

Ukrainians back Lithuanian independence, ready their own

by Luba George

On April 1, in defiance of a Soviet ban, mass rallies in support of independent Lithuania called by the Ukrainian national movement Rukh, involving over 300,000 people, were held in at least nine major cities of Ukraine, by far the largest of the U.S.S.R.'s non-Russian republics. In the capital of Kiev, 30,000-50,000 demonstrated in a sea of blue and yellow Ukrainian national flags. In the western Ukraine metropolis of Lvov (Lviv), over 100,000 took part, while in the western Ukrainian cities of Ivano-Frankovsk and Ternopol, the count was 50,000 each.

In Kiev, the crowd roared its approval to a Rukh resolution denouncing Gorbachov for "interfering in the internal affairs of the independent republic of Lithuania." In Lvov, Ivano-Frankovsk, and Ternopol, the crowds also approved a Rukh resolution calling for an "all-Ukraine [political] strike . . . if the imperial pressure on Lithuania continues." The crowds in Lvov chanted slogans such as "Hands off Lithuania" and "Ukraine and Lithuania are sisters."

Rukh's program calls for a post-independence economic confederation among Lithuania, Belorussia, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

Each of the Rukh demonstrations was peaceful, except in the mining city of Donetsk, the region which led last summer's coal miners' strikes. There, authorities tried to brutally suppress the demonstration, but failed when crowds reassembled and marched on the city center.

Rapid growth of Rukh

These demonstrations, which have established Ukraine as the main center of support inside the Soviet Union for beleaguered Lithuania, are themselves a measure of how rapidly the internal crisis threshold in the Soviet Union has lowered since this year began. It was only last September that Rukh held its founding congress in Kiev, which was

highlighted by the attendance of a Polish Solidarnosc delegation led by Adam Michnik, a former political prisoner and now editor of the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

In a very short time, Rukh developed into a mass movement, as its 500-kilometer human chain demonstration of 1 million on Jan. 22 for Ukraine's independence proved. Soon after that, Moscow abandoned its overtly hostile stance towards Rukh, registering it as a legal informal association on Feb. 9.

Rukh's next significant victory was the March 11 elections for the new Ukrainian parliament. Rukh and Rukh-supported candidates, organized in the electoral alliance called the Democratic Bloc, won 110 of the 440 seats, and in many of the big cities, won overwhelming majorities, smashing the candidates from the Communist Party. In Kiev, Rukh won 16 of 22 election districts; it swept all districts in the western cities of Lvov, Ternopol, and Ivano-Frankovsk, as well as in some eastern industrial centers, such as Donetsk and Sumy.

These candidates won on a platform which delineated the following basic principles that would create the political conditions for independence: 1) genuine political and economic sovereignty; 2) a multi-party system, and the abolition of Article 6 of the U.S.S.R. Constitution, which guarantees the leading role of the Communist Party; 3) an economic system based on a variety of forms of ownership, with equal rights to all enterprises; 4) a cultural renaissance and the free development of the Ukrainian language and culture and the cultures of all other national groups living in the republic, including Russians and Jews; 5) freedom of religion, including the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church; and 6) the preparation of a new constitution of the Ukrainian Republic that would guarantee sovereignty and political rights based on internationally accepted human rights laws.

Rejection of chauvinism, anti-Semitism

Leaders of Rukh and its allies are acutely aware of the danger of the current revolutionary upsurge being diverted into the trap of national chauvinism. As Michnik of Solidarnosc told an interviewer in Toronto, Canada at the end of 1989: "Either we choose the road of constructing some sort of community that would resemble Western Europe—and this will not be an anti-Russian community; there is a place for Russians, and it is an important place, but the Russians must understand that they must now make a break with the habit of Great Russian chauvinism . . . or, on the other hand, nationalist, chauvinist orientations will gain the upper hand in our countries. And then we will be doomed to a bloody conflict that will bring only harm to our nations. Whereas in concord, agreement, we will win together." ("Report on the U.S.S.R.," Jan. 5, 1990.)

Rukh has waged a continual, and very successful, campaign against Russian and all other forms of chauvinism and anti-Semitism. It has systematically exposed and preempted what it calls "Moscow's divide and rule tactics" of pitting one nationality against another. At Rukh's founding congress, all nationalities were represented who live in Ukraine, including the large Jewish community. Rukh founding member Burakovsky gave a speech on behalf of the Kiev Jewish community, in which he stressed that "Ukrainians and Jews are feeling a real harmony."

Rukh's secretariat passed a resolution against anti-Semitism which denounced the Russian chauvinist organization Pamyat for its so far unsuccessful attempts to launch anti-Semitic pogroms in Ukraine. According to the resolution, which was distributed as a leaflet at the recent demonstrations: "The executive of the Popular Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) expresses its indignation and sense of outrage with regard to the anti-Semitic actions and statements of Pamyat and similar chauvinistic associations. The provocative articles which recently appeared in *Nash Sovremennik*, *Molodaya Gvardiya*, *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, and *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the chauvinistic plenum of the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R., the meeting of the 'Black Hundreds' in Red Square, and finally the recent appeals of emissaries from Pamyat calling for an anti-Semitic action on May 5, 1990—these are all links in the same vile chain. . . .

"The provocateurs operate on the basis of the old chauvinistic concept of 'one and indivisible imperial Russia,' refusing to recognize the rights of non-Russian nations and peoples in the U.S.S.R. striving for independence; they call on anti-Semitic actions, while forging the prison shackles and chains for all of us, including the Russian people. The words and deeds of these followers of Puryshkevych and Shulgin, of Stalin and Beria are trying to disgrace our country before all of civilized humankind. These words and actions cast a shadow of Hitler's national-socialism on our country.

"On behalf of thousands of its members and on behalf of many millions of honest citizens of Ukraine—Rukh sympa-

thizers—the Rukh leadership categorically and resolutely states its unequivocal support of the Jewish population and its readiness to defend its dignity, peace, and life. Rukh will not allow these provocateurs to violate the unity, friendship, and spirit of brotherhood of the peoples of Ukraine. . . . Our Jewish brothers and sisters! Rukh is with you!"

Leaders of Rukh, starting with its chairman, the writer Ivan Drach—known as the "Vaclav Havel" of Ukraine—not only coordinate with other national independence movements inside the U.S.S.R. but also see it as absolutely crucial to develop and expand ties with the new leaders of Czechoslovakia and Poland, and with workers, students, and the intelligentsia of both countries.

In an interview with the Ukrainian monthly *Kultura i Zhitya*, Drach said: "Rukh—this is an evolutionary path toward development of society. We are sick and tired of those 'revolutions' which have only led to poverty, hunger, starvation, and cruel terror, particularly in our country. Therefore, we are carefully aiming to go the 'European way' and I have in mind the Czechoslovakian variant . . . and not the Romanian or Chinese. . . . We must not shy away from our historical and cultural European roots. . . . Recently I participated at the Sajudis [Lithuania's independence movement, and now government], where the Rukh leadership together with the leaders of this organization—Landsbergis and Chepaitis—agreed to form a 'Lithuanian Charter'—based on a new codex of laws—which would provide the basis for establishing and guaranteeing Ukraine's sovereignty . . . later to be joined by Poland and other countries."

The next test for Rukh will come later in April, when workers are expected to go on strike; Rukh's program of economic sovereignty has gained wide support among Ukrainian workers, since Ukraine is on the brink of a physical economic breakdown. Ukrainians are continuously short of food—meat especially—at the same time that some 600,000 tons of meat are exported yearly—as well as other basic commodities, and above all, housing. Some 2.4 million families, or 14% of the population, are in dire need of housing. The average wage in Ukraine, which has the largest concentration of heavy industry in the U.S.S.R., is considerably lower than in Belorussia, the Russian Republic, and the Baltic Republics.

In an interview to the *Sunday Telegraph* of Britain, Ukrainian Helsinki Movement leader Bohdan Horyn said: "Our aim is to secede from the Soviet Union. Free Ukraine will have normal neighborly relations with Russia. . . . The forces that are pulling the Soviet Union apart are those of national sentiment and economic logic—and you cannot stop these with tanks. Gorbachov knows that the moment he cracks down, his myth will disappear and his maneuver for the opening to the West will be doomed. Lithuania is already unstoppable. Our time will come."

Ukrainian leaders realize a difficult period is ahead. The Anglo-American sellout of Lithuania has been duly registered.