

EIR In Memoriam

The Murder of a Legend: Who Was Grigori Bondarevsky?

by Mark Burdman

The Aug. 22 EIR reported the brutal Aug. 8 murder in Moscow of Prof. Grigori L. Bondarevsky, in an article which briefly expressed his importance both to our association, and among historians worldwide. In response to the tragic loss of “The Professor,” Lyndon LaRouche asked that an “In Memoriam” testimonial be published to the life and work of this man, a friend of Lyndon and Helga LaRouche and a regular contributor to the work of EIR. Correspondent Mark Burdman, a friend of Professor Bondarevsky, begins it on the theme, “Bondarevsky the Man.”

In speaking to Russian intimates and friends of Grigori Lvovich Bondarevsky, since his death, I have been impressed by how frequently I have heard the words, “He was my teacher.” This, from people who did not formally study with him, at a university or institute, but who learned enormously—partly by reading his published works; also from his trenchant insights into history and current world developments; but most important, from his commitment to impart his ideas to others and insist that they attain the same intellectual rigor by the same hard work that he imposed on himself. Grigori Bondarevsky would probably have had no greater honor than to be remembered in this way.

The words, “He was my teacher,” resonate strongly with my first impression of Professor Bondarevsky, on meeting him in late September 1990, in London, with my colleague Michael Liebig. We had first contacted him, on the basis of an interview he had given to the London *Guardian*, in which he had called into question the apparent lack of foreknowledge, by the British intelligence services, that the Aug. 2, 1990 Iraqi attack on Kuwait was going to happen. His implication, was that there was some strange, unexplained skullduggery involved.

During that encounter at the Kensington Park Hotel, we were taken into a world far beyond the complexities of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict. He had a great deal to say about that conflict; it was evident that he was advising the Russian government, and likely other governments, about recommended courses of action. But his views on the immediate crisis were constantly interspersed with insights into the history of Iraq and the Gulf, descriptions of his own original archival work, and anecdotes from his own wealth of experience. We were awed by the breadth, extent, and passion of his knowledge, and he became known to us then, as for the 13 years following, as the “Professor”—our teacher.

One other point says a great deal about how this man taught. During the course of several hours of that discussion, we often nearly collapsed from laughter. Professor Bondarevsky could bring the most biting irony into his historical discourses. He had studied, and met, pretentious potentates in Central Asia and other regions (“that great democrat,” he would call one or another of these self-proclaimed “Presidents for Life”). He had also survived Josef Stalin, the collapse of dictatorship, and then, the collapse of an entire system—the Soviet Union. Irony and humor were integral to his ability to survive, as a man and intellect, through so much political and social turbulence; and, as with every excellent pedagogue, they were integral to the way he communicated ideas.

Members of the *EIR* staff and others of the LaRouche movement in Europe fondly remember Professor Bondarevsky as this kind of teacher. He visited our Wiesbaden, Germany headquarters several times, in the early and mid-1990s, and it was always a special treat to confront that unique “Bondarevsky package,” of astonishing in-depth historical insight, and devastating humor. For 13 years, he was a constant “presence” in our intelligence and conceptual work.

A Special Kind of Russian Patriot

This man was one of the unique and fascinating figures of the Russia of recent decades. His very life embodied a paradox: He was a Russian Jew, and a staunch Russian patriot. Grigori Bondarevsky was born on Jan. 25, 1920 in Odessa, into a Jewish family with a rich cultural life. Up to the last years of his life, he would take pride in reciting, by heart, poems of Schiller, Goethe, and others of the German classical period, which he had learned as a child.

His being Jewish makes it remarkable that he was able to play a prominent role in Soviet Russia, advising governments, and carrying out special and sensitive missions. In one case, which he loved to describe, he was called into Kremlin circles to help make sure that ukazes and decrees were being issued, and some semblance of normal functioning maintained, at a time when the aging and ill Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev was already functionally dead. It was no everyday occurrence in Soviet Russia for a Jew to play such roles, especially during dictator Josef Stalin's rule. Not only was there the anti-Semitism that was a commonplace of life in Russia since the 19th Century, but there was the top-down, paranoid distrust of Jews by Stalin and his clique, who often made prominent Jews subject to purges, imprisonment, and/or execution. We know from our discussions with the Professor, that it was not easy to work as he did, under these conditions.

But up to his death, Grigori Bondarevsky remained a steadfast Russian patriot, determined to foster the interests and aims of Russia as a nation, even as leading Russian forces, centered around the so-called "oligarchs," have been destroying it by selling its resources to western looters. In comments to members of the *EIR* intelligence staff on Aug. 14, Lyndon LaRouche characterized him as "a very peculiar kind of Russian patriot, of Jewish origin. This is a very specific kind of quality: a mind of this kind of genius and connections, and his Asian orientation; a very specific kind of personality. And he typifies . . . the new kind of patriotism, which was tending to emerge in Russia, of which he was an epitome in our work with him."

In the last months of Professor Bondarevsky's life, this devotion to his nation was often accompanied by great pain and effort. The Russia of recent years has been a difficult one, financially and otherwise, for academicians—the brains of the Russian nation, who in former times, were treated with such great respect and honor, but now, must often scramble to survive.

Beyond this, he had many health problems. And his beloved wife Alexandra, to whom he was married for 63 years, became increasingly ill during recent years. Her illness was recently exacerbated by anxiety resulting from a breakdown of security in the apartment complex in which they lived in Moscow; this, no doubt, was a factor also in his murder. In April 2003, his wife died, and the Professor was emotionally devastated. She had been his devoted assistant, in his non-stop writing ventures. He used to say, with great pride, "All



Professor Grigori L. Bondarevsky: honored historian, intelligence expert on Eurasia, and an "epitome of a new kind of Russian patriotism."

the time we have been married, we have never quarrelled!"

Yet even after his wife's death, the Professor worked long hours every day, studying, writing, closely monitoring international events, and, of course, teaching. At the moment he was murdered, he was working on a paper for the Russian government, on "Russia and the Caucasus." In fact, a planned *EIR* interview with him, on the historical background to the current crisis in Iraq, had to be repeatedly postponed, because he was so busy on crucial assignments. After his death, a close colleague of his in Moscow, himself from the generation succeeding that of the Professor, said, "If only some of my younger colleagues would work as hard as he did!"

Lifetime Devotions

Grigori Bondarevsky's service began in the Central Asian and Iranian/Gulf theaters during the Second World War. In 1943, he helped organize the Teheran conference of the anti-Nazi Allies. He regaled us about his more colorful experiences in the country then known as Persia. In 1945, he became Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan. These regions, plus India, became the foci of his attentions, and historical and archival work, throughout six decades. They are at the heart

of Eurasia, the history and development of which great region, was Professor Bondarevsky's lifetime obsession.

For India, he developed a special love. "This country was once a pearl in the crown of the British Empire," he said. "But for me, India became a pearl in my heart." The Professor was a recipient of the International Jawaharlal Nehru Award, and in 2000, President Raman Narayanan received him at his official residence to award one of India's highest honors, the medal Padma Shri. K.R. Ganesh, former Indian Finance Minister in the Indira Gandhi government and long-time leader in the Congress Party, said of Bondarevsky, in an Aug. 28, 2003 discussion with *EIR*: "Among all the orientalist and academicians in the Oriental Institute, Professor Bondarevsky was the most clear as far as India was concerned. He clearly understood India's own way of tackling problems. He understood India's civilization, its non-violence, the role of the Congress Party, and its nationalist forces. He was *very clear* on India. Many academics often swayed from one side to another, but for Bondarevsky, India kept its central role: he continued in his assessment of India. I knew him very well, for many years."

At his death, the Indian government sent a eulogy to his family, praising this "great son of Russia," and affirming that the nation of India would mourn his passing.

For years, the Professor worked with the Oriental Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and was dean of the Oriental Institute at the University of Central Asia, in Tashkent. He served, in an advisory capacity on oriental affairs, more than a half-dozen Soviet and Russian governments over six decades. He became a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Social-Political Studies, and was elected to the Russian Academy of Social Sciences in 1995. He was the author of 27 books and pamphlets; many articles on subjects ranging from Central and South Asia, to the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf, to British imperial policy in the Near and Middle East; and a seminal work on the Baghdad-to-Berlin Railway.

A Special Relationship

We in the LaRouche movement developed what might be called a "special relationship" with the Professor. After that initial encounter in London, he came to Wiesbaden in December 1990, meeting then with Helga Zepp-LaRouche, whose husband Lyndon LaRouche was unjustly imprisoned in the United States. He expressed deep concern about Mr. LaRouche's situation, and offered to help, in whatever way he could.

In the 1990-92 period, Bondarevsky opened our eyes to crucial developments in Eurasia. His input was catalytic in helping bring into actuality, the LaRouche "Eurasian Land-Bridge" policy. He was also the inspirer of an important LaRouche movement initiative of that time, the Committee to Save the Children of Iraq, whose lives were threatened by the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War.

By 1996, he was able to meet the LaRouches together, in

Moscow. After several subsequent meetings in Russia and Germany, the personal relationship with Lyndon LaRouche took a moving form, in their mutual tributes on their respective 80th birthdays. On the Professor's 80th, on Jan. 25, 2000, LaRouche wrote an *EIR* feature, "LaRouche Honors Russian Scholar: On the Issue of Mind-Set." Later, the Professor wrote an enthusiastic statement for the *Festschrift* published on the occasion of LaRouche's 80th birthday, Sept. 8, 2002.

Their relationship was also indirect. On countless occasions, he would punctuate a telephone discussion with the insistent demand, "You must tell Mr. LaRouche"; or "Mr. LaRouche must know"; and then outline something that he would characterize as having "the greatest importance." Often he had specific suggestions, proposals, and even "marching orders" for LaRouche; or would propose special coverage to be featured in *EIR*. He put forward these proposals with great insistence; indeed, the Professor was a passionately opinionated, and often argumentative man. Accepted or not, his proposals almost always stimulated thought and discussion in our ranks.

The Matter of Dick Cheney

A memorial to Grigori Bondarevsky would not be complete, without reflection on one of his main missions in the last years of his life: confronting "Russia's Dick Cheney problem." His efforts on this front were the truest expression of a "Russian national interest" patriotism, in opposition to those oligarchs—of the Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Boris Beresovsky variety—who have a deal with the Cheney-centered group in the United States to further loot the devastated Russian economy.

After his death, a leading figure at Moscow's USA-Canada Institute praised Bondarevsky, as one of the strategists most involved in efforts to prevent Russia from becoming either a victim of the provocative strategies of the new Bush-Cheney Administration, or a limp "junior partner" in a would-be "American Empire." From personal experience, I can confirm that the Professor had an intense passion on this matter. Hardly had the Bush-Cheney Administration taken office in January 2001, than he told *EIR* that Russia would counter provocative policies from Washington by strengthening relations with Europe; but, "of greater significance, will be the great strengthening of our relations with China, India, and Iran, which some call the new 'quadrangle' in Eurasia."

In the Autumn of 2002, he sent urgent communications to LaRouche supporting the Presidential candidate's focus on removing Cheney from American public life. Later, in 2003, when LaRouche made his campaign to force Cheney from office international, the Professor enthusiastically supported and encouraged it and would say, with pride, that he was among the most outspoken critics, inside Russia, of Cheney and his allies. This was true up to the moment of his death.

That fact forces the question, "Cui bono?" from the Pro-

IN MEMORY OF GRIGORI BONDAREVSKY

The Odessans Won't Cry, But. . .

On Aug. 11, the Russian newspaper Vremya Novostei published this obituary. Author Yelena Suponina, paper's foreign editor, has kindly permitted EIR to publish it, as translated from the Russian by Jonathan Tennenbaum.

I could never have imagined, that the death of my old professor, my tireless teacher and advisor, the 83-year-old Grigori Lvovich Bondarevsky, would be connected with such a horrible event. But it happened. Murder. And this is not simply a personal tragedy. It is a tragedy for the whole state in which we live. A state that is not able to guarantee the safety of its citizens. Even the young, strong and healthy ones, not to speak of the older and weaker. We are afraid of opening the door to an unexpected ring. But Professor Bondarevsky did open. In a naive spirit, he thought, there was nothing to steal from him. And indeed, as I well know, he kept only archives and books, books, books. He didn't use his liquid pension to save up for his burial, as many old people do, but spent it to subscribe to newspapers and magazines. He read the press every day, despite his age, because, irregardless of his age, he continued to work day after day, preparing analytical notes and articles.

In our state lived the brilliant professor, with a lucid mind, living in a—to put it mildly—modest apartment on Tsurupa and Cheremushky Streets, at the sight of which his colleagues from somewhere in Great Britain would have turned up their noses. But it was this same Professor Bondarevsky who received letters and greetings from the leaders of India, Kuwait, Iran, the Emirates; to whom historians of many countries turned for advice. Three years ago, in his official residence, the President of India personally awarded Bondarevsky one of the highest honors—the medal “Padma Shri.” And once, they even invited him to

move to Great Britain. But he did not want to. These old ones, they were real patriots. They loved their country. An unreciprocated love, it is true.

You could call up Bondarevsky, to clear up any historical fact that you couldn't find in encyclopedias. He knew history like his own biography. A great story-teller, an archivist, an analytician. Warmly loving his own country, his free mastery of the English language served him in studying the British archives. Bondarevsky was, above all, devoted to meticulous digging into the history of colonial expansion of that country. His passion was studying the colonies of Britain in the East.

Toward the end of his life, he was not supported. This old man turned to the state, where brains, erudition, and the willingness to work not for one's pocket, but for the good of the country, seemed not to be honored. As any other scholar whose institute nowadays can hardly make ends meet, he just suffered through it, labored like a work-addict, and hoped that somehow, sometime, things might change. They did not change.

You think he was despondent? You think he complained? Nothing of the kind. For Grigori Lvovich was an Odessan—which means, he was an optimist with a sense of humor, and a well-prepared tongue. Just like his wife Alexandra Arkadevna, who, thanks be to God, died three months earlier. An honors student from Odessa, he was admitted, in 1939, on account of his talent, to the historical faculty of Moscow State University—although with great difficulties (he was Jewish, and in these days, serious attention was paid to one's record). His graduation dissertation was on the Baghdad railroad. He was destined soon to become the youngest doctor of historical sciences. The war interrupted this. And then—secret work on the ideological front, in the special office of propaganda and disinformation. And then again to the East, and not only through books. Stalinabad (Dushanbe), Tehran, Tashkent. Then again to Moscow. The book *Russia and the Persian Gulf*. Other articles and works.

It is terrible, when people who have survived the horrors of war, are murdered today. In our Russia. In the Russia where we decided to live. And even survive?

—Yelena Suponina

fessor's murder. Russian police have apprehended a young man, a son of a household worker for the Bondarevsky family, as the murderer. Ostensibly, the young man was desperate for money; yet the Professor had none; his most cherished possession was his library of several thousand books, of which he was enormously proud. We are not in a position to comment on this police investigation; nor, of course, could we present pay stubs to prove this was a “murder for hire.” We only assert—and that as a point of honor to Professor

Grigori L. Bondarevsky—that some extremely nasty elements, in Russia and abroad, would have preferred to see him silenced.

A good man is not only proven good by his friends, but by his adversaries. And Grigori L. Bondarevsky was a very good man. He will be remembered. As LaRouche said during a presentation in Frankfurt on Aug. 16, eight days after the Professor's murder: “You miss him immediately. There's an empty place in your life. But *he's there*.”