

facts we were receiving by the official media. I do not know if you are aware that our organization was receiving the truth the way it was.

- *How can the Schiller Institute help Croatia?*

We will do our utmost, but our ultimate goal is to help stop the war in Croatia. We will persist in that for as long as necessary.

## Death sentence against Croatians

*Information supplied by the Committee for Legal Assistance to the Defenders of Croatia:*

On June 26, the Military Tribunal in Belgrade passed death sentences on Croatian prisoners of war Martin Sablić, Zoran Sipos, and Nikola Cibarić, and sentences of long-term imprisonment against Bartol Domazet (15 years), Jure Marusic (12), Slavko Madarević (8), and Ante Vranković (6). The convicted persons are all members of the Croatian Army involved in the defense of Vukovar.

The accusations and condemnations were based on the violations of two paragraphs of the old Yugoslavian Penal Code—Paragraph 124, armed rebellion against the Yugoslavian Federal Republic, and Paragraph 142, genocide against civilians.

- The convicted persons were members of the Croatian Army, one of the sides of an international armed conflict and so, according to the Third Geneva Convention, they could not have been punished for participating in armed conflict (“armed rebellion”). . . .

- This procedure has been started on the basis of rules of the former Yugoslavia, which meanwhile ceased to exist, with the same consequences for its Army and for the Tribunal which has passed the sentences.

- The mentioned Croatian defenders have been convicted for crimes against the civilian population on the basis of confessions and testimony obtained through torture during long periods of detention in concentration camps and prisons.

All the named circumstances lead the committee to conclude that this and other processes at the Military Tribunal in Belgrade are illegal and that the sentences passed represent a “legal crime.”

There are 178 more Croatian soldiers facing criminal proceedings at the Military Tribunal in Serbia.

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## Interview: Pavlo Movchan

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# The writer as a man of the nation

*The Ukrainian poet Pavlo Movchan, as a secretary of the Kiev branch of the Ukrainian Writers Union, was one of the initiators of the Popular Movement of Ukraine for Perebudhova (known as Rukh) in 1989. He is a deputy in the national parliament of Ukraine. Jonathan Tennenbaum interviewed Pavlo Movchan on May 6 for the German periodical Ibykus, which has made the interview available to EIR. We have added footnotes.*

**Tennenbaum:** How would you evaluate the role of the Union of Writers in building the Ukrainian nation?

**Movchan:** The role of the writer? Of the Union of Writers? . . . I cannot answer that it is uniformly positive, for the simple reason that the Union of Writers was an agency artificially created to control the activity of all writers, with an overt ideological bent and with attempts to regulate all spiritual processes in Ukraine. Therefore, I cannot say that the Union of Writers had a positive role in the past.

But at a certain period in time, precisely in the Union of Writers, as the last substance of national independence—because the Ukrainian writer was dealing with language, and language was the last sanctuary of national freedom; it denoted national freedom—there matured many initiatives. At first, societies were created such as the Ukrainian Language Society. The Memorial Society was created, and Greenpeace. And in a certain way, the Union of Writers gave the impulse to the creation of [the independence movement] Rukh. It was in the Union of Writers that the charter tenets of that organization were thrashed out and polished, regarding all forms of its activity.

For Ukraine, a writer is not only a writer. He is something more than a citizen in Russia. Since the time of Taras Shevchenko [in the early 19th century], the writer was the national ideologue, but in a positive sense. He was the preserver of traditions, related to language. . . .

**Tennenbaum:** A national poet. . . .

**Movchan:** He was a national poet, naturally. And a man of the nation, a statesman, because the idea of statehood was passed like a baton from writer to writer. From Shevchenko to Drahomanov. From Lesia Ukráinka to Franko. That is at the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century. Then later, in the revolutionary time, to Vynnychenko, the historian,

writer, and philologist.<sup>1</sup> And then, across that renaissance by firing squad, that levy, the slaughter of leading figures of culture and literature, it passed to us: the immortal idea of recreating Ukrainian statehood, which had been lost.

**Tennenbaum:** What role will your organization have in the development of Ukraine, now that it is independent?

**Movchan:** After independence, writers should be busy with their writing. (Laughs.)

But if you are asking about the society that I now head up, Prosvita [Enlightenment], this is a cultural organization that is very similar, in some of its tasks and goals, to the Schiller Institute. Through knowledge—historical knowledge, scientific knowledge, cultural—we are trying to give the Ukrainian back all his national parameters, which were lost during a long period of time. He must feel that he is the inheritor of a great culture. He must be conscious that he is not a second-class person, and be freed from his national inferiority complex.

An atmosphere of provincialism was specially created in Ukrainian culture, and that provincialism lies like a deeply imprinted seal. It is necessary to get free of that provincialism, which established itself and for a long time ate its way into all the pores. And therefore the task of the society, along with the rebirth of the language and literature and customs, is a spiritual return. . . .

**Tennenbaum:** A renaissance?

**Movchan:** Yes.

**Tennenbaum:** Socialism made wounds and left a scar; it caused big cultural losses. What happened to culture under socialism?

**Movchan:** Russian, Soviet socialism did not arise in a vacuum. It arose as a natural continuation of the absolutist idea which was the ruling idea in Russia, beginning in the time of Peter I—all his reformism notwithstanding. His position was continued by Nicholas I, who controlled everything. This absolutist idea has a deep history in Russia. And I have big doubts as to whether Russia will ever become really democratic. My disenchantment is grounded in history and historical references, because there were no democratic periods in Russia. There were democratic aspirations, there were forces and movements. But there were no periods in the actual history. Maybe there was that very shortest of periods, known as the interregnum, between the monarchist system and the Bolsheviks. Maybe that very short period.

Ukraine, however, is very rich precisely in democratic traditions from the period of the Kiev princes, the elected *viche*, through the Cossack republics with their democratic principles, through the constitution that was written by Pylyp Orlyk already at the end of the 17th century.<sup>2</sup> The Polish Sejm and the king cited that constitution; it was their basis. So democracy is the basis of the Ukrainian mentality. For

that reason the Ukrainian is accused of extreme individualism, and blamed—as part of his inferiority complex—for the fact that each Ukrainian tries to stand apart, to live and to be concerned with his plot, with his land, with his principles, as he sees fit.

For this reason, I don't speak about democracy in Russia, and it seems to me that the Russian philosopher Berdyayev addressed this the best of all. He did not idealize history and he considered that Russian socialism was the third phase of Russian absolutism. The first phase was Ivan Grozny [the Terrible]. The second was Peter I. The third was Leninism-Stalinism, with all its consequences.

To speak about Russian socialism is to speak about barbarism and an aggravation of everything there was before, which was now just perfected, like instruments of torture, executions, humiliations. It seems to me that there is a scar there, a continuous historical scar.

For Ukraine, the most terrible period of the rule of these ideas was the period of annihilation of the bearers of culture, the peasantry, the bearers of the people's culture. The elite was finished off right away. No nation can survive without its elite. So that elite layer was destroyed immediately after the revolution, and during the revolution. What remained as the bearer of the people's traditions and the people's culture, was the peasantry.

Therefore, there began under Stalin the period of collectivization, and *famine*. Yes. Therefore, for me, the word "socialism" has just one shade of meaning: It was the cruelest fascist period in the history of my people. This was the period of the systematic annihilation of Ukraine.

**Tennenbaum:** What kind of viewpoint is there in Ukrainian literature today and in the past, which could provide a positive identity?

**Movchan:** It is not a viewpoint. Historically, I would say it is a tradition. It is what I was talking about in the Ukrainian mentality, which runs deep. It was formed and then recreated, or provided the resources for the re-creation of that mentality. But after the period of socialism, it became much more difficult to generate this.

**Tennenbaum:** What kind of role will literature play?

**Movchan:** For the rebirth of the individual?

**Tennenbaum:** Yes.

**Movchan:** Unfortunately, literature does not occupy the place it should in the world, because mass culture has gripped not only America and western Europe. It is penetrating the East, as well. We have the same problems as everywhere. Television, audio- and video-technology expansion. All information comes through that. This means that it is ever more difficult to restore the contexts of life.

But our problems are aggravated by the fact that at present we have an information blockade by Moscow. We are depen-

dent, with respect to deliveries of paper. As a result, the Ukrainian book is dying before our very eyes.

**Tennenbaum:** Literally?

**Movchan:** Literally. It is very difficult now to publish a book in Ukrainian, and unprofitable. This is strictly a loss-making proposition. This is a big burden for our young economy, and a big problem. And if the Schiller Institute were to help us, we would be very grateful. Even just to think of how to break the information blockade. Perhaps there are some new technologies for manufacturing copying materials out of recycled raw materials, to produce paper not at big plants that require a lot of wood, and ecologically more or less cleanly, so that again we could have our own books.

We had them, but in the 1930s, books were annihilated, burned. We were deprived of sources. This was that same period of fascism.

As a matter of fact, German fascism was provoked by Russian fascism, as a reaction. I see a direct dependency between Hitler's accession to power, and the regime in Moscow. These were all the Leninist principles, inculcated with some changes in Germany. I think that these things have to have mutually conditioned each other.

You must not cultivate barbarians in the East. People in the West must understand that barbarians in the East are a danger for them. And therefore there should be joint efforts here.

The place of the writer would be more tangible now, if he could have an influence on the state of mind of his readers. For the most part, his readers right now are sitting in front of the television and listening to Russian programs. They are watching Russian programs, because we have an information blockade with respect to television as well as books. The broadcasting power and technical capabilities of Moscow television are incommensurate with the provincial ones, as they were artificially maintained by Moscow. That is, we didn't have our own equipment, skilled workers, or capabilities. So, we have a very serious problem in this respect, as well.

**Tennenbaum:** In your opinion, what influence has Ukrainian literature had in Europe? Is there a connection, throughout history?

**Movchan:** The influence of Ukrainian literature in Europe has not been studied very much. I can talk about the influence in the opposite direction, because the so-called German Romantic school had a certain influence on the rebirth of Ukrainian literature.

**Tennenbaum:** Schiller, for example?

**Movchan:** Yes. Above all, yes. And this could be observed in the work of Lesia Ukrainka, her plays, and many other of her works.

But I would say that it is not just a question of literature.

The philosophical ideas of [Hryhorii] Skovoroda<sup>3</sup>, for instance, in a certain way influenced and penetrated through Poland and Slovakia, and reached Europe. Europe had not known the asceticism and aloofness from the world, which Skovoroda preached, and in a certain way this was a positive feature for the process of spiritual formation.

Otherwise, I think that it was not possible for there to be influence, for the reason that we did not fully realize ourselves as a nation. This we were not allowed. We have a big, unrealized spiritual potential.

But there were periods in which, indeed, there was an influence on Europe. This was the period of the [Kiev] princes, when all the hereditary princes of Europe studied at the school of Monomakh. And because of the marriage of daughters, many European rulers were in-laws, relatives of the Kievan princes.

Anna Yaroslavna, Queen of France [in the 11th century], had a very big influence both on the history of France and on education. She was very well educated. The educational institution, the academy at the court of Prince Yaroslav was, in its time, the strongest in Europe. But, unfortunately, that was a short period. Due to the Tartar horde, the yoke, it was cut short.

There was a second period, a renaissance, in the 17th century, when Kiev again became the second or third center of education and culture in Europe. This is the Cossack period, when the Mohyla Academy was formed in Kiev.<sup>4</sup> Many students from Europe studied in Kiev. And I think that these traditions must be brought back to life, and sometime in the future, if we will consistently realize ourselves, we will be able to and should interact positively. Because our spiritual potential has not yet been charted to the end. *Nor has it been all destroyed.* There are great cultural traditions, with which Europe is not acquainted, and which could be fruitful for the European.

## Notes

1. Taras Shevchenko (1814-61) grew up as a serf, and became the beloved national poet and artist of Ukraine. His indefatigable fight for Ukraine's independence and for universal republican principles landed him in prison where, on orders from Russian Czar Nicholas I, he was forbidden to write or sketch. Singlehandedly, Shevchenko transformed the Ukrainian language into a poetic one. Mykhailo Drahomanov (1841-95) was a Ukrainian socialist and intellectual. Lesia Ukrainka (1871-1913) was the pen name of Ukraine's foremost poetess. Ivan Franko (1856-1916) became a leading Ukrainian writer, often seen as second only to Shevchenko.

2. It was in 1710 that Pylyp Orlyk drafted the *Pacta et constitutiones*, often referred to as the Bender Constitution, since it was written near the town of Bender in Ottoman-ruled Moldova. There the forces of Ukrainian hetman Ivan Mazepa fled after the Battle of Poltava in 1709, which marked the end of the Ukrainians' attempts to break away from Russia in that era. Orlyk was Mazepa's chancellor.

3. Ukrainian philosopher and poet Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722-94) was known as the "Ukrainian Socrates."

4. The Mohyla Academy, the leading educational institution in the Slavic world, was founded by Petro Mohyla, metropolitan of Kiev who was regarded as the leading Orthodox churchman of 17th-century Ukraine.