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## Interview: Jurij Darewych

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# History shows that Ukraine will not be deterred from independence

*Mr. Darewych is the co-producer of the documentary film "Harvest of Despair," produced by the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee, St. Vladimir's Institute, in Toronto in 1983. This film made public to the world that in 1932-33, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin deliberately starved to death an estimated 7 million Ukrainians. He was interviewed by Irene Beaudry on Nov. 18.*

**EIR:** "Harvest of Despair" shocked the world with its exposure of the created famine in Ukraine and the complicity of the West, particularly the British Foreign Office, the *New York Times*, journalist Walter Duranty, and the grain cartels, in covering up this mass murder. What led you to now produce a film on Ukraine in World War II? Have you found a similar coverup?

**Darewych:** There are parallels. For those of us who grew up in the Ukrainian community, myself included, it was always most curious that, whereas the famine was common knowledge amongst Ukrainians, it was essentially unknown outside the Ukrainian community. You would pick up a book on the history of the Soviet Union, and if the famine were mentioned at all it would be mentioned in a footnote. As our community would mark this tragic anniversary every 10 years, we decided the time was ripe for getting this information out to the ordinary citizen.

Somewhat similarly, if you go to books about World War II in eastern Europe, the focus is on the fight between the Germans and the Russians. What is clear to those of us who are of Ukrainian background is that most of the war in the East was fought on Ukrainian and Belorussian territory. And it was these two nationalities that bore the brunt of the war and suffered the most. The Germans occupied Ukraine and Belorussia totally, whereas they occupied only small parts of Russian territory and for relatively brief periods of time except for the area around Leningrad [now St. Petersburg].

**EIR:** What was the extent of the destruction?

**Darewych:** The war in Ukraine came on the heels of a great catastrophe, namely, the famine in 1933, followed by the Stalinist purges and murders of 1937-38. A tremendous number of Ukrainians were killed—executed by the NKVD or

shipped to Siberia—the numbers run into the hundreds of thousands of people.

As the war rolled over Ukrainian territory, huge numbers of Ukrainians were conscripted. About one-quarter of the Red Army was made up of Ukrainians. A large number of them died either in the initial fighting when the Red Army was taking a tremendous beating, or subsequently in captivity.

One of the reasons for the initial German successes, was that much of the Red Army, particularly that part made up of non-Russians, didn't want to fight. They said, "We have no business fighting for Stalin." They were under a misconception, unfortunately, that the Germans were going to come in as representatives of a western country, western culture, and were going to treat the Ukrainians and other peoples humanely. Many Red Army soldiers gave up in the hope that the Germans would replace the horrible Stalinist regime by something better. In this they were very quickly disappointed, and they learned that the Nazis were hardly any better, if not worse. A huge number fell into captivity, and very many were essentially starved to death by the Germans. This ran to millions of people, to say nothing of the tremendous losses in the civilian population as the war rolled back and forth.

Taking these events together—the Stalinist terror, the famine, and the war—you have the loss of roughly a quarter of the population of Ukraine. The extent of this blow to the Ukrainian people is not often understood because all these losses are grouped under "Soviet" losses.

**EIR:** What bitter tragedy that the Nazis drove Ukrainians into Stalin's arms and his hated Red Army.

**Darewych:** The Ukrainians had no choice, they were simply drafted into the Red Army. No one asked, and you couldn't refuse, because this was regarded as treason.

When the Germans invaded, the majority of the population, which had been under Soviet rule, knew very little about the Nazis because the only thing they had to go on was Soviet propaganda. That propaganda was not truthful, and it flipped. Because Stalin signed a pact with Hitler in 1939, the Soviets all of a sudden stopped calling the Nazis nasty names and started speaking of them vaguely as allies. This confused the population. They didn't know what the Ger-

mans were all about. Anything the Soviet regime would say would be taken with a grain of salt in any case.

It is misleading to compare the people of Ukraine in this regard to people in Canada or the United States, who did have a free press, who did have proper and correct reports on what the Nazis were all about. If someone were interested, he could have read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. No such thing was possible for the Ukrainians living under Soviet rule. The only information most of them had was that which was fed to them by the Soviet authorities.

**EIR:** Was there a resistance in Ukraine as you had in France, Poland, and other countries?

**Darewych:** There was an underground resistance to Soviet rule in Ukraine before the war continuously throughout the period of Soviet occupation. The initial resistance was suppressed almost totally by 1933, but in the latter part of the '30s, it was organized again. To some extent, it was connected with the Ukrainian resistance that had sprung up under Polish rule in western Ukraine, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, although not entirely. However, not much is known about it for the simple reason that most of the documentation is in what was then NKVD and is now KGB archives. Unfortunately, this has not been available, so we have rather sporadic information about such resistance. Apparently, much of it was destroyed during the purges of 1937-38.

**EIR:** One of the falsifications of history shows itself in the media treatment of the trial of John Demjanjuk and in the commemorations of Babyn Yar. It is not generally known that Ukrainians were also killed in Babyn Yar.

**Darewych:** Yes, I think that there is a common misperception that the Ukrainians were great collaborators of the Germans. Most countries occupied by the Germans during the Second World War had pro-Nazi collaborationist governments. The French, Belgians, Danes, Norwegians, etc., all had puppet governments made up of local people that were pro-Nazi. But Ukraine was one of the countries that did not. Ukraine was governed directly by the Germans. This administration was headed by a horrible person by the name of Erich Koch, and his regime was ruthless toward the Ukrainian population.

The Germans shot or otherwise exterminated most of the leadership of the Ukrainian nationalist underground movement in the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, including people like the poet Olena Teliha; Ivan Rohach, the editor of a Ukrainian newspaper in Kiev; Oleh Kandyba, another poet, and many others. It was a tale of horrible repression, brutality, arbitrary arrest, and wholesale grabbing of people and shipping them off to work in German factories because they were short of labor.

It is important to stress that the Ukrainians did not, under the Germans, have a pro-German administration of their

own. The Germans simply did not permit any kind of Ukrainian government. Even with the so-called Ukrainian police: During the occupation there were auxiliary police forces in the various cities of Ukraine in addition to the Gestapo and similar Nazi units which were in charge. But this "Ukrainian" police force was in no sense under the authority of some kind of Ukrainian government. There was simply no such thing.

Under the German occupation, there were only two organizations of any consequence that were under the control of the Ukrainians. One was the Ukrainian church, to which the Germans were very hostile because the Nazis were hostile toward the church, period. And the second was the Ukrainian underground, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and, later, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

One sometimes hears, for example, that the Danes managed to help their Jewish population under the German occupation much more than the Ukrainians did. But these are not at all comparable situations. Denmark was an independent country before the war. It is near Sweden, which was a neutral country during the war—there was some place to run to. There was no such possibility in Ukraine. There was no Ukrainian administration before the war or during the war. Ukraine was surrounded by enemies on both sides. There was no in-between and no one to turn to for help or protection.

**EIR:** And yet you had the formation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

**Darewych:** The Ukrainians realized very quickly that the only ones who were going to defend them were themselves. They had, particularly in western Ukraine, a well-developed resistance movement to the Polish occupation before the war which simply carried on the struggle against the Nazis and the Soviets. As huge armies moved back and forth across Ukrainian territory in late 1942 under the German occupation, the first units of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army were formed to protect the population from German excesses and from Soviet partisans when they would terrorize the local population. This resistance expanded, particularly in the northern region of Ukraine, which was heavily forested. In the provinces of Volyn and Polissia, there were large units of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army that operated from that period onward, harassing the Germans and attacking their communications columns, particularly their police units, etc. . . .

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army stayed on when the Russians reoccupied the country. They continued fighting right through to the early '50s. It was a tremendous resistance effort in an extremely difficult situation.

**EIR:** What is most remarkable is that Ukraine has never given up her fight for freedom.

**Darewych:** There is no question of that. Even now, despite the years of Soviet propaganda, most Ukrainians realize that unless they will be in charge of their own affairs, they will

always be getting it in the neck from one side or the other as they have in the past. This is the reason they are so intent on having their own independent state. I believe that nothing is going to move them from that path. No urging on the part of Mr. Bush or Mr. Mitterrand to retain the [Soviet] Union is going to change their mind. They have learned that unless you have your own army, and are able to defend yourself, no one is going to do that for you. Therefore, it is unrealistic on the part of the politicians in the West to expect that the Ukrainians will settle for anything less than a status equal to that of France or Germany or Poland or Spain. I think that anybody who is forming policy based on some other premise is kidding himself.

I get the impression that the Bush administration is not terribly keen on Ukraine becoming independent. Bush is a big buddy of Mikhail Gorbachov, and is urging the retention of the Soviet Union in some form. But I think the U.S. administration is making a big mistake if it thinks that the Ukrainians are going to go for some quasi-colonial status, because they won't.

There has been a contract signed between Ukraine and a company in Canada to print Ukrainian money. This currency is to be issued, I understand, in May. It is just a question of what route and how long it will take before Ukraine is recognized as an equal member of the European community of nations.

**EIR:** If we take the example of Croatia, it looks grim, because not one country is willing to recognize Croatia's independence.

**Darewych:** The double standard is amazing. On the one hand, one has all these U.N. pronouncements about the right to self-determination of every people, and yet in Croatia, where the population voted for independence and proceeded to implement it without attacking anybody, they got attacked. No western government is willing to lift a finger because, it seems, there is this curious fear of destroying the remaining multinational empires like the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia.

**EIR:** I think it may have something to do with Bush's new world order which is anti-sovereignty.

**Darewych:** Perhaps. The behavior of France and the United States is difficult to understand because if they had, early on, put a little pressure on the Yugoslavs, that is to say, on the Serbians, and said, "Lay off or else," there would not have been this tragedy and loss of life. The question is why the Croats are forced to go through this agony to establish something which is their right according to international conventions.

**EIR:** Why has it been the case that Ukraine has always been the country whose independence could not be permitted?

**Darewych:** I think part of the reason is because Ukraine was not powerful enough to stand up to their enemies in both East

and West by themselves, and they were never given help by the western democracies. Now, why that is so, is difficult to know. For example, at the end of World War I, President Wilson said that the United States was going to insist that all the nationalities subjugated under the former Austrian and German empires in Europe have a chance to establish their own states. They insisted on that for every nation—Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc.—except Ukraine: It was allowed to be partitioned among neighboring states.

Another difficulty is the misinformation or lack of information in the West about Ukraine. Part of the problem is Sovietologists. Who are these people? Many are students of people who were trained in British, U.S., and other universities in the inter-war period in the imperial Russian mode, sometimes by professors who were Russian emigrés who had little sympathy for Ukraine and presented it as some sort of province of Russia, and not as a country which had been subjugated and colonized by a foreign, oppressive regime. This is part of the reason that Ukraine was not viewed as a colonial problem in the same sense that the occupation of many countries by European powers in Africa or Asia was.

The Soviets also fed the West propaganda about the U.S.S.R. being a family of equal peoples where the nationality problem was "resolved." All of this has had a cumulative effect and resulted in distorted information about Ukraine.

**EIR:** What about the popular myth that Ukrainians are anti-Semitic?

**Darewych:** Perhaps some are, as are some people of various nationalities. But there are many Ukrainians who put themselves in great danger to assist Jews during the Second World War. I might mention, for example, my aunt and her husband, who hid a Jewish girl during the German occupation. Had the Germans discovered that, it would have been the end of them. As far as I know, that lady is today alive and well and living in Haifa, Israel.

I might mention also, Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky, the primate of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, who not only hid Jews in his apartments during the Nazi occupation, but encouraged others to do so, and spoke out publicly against Nazi excesses and killings. Sadly, to this day, there is no memorial to him at the Yad Vashem Memorial of the Righteous in Jerusalem.

**EIR:** I look forward seeing to your film.

**Darewych:** Making the film is one thing; then comes the problem of getting it shown. It was a great uphill fight for us to try to get "Harvest of Despair" shown on television. We never did get the main networks in the U.S. to show it, even though we approached them. It was shown on PBS, however, as well as BBC, and by the main Canadian, Australian, and Swedish networks. The German and French TV networks declined to show it, however, despite our repeated efforts.