



# NEWS FROM UKRAINE

Information About the Current Struggle for National Independence and Human Rights

VOL. 7, NO. 2

SUMMER 1980

## *Wave of Arrests, Repression Sweeps Ukraine*

In the worst crackdown on Ukrainian dissidents since the early 70's, the regime in Ukraine has, over the past year, begun a series of arrests and trials of Ukrainians known or suspected of anti-Soviet views or actions. Scores of human and national rights activists, many of them having already served prison terms for their participation in the national liberation movement in Ukraine, have been given harsh prison terms; others have been exiled beyond the borders of Ukraine, threatened or harrassed by the KGB, fired from their jobs. Some have been beaten, even killed. Perhaps the hardest hit have been the members of the Kiev Helsinki Group of which, according to one count, only three remain free. A document written last fall by three women Helsinki monitors and titled "Lamentation" appeals to the free world to help stop the impending liquidation of the Group. However, another document signed by ten members of the Group and only recently received in the West states that "Provocation will not succeed; terror will not succeed. Nothing will succeed in stopping the Ukrainian rights movement." Among those arrested or sentenced are:

Vyacheslav Chornovil. Arrested in exile in Yakutia after having served a 7-year term, the well-known Ukrainian dissident was charged with rape and sentenced to 5-years of prison. He has been on a hunger strike since April to protest the illegalities in his case (reports from Ukraine state that he was too weak to stand at his trial because of his physical condition). Chornovil joined the Kiev Helsinki Group last year.

OIha Heyko-Matusevych. 27-year-old philologist and member of the Kiev Helsinki Group, arrested in March and charged with anti-Soviet slander. Miss Matusevych is the wife of Mykola Matusevych, former member of the Kiev Group sentenced in 1978 to 12-years of prison and internal exile for anti-Soviet activity. The youngest member of the group, Matusevych refused to denounce her husband after his arrest and was continuously under surveillance by the KGB who subjected her and her family to crude harrassment.

Oksana Meshko. 75-year-old widow and former political prisoner in Stalin's concentration camps, arrested in June and sent to a psychiatric hospital for two months of "observation." One of the founding members of the Kiev Helsinki Group, she has been the de facto head of the Group since the arrests of Mykola Rudenko in 1977 and Oles Berdnyk last year. Because of her activities, she has been subjected by the KGB to continuous harrassment, interrogation, and apartment searches over the last 5-years.

### *The Struggle Intensifies: A Decade of Repression and Resistance*

1972: Mass arrests in Ukraine, the worst since Stalin, aimed at crushing Ukrainian dissent and the circulation of underground literature. In latter part of the year strikes, riots, and demonstrations break out in Dnipropetrovsk and Dniprodzerzhinsk.

1974: The underground Ukrainian Herald reappears after two years' silence, calls for a broadening of the "national liberation struggle." Arrests of dissidents continue.

1976: Formation of the Kiev Public Group to Promote the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords marks the culmination of legal opposition to the regime and the attempt to inform world public opinion about violations of human and national rights in Ukraine. Arrests and sentencings of members begin less than a year later.

1978: Despite continuing repression, the Kiev Helsinki Group continues to function, issues a Manifesto calling for the equal partnership of Ukraine in world affairs and for its rightful place in the community of nations.

1979: Ukrainian National Liberation Movement demands the secession of Ukraine from the USSR, calls on the UN and on Ukrainians abroad to aid in achieving Ukrainian independence from Russian colonialism...KGB murder of composer Volodymyr Ivasyuk sparks mass public demonstrations and outpouring of national sentiment in Western Ukraine...The regime's policy of russification, terror and repression intensifies...

Vasyl Stus. 42-year-old poet and literary critic and member of the Kiev Helsinki Group, Stus was arrested in 1972 and sentenced to 5-years of prison for his activity in the Ukrainian rights movement of the 60's. A well-known dissident, Stus wrote protests and appeals concerning arrests of Ukrainian nationalists and rights activists and assailed violations of legality and freedom of expression. Re-arrested in Kiev on May 9.

Zinoviy Krasivsky. A member of the Kiev Helsinki Group and one of the members of the defunct Ukrainian National Front whose members advocated the liberation of Ukraine and for membership in which Krasivsky was arrested in 1967 and given a 12-year prison term, having served 6 of those years in a psychiatric hospital. Arrested in March.

*Ivan Hel:*  
*USSR — A Murderer of Nations*

In a letter to the UN Human Rights Commission, written last July, 43-year-old political prisoner Ivan Hel asks that the state of national and social life in Ukraine be discussed at the UN forum and revealed to the world community. At the same time Hel proclaimed a hunger strike to protest against KGB persecution of him and his family and against violations of national and human rights in Ukraine.

In his letter Hel states that the so-called "USSR" is an occupying state on Ukrainian soil and is merely a juridical extension of Russian control. The Russian administrative apparatus carries out in Ukraine a massive policy of forced denationalization with the aim of liquidating all vestiges of Ukrainian culture, identity, and national life. Hel details the key areas in Ukrainian life subject to Moscow's

The Russian empire is a prison of nations. This is a terse and mathematically precise formula which condenses within itself several centuries of plunder of foreign wealth, exploitation of human resources, and the oppression—brutal and unprecedented in scope—of the intellectual and spiritual potential of captive nations. This formula needs to be more accurately defined today. Today the Russian empire is a murderer of nations. It is a murderer in both the literal and figurative sense of the word...In its unbelievable number of victims Russian bolshevism has far surpassed German fascism...The artificially created famine on the territory of Ukraine in 1932-33 took approximately ten million souls... The United Nations, containing in its statutes the high duties and responsibilities for the fate of nations, must remember these crimes against mankind because the goals of the empire and the methods of their realization have not changed.

russification drive: educational institutions, communications media, the armed forces, job opportunities and population transfers. The result, says Hel, is a large scale artificial, unnatural mass mixture of peoples of various nationalities, an international "farce" forced to communicate in the Russian language, to "live and educate its children in an artificially created environment and, as a result, lose quickly one's national identity, language, individuality." The doctrine behind these policies is bolshevism, a specifically Russian conception which has nothing to do with social ideals or goals. Bolshevism, writes Hel, is a cleverly perfected, flexible ideological mask which has for its political creed the motto "Everything is permitted." Internally it provides for ruling a society by terror; externally it provides for a strategy of expansion. Bolshevism is "dictatorship and lawlessness, and psychology of fear, uniformity, and lack of initiative, a narcotic for doping and manipulating human beings."

*Bohdan Rebryk:*  
*Russia — A Prison of Nations*

Only recently reaching the West are two letters written last June by political prisoner Bohdan Rebryk, currently serving a 7-year prison term in Mordovia. Rebryk, a 42-year-old school teacher from Western Ukraine, was first arrested in 1967 and sentenced to 3-years of prison for educating children in a "spirit of nationalism." In 1974 he was arrested again and sentenced to 7-years of strict regime for distributing "anti-Soviet propaganda." Accused of being a Ukrainian nationalist, Rebryk told the judge at his trial, "Shoot me. I will never be any different." Rebryk's last word at his trial was widely distributed in the Ukrainian samvydav. In the labor camps the KGB has consistently pressured Rebryk to recant his views but with no success. He was subjected to "re-educational lectures" in Kharkiv prison in 1977, beaten in Ivano-Frankivsk prison in 1979. He is due for 3-years of internal exile after his camp sentence.

Rebryk's first letter is addressed to a Denis Milner in England whose letter of praise for the USSR was printed in a Soviet newspaper. Rebryk states that to a person growing up in normal human circumstances and in a lawful nation such as England it is impossible to conceive of the terrible essence of the Soviet regime and its hypocritical and inhuman Party doctrine. Rebryk details the harsh facts of Soviet life and theory, gives the history of Russian exploitation of Ukraine as well as the history of his own treatment by the regime. "My country," writes Rebryk, "was a colony of Russia for a long time ... in 1917 ... Ukraine was proclaimed an independent republic ... Lenin declared war on Ukraine, we lost our independence, and Ukraine was turned into a colony of the Soviet socialist empire." Russia has always been a prison of nations in which free thought was viewed as rebellion and was punished, states Rebryk. He warns that Russia has not abandoned its desire for world hegemony and that unless the truth about the USSR is known the fate that met Ukraine may be the fate of other nations, including England.

**"PROGRESSIVE" APOLOGISTS FOR THE USSR**

Rebryk's second letter is addressed to those so-called "progressive" Ukrainians in Canada and the US who take a sympathetic view of the USSR and some of whose letters of praise are often reprinted in Soviet propaganda publications. Again Rebryk sketches the sufferings of Ukraine under Russian domination and the struggle for its independence. Taking into account the resources of Soviet propaganda and the effects of its disinformation efforts, Rebryk states that he can understand when a Frenchman or an American is taken in by such methods. But when a Ukrainian parrots the Soviet line, that is a wholly different matter. It is a double crime: first, against one's own people and, second, against those that have given one a place of refuge. One can also understand those in the USSR who lie in order to save themselves. But the "progressivists" live in the free world at a time when even the savage Soviet regime must take world opinion into consideration.

News From Ukraine is published at Hagerstown, Maryland 21740 by the Ukrainian Division of the American Friends of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations. Subscription is free. All material may be quoted. Comments, inquiries and requests for copies or subscriptions should be sent to: Editor, News From Ukraine, Box 142M22, Ijamsville, Md. 21754.

## *Protest-Appeals*

- A letter written last June and just reaching the West tells of the sufferings of Ukrainian Helsinki monitor Oleksa Tykhy, currently serving a 9-year labor camp term and ill with cancer. The letter, written by six political prisoners, three of whom are Ukrainians, is addressed to "all readers of Soviet propaganda publications in the free world" and details the brutalities perpetrated on political prisoners in Soviet concentration camps, using Oleksa Tykhy as an example. Tykhy was refused all medical help by camp officials, who wanted to force him to renounce his views before allowing camp doctors to see him. The 53-year-old former teacher and founding member of the Kiev Helsinki Group was kept in an isolation cell where he went on a hunger strike to protest his treatment. Only after coughing up blood, severe abdominal pains, and swelling was a doctor allowed to see him. The subsequent operation revealed cancer of the stomach. The authors of the letter accuse the camp administration for Tykhy's illness; they accuse the whole governing body of the USSR, including Brezhnev, of the brutalities perpetrated on Tykhy

### *USSR Most Glaring Example of Colonialism, Fascism, and Social Apartheid*

Tykhy and his friends found themselves behind bars because of the convictions they expressed in their documents. This is not only Tykhy's and his friends' tragedy; it is the tragedy of the whole world. The whole Ukrainian nation has been given a disciplinary lesson—what one cannot do in this country of "real" freedom and democracy...If you do not agree with the rulers of the USSR, then you will be destroyed by any means possible. Now one can no longer put thousands before the firing squad, as was done earlier. But one can give out sentences and send people into "institutions" where jailers will hasten their death. That system of torture which lies at the basis of Soviet prisons caused Tykhy's cancer, was the favorable medium for the disease. That which Leonid Brezhnev thinks of as a blessing and progress turned into a tragedy for Tykhy.

and warn the West of Soviet propaganda and of the nature of the Soviet system. "Will the West allow itself to be deceived by the apostles of genocide? Are the enlightened circles of the Western world threatened by the kind of genocide which took place in Campuchea, Vietnam, and, earlier, in the whole USSR?" write the authors.

- A letter written early last year by twelve political prisoners and only recently reaching the West appeals to all athletes and sports lovers of the world to transform the Moscow Summer Olympics into a rostrum for the demand of the "humanization of the internal policies of the Soviet government." The letter, signed by eight Ukrainians, notes that the regime is afraid of the watchful attention of the nations of the world to Soviet internal policies. "We political prisoners of Sosnovka concentration camp," write the prisoners, "look to you with hope."

## *Religious Persecution*

- Last fall's issue of the Moscow-based Chronicle of Current Events tells of the efforts of a group of villagers in the Riven region of Western Ukraine to open a church which had been shut down by authorities in 1960. For twenty years the villagers tried get their demands acted on—complaints to local official, appeals to party members, letters to Brezhnev and Kosygin—but with no success. They even tried to rebuild and open the church themselves with the result that one of the local officials called the villagers "Banderivtsi" (followers of Ukrainian nationalist leader assassinated by the KGB in 1959 and the standard Soviet epithet for any manifestation of Ukrainian national identity) and "hooligans." Several of the villagers were fined for "disturbing the peace." The villagers persisted, a fact which drove the officials to the following measure: The villagers were asked to sign a document stating that they would confine any pigs they owned to certain designated areas. The very same signatures later turned up on an official statement to the effect that a church in the village was not needed.

- From Keston College in England comes a report about the Ukrainian village of Zanosy whose whole population went on a strike when the local authorities decided to turn the village Orthodox church into a grain warehouse. After a few days of the strike the authorities responded with force. They forcibly sent all the inhabitants to another village while five busloads of militia arrived at the church and began to demolish it. In the morning the remains of the church were set on fire. The villagers responded by hanging religious ornaments on a nearby grove of pine trees and turning it into a substitute church. The authorities then decided to cut down the trees. They looked for a man to do the job but could find no one, even atheists and a former criminal refusing the task. They finally found an alcoholic who cut down the trees while guarded by the local militia.

- A German Catholic information agency reported in mid-May that the KGB murdered a 74-year-old Catholic priest, Father Anatoliy Gurgula, in the Kalysh district in Western Ukraine. The priest's elderly wife was also murdered. The couple was apparently bound, drenched with gasoline, and set on fire in their home on the night of February 26. There were no witnesses. The funeral services were heavily attended by shocked villagers from surrounding village areas. Although Father Gurgula was not openly harassed by the KGB, he was "encouraged" to convert to the Orthodox faith, a choice which he refused to take.

- In September 1978 the KGB arrested four members of the independent Baptist Church in Ukraine (formerly headed by Pastor Georgi Vins, who was exiled by the USSR to the United States in April 1979) and seized a printing press used by the four to publish the journal *Christian* and other religious material. The KGB originally wanted the four tried on charges of embezzling state property but its case was so weak that at one point the judge refused to go on with the hearing and walked out of the courtroom. The KGB then offered the four their freedom if they would become informers. When they refused, the KGB had the hearing suspended for further "investigation."

- Defected to the West late last December: Alla and Yuriy Turchenko. A specialist in Ukrainian art, Turchenko held a high post in the Soviet Ukrainian Commission to UNESCO. His wish to become a member of the Ukrainian Academy of Science fell through when he was accused of "Ukrainian nationalism" after defending a thesis on Ukrainian engraving. Warned by friends that he might be arrested for refusing to cooperate with officials in denouncing Ukrainian dissidents, Turchenko decided to seek political asylum with his wife in the West.

- Valentyna Siry, wife of Ukrainian worker Leonid Siry, issued an appeal to the world public last summer pleading for help to defend her family from persecution by the KGB. The Siry family have been the targets of harassment ever since Leonid Siry applied to Soviet authorities for permission to emigrate to the West, citing poor working conditions and the oppressive nature of Soviet society in general. Siry's wife ends her letter to the "citizens of the West" by asking for whatever help can be given her family: "For God's sake, for the sake of justice, humaneness, and compassion, we plead: Save us! Do not let us die and leave our children orphans."

- Recently reaching the West, a document written last summer by ten Soviet political prisoners and members of Helsinki monitoring groups in the USSR calling attention to Soviet violation of Ukrainians' emigration rights. Addressed to all heads of state and governments of the Helsinki Accords signatories, the document reviews the history of Ukraine and the established policies of russification and destruction of Ukrainian culture and national life. It lists a number of cases of Ukrainians who desired to emigrate because of Soviet violations of national and human rights. "We see this 'government' as an anti-Ukrainian colonial administration resulting from the Russian-Soviet occupation of Ukraine," write the authors. "Can a government headed by staunch supporters of russification policies represent and defend the national interests of Ukrainians?" ask the authors. The answer, they write, is obvious.

- Arrested on March 10 in the Russian SFSR, 61-year-old veteran of the Ukrainian liberation struggle Bohdan Chuyko. First arrested in 1949 and sentenced to 10 years of prison, Chuyko was arrested again in 1972 and sentenced to 10 years of prison and 5 years of exile for "high treason." The latest arrest charged him with "falsification of documents," a charge that Chuyko calls the "usual KGB provocation."

- An appeal to Brezhnev written by 81-year-old Volodymyr Horbovy has just been received in the West. In that appeal the former OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) member asks that he be allowed to emigrate to Czechoslovakia in order to live with his son's family. Horbovy, who served a 25-year-prison sentence for his "anti-Soviet" activities, receives no pension and is in danger of starvation. In July he was refused permission to emigrate.

- In a memorandum to government leaders of the nations taking part in the Helsinki Accords agreement, six members of Soviet Helsinki groups suggest that, in view of the continuous violations of the Accords by the USSR and of the danger to world peace represented by that regime, the signatories of the pact create at their next meeting a judicial organ which would note and rule on any violations of the provisions by member nations. "May God help all those who defend truth and justice from lies and false accusations," write the political prisoners.

- Myroslav Symchych, sentenced to 25-years in labor camps for membership in the OUN and UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army), was due to be released in 1979 yet remains in a prison camp in the Perm region. According to camp officials, Symchych will not be released until 1982 as additional punishment for his part in the concentration camp riots of political prisoners in Magadan in 1953. In camp he was interrogated by the camp commander, who asked Symchych what had determined him in holding to his views. When Symchych gave him a capsule history of Russian colonialism in Ukraine, the commander remarked, "I see that 27-years have not re-educated you..."



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