This kind of strategic knowledge was indispensable for having a correct picture of the role of mass media in what is now called "the industrialized countries," but known at that time as "the countries of developed capitalism."—K.C.

6. We believed that the "ideological aberration" in his biography resurfaced when that most vicious tyrant of ideas, Communist Party Ideology Secretary Mikhail Suslov, was playing a more important role in supervising science, than the already doddering Leonid Brezhnev. It is noteworthy that at that very time, the Soviet elite was faced with the choice of making U.S.S.R. a leading world force either in machine-building, or in the oil industry; the effects of its opting for the latter, are being felt to this day. The choices made at that time, were accompanied by a more and more formalist approach in cadre policy, under which morally weak careerists were promoted, and independent-minded, decent specialists got the boot. The dubious role of ISCan during Mikhail Gorbachov's *perestroika*, which was essentially an ideological victory of consumerist thinking, and a catastrophic defeat for the concept of industrial development, resulted from this crippled and degenerative biased personnel policy. In the sphere of information science, the defeat

Taras Vasilyevich survived this setback, too. A few months later, he began to teach at the Department of Theory and Informatics, at the Moscow Historical Archive Institute. The history of information management in our country is inconceivable, without the contribution of T.V. Muranivsky as a researcher, as well as a professor at the Moscow Historical Archive Institute, where he trained a whole generation of information specialists between 1976 and 1998. (In 1991, the Institute was transformed into the Russian State University for the Humanities, housed, ironically, at the former premises of the Communist Party Central Committee's Higher Party School.)

A Risk-Taker

Taras Vasilyevich was an extraordinarily creative person, a risk-taker. He didn't care about his own "scientific immortality." Despite much coaxing, he had no interest in pushing the publication of either of his dissertations. He had defended his dissertation for the degree of *Kandidat* of Economic Sciences, at the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) in 1970. In 1988, he defended his doctoral thesis on the social aspects of scientific information and management, at the Philosophy Department of Moscow State University. But for him, this was relatively boring; he was always looking for more interesting, important, and—most importantly—new things to look into.

He found a pivot for his interests, and his furious hard work: the social problems of informatics and management theory. The most interesting thing he did in that period was to raise the issue of the value and cost of information (here was the heritage of Lev Krasnopevtsev's early works!), founding a new branch in Soviet information science, which has still not been followed through. He was the first to work, not on the technical problems of information transfer, but its social aspects, and to tie this question in with the theory of management. Since archivists were less strictly ideologically controlled than diplomats, he managed to raise issues that were considered pure heresy, such as feedback from those being managed, to those doing the managing. This was a bold step at that time. Today, it doesn't take great audacity to raise the question—but, it still hasn't been solved.

I heard it said (though it wasn't stated in print) that cybernetics had supposedly determined that the optimal type of management would be a dictatorship.⁷ Taras Mura-

was of special importance, because Gorbachov's notorious *glasnost*, or "openness," entailed the total, uncritical, and ruinous adoption of the axioms of information theory, which infected the scientific circles at the highest level of the Communist Party.—F.B./K.C.

7. In the early 1980s, Russian science experienced a big intervention of cybernetics theories, along with technologies for the manipulation of the human mind with methods developed at New Age institutions in the West. From the standpoint of this poisonous quasi-science, silently infiltrating the ostensibly isolated Soviet scientific community, dictatorship was seriously regarded as an optimal form of management.—K.C.

nivsky developed a diametrically opposite conception: that without feedback (without democracy, that is), society is doomed.

He published hundreds of scientific works, methodological handbooks, and courses of study. The bibliography of his works is recorded in the publications *The Role of Information Processes in the Social Management of Production Collectives* (Moscow: 1980), and *Socio-Economic Problems of Providing Information Services for Scientific and Technological Progress* (Moscow: 1982).

He remained a scrupulously honest person. When S. Velikovskiy of the Progress Publishing House asked me if it was worth giving Vadim Kozovoy a chance to earn something, Taras Vasilyevich was ready with an answer: “Let’s see it! Kozovoy is very talented. He should be published. As for his talking too much to the interrogators, I’m not some Stalin who wants to take revenge on him my whole life.” And Vadim got his chance. He published the poem “Tristan and Isolde,” with commentary, and some poems and essays of Verlain. He died, never knowing that we had helped him for our own satisfaction.

His Finest Hour

But Taras Vasilyevich’s finest hour came later, when the Soviet Union broke up, and a social counterrevolution took place in Russia. He did not accept the sort of new capitalist social order that took hold. Yes, his father had been arrested and expelled from the Party, and he himself had been persecuted. But these personal offenses did not distract him from the heart of the matter. The events of 1991 significantly shifted his scientific interests. Taras Vasilyevich was not content with the role of some kind of living classic of information theory, but threw himself with passion into the study of what were new problems for him—the situation on the whole periphery of George Bush’s “New World Order,” in Latin America, in Eastern Europe, in his native Ukraine, and Russia.

Essentially, he took up a new area of scientific specialization, becoming an expert on Latin America and the reforms in Poland. His refutation of the attempts to justify the reforms in Russia, using the experience of Latin America, is very interesting. He showed that this was a nonsensical endeavor.⁸

His collaboration with Lyndon LaRouche and his associates played an enormous role in the development of Taras Vasilyevich’s view of the world. The work he did with them on problems of the globalist capitalist system, and its “Third

8. He joined this battle before it really started, warning Russian ruling circles in his publications, about the danger of the particular kind of reform implemented in Latin America, which had doomed it to degenerative deindustrialization. This Argentinian kind of reform, favored by such types as swindler Boris G. Fyodorov, and imposed by them on the minds of officials like Victor Chernomyrdin (whose company, Gazprom, this Fyodorov was busy asset-stripping), was prevented in Russia due to the efforts of decent Russian scientists, whose opinion was expressed in Taras Muranivsky’s articles in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* and elsewhere.—K.C.

World” component, was the centerpiece of his creative investigations during the last decade. Muranivsky valued especially highly, the regular system of international information, created by the Schiller Institute under the leadership of Lyndon LaRouche and his wife. He saw that information channel as an alternative to the information networks of Reuters, the Associated Press, Agence France Press, which he called apologists for imperialism.

Coming close to the Schiller Institute, he was most impressed with the similarity of approach and concern over the fate of all mankind, especially those in the “Third World,” in the suffocating atmosphere of a global economic and cultural crisis of civilization. He recognized this stuffy atmosphere as the prelude to a thunderstorm, in which the battle for real truth, beyond modern “information theory,” was going to start.

And in this new struggle, again, he preferred truth to considerations of career. Speaking the truth, he could not help exposing lies and ideological manipulations. While thousands of Russian scientists humbly accepted grants from George Soros, sacrificing a part of the identity of their country for a short-term salary, Muranivsky exposed Soros in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*—though Soros was also a sponsor of the “democratic guru” Yuri Afanasyev, director of the Russian State University for the Humanities. Just as 40 years before, this opposition to the mainstream made him an outcast in the Moscow scientific community.

In 1998, Yuri Afanasyev discharged him from the University, thus obediently demonstrating his devotion to the ruling oligarchy, which Afanasyev had always displayed, since being the chairman of the Soviet Pioneer Organization (from which he once expelled the activists of the Communist Movement, sending a paper to the Politburo in the classical style of Gen. Ivan Serov).

Unfortunately, his voice was not always heard. He was mainly published in a fine newspaper, *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, but its circulation is not so large. And, not all of the works in this cycle of his reached their readers. It would be important to pull together a collection of his articles, because what he did brought qualitatively new knowledge, which is very necessary for all of us—for it is still not clear, what country we are living in, and what kind of social formation we have here.

Therefore, it is the sacred duty of his friends, to publish a collection of his works. If someday a book is published under the title *Russia’s Answer to the West*, a place will be found in it for the works of Taras Muranivsky. Time will pass, and the renewed Russian scientific community will pay tribute to the decency of real specialists, appropriately evaluating the petty career manipulators, who floated on the crest of the murky wave of unjust and selfish deals during the transformation. The task of those who remember the most decent scientists—in particular, my task as a friend of Taras Muranivsky—is that their names remain in the minds of people, before these better times come.