
Interview: Viktor Kuzin

New bureau seeks to revitalize Russia's human rights movement

Viktor Kuzin is a Russian human rights activist and former member of the Moscow City Council (Mossoviet), who visited the United States in July and October of 1993 (see EIR, Nov. 5, 1993, p. 60). The Moscow Bureau for Human Rights Defense Without Borders was founded on Kuzin's initiative on Nov. 25, 1993, Mossoviet having been disbanded in October, as a result of Boris Yeltsin's violent overthrow of parliamentary institutions in Russia. At Mossoviet, Kuzin headed the Subcommittee on the Defense of Civil Rights. The new bureau is intended to continue work in the area of human rights defense, both in Russia and abroad. The name of the organization highlights his view, that only international efforts for human rights can succeed under present circumstances, as the campaign for freeing Lyndon LaRouche exemplifies. Kuzin spoke to EIR from Moscow on Dec. 22, 1993.

EIR: There exist many international and national organizations with similar names, which say that they are acting for human rights. What is the sense and the justification for setting up another human rights organization?

Kuzin: Unfortunately, respect for human rights has not improved in proportion to the growth of the number of human rights organizations. Strange as it might seem, the situation rather has deteriorated. This is a universal pattern. Another consistent pattern, is that the violation of such elementary human rights as the right to life and decent living conditions has become massive.

EIR: What are the reasons for this, in your view?

Kuzin: As the collapse of the communist system showed, none of the states existing today has treated human rights as an absolute value, or the protection and observance of those rights as the highest criterion of an effective domestic or foreign policy.

Unfortunately, there are still no players in world politics, who would defend the sanctity of the individual, as against egoistical, parochial interests. We encounter an attitude to the philosophy and practice of human rights defense, on the part of the state, which consists exclusively in playing with and manipulating human rights for narrow purposes, in the struggle for power. This means that the attitude toward human rights is determined by what is politically opportune. It is subordinate.

Therefore we can say for sure, that all the best known and flourishing human rights defense organizations today, those whose activity is approved at the state level, are really neither independent, nor truly concerned with human rights. Their approach to the evaluation of various human rights violations, sometimes very crude ones, is not based on law; it is a purely political approach. The examples which you and I might know best would be the reaction of these organizations to the preplanned mass murder of innocent people, committed by partisans of Boris Yeltsin on Oct. 3-4 in Moscow, in the course of their overthrowing the parliamentary republic in Russia, and also the reaction to the conviction and sentencing to long prison terms, on fabricated accusations, of activists of the political movement headed by Lyndon LaRouche in the United States.

EIR: What concept of human rights activity would you counterpose to the existing state of affairs?

Kuzin: There is essentially nothing new in how I see human rights activity: The freedom of the individual, guaranteed by the norms of international law, should be fully defended, regardless of his political or other beliefs. Such individual freedom, corresponding to the natural variety of forms of life, is a value in and of itself, insofar as it represents the only inexhaustible source of intellectual and material wealth for society, society's ability to overcome any obstacle in the path of progress.

It is also important to stress that any freedom in society can only exist in the framework of law, which acts as the necessary measures of freedom, and without which freedom itself turns into caprice. Law and the state, which guarantees obedience to the law, should act as guarantors of the harmony of interests of the individual and society. The task of human rights activity is to constantly prod the state to do this, in accord with its true purpose.

EIR: What are the necessary conditions for this?

Kuzin: First of all, the most serious and hard to eliminate obstacle on the path to success today is the existence of a persistent tendency everywhere, toward the moral bestialization of mankind, as a result of the global deterioration of the quality of the social environment, the absolute reduction of the quantity, as well as the reduced accessibility, of the mate-



EIR's Webster Tarpley (left) interviews Russian human rights activist Viktor Kuzin on "The LaRouche Connection" cable television show, July 1993. Translator Rachel Douglas is on the right. Kuzin, former member of the Moscow City Council, has recently founded the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights Defense Without Borders.

rial basis for life, necessary to sustain the majority of individuals alive today at a decent moral, spiritual, and intellectual level.

The collapse of the communist system did not lead to the expected rejection of previous approaches in politics. On the contrary, totalitarian, anti-liberal and anti-democratic phenomena, under a somewhat new guise, are gaining strength everywhere, and can rely today on support and solidarity from the ruling elite of the countries of the West and from the former communist *nomenklatura*, who jointly strive to attain absolute world hegemony at any cost and using any means.

But bolshevism and confrontation, which have been the very essence of traditional approaches in politics, make this an illusory goal. The further inevitable, senseless, and simply unproductive waste of intellectual and material resources, which accompanies such a model of development, deprives that ruling elite itself of any future, since it provides no means to cope with a whole array of looming global crises (energy, ecology, food, the growth of mafia criminality). These problems today are international in scope and therefore cannot be solved by anyone individually, but only all together. Reason and moral considerations require the united efforts of many countries and social groups, elimination of confrontation, and reining in of narrowly egoistical interests in politics and economics. This understanding should become the fundamental element of a modern political elite, whereupon the state will be able to fulfill its assigned role as the guarantor of rights.

Second, we need special qualities from people working

in the area of human rights defense. Any organization is, first and foremost, the people who comprise it. Considering the difficulty of the tasks we face, as well as the likelihood of repression by the authorities, I have invited my closest co-thinkers to join the bureau—jurists, journalists, scientists, and others, people of intellectual audacity, civic courage, independence of thought, competence, good conscience, and responsibility.

Since the bureau intends to speak out both on human rights violations in Russia and on human rights violations in other countries, including the United States, it plans to have representatives abroad. We realize that the position of the bureau and the framework of its activity are such, that steps it takes may cause dissatisfaction both in the West and in the East. Members of the bureau are fully conscious of this and treat it calmly.

A weak point of our organization, which significantly constrains its potential for action, is the lack of any material or financial base as yet. We need to be circumspect, and we absolutely exclude accepting any subsidies from the state or from organizations we do not know. Therefore, at least for now, we are unable to devote all our time to bureau work. All the members of the bureau, including myself, have to spend a good amount of time working for compensation at other jobs. I, for instance, spend 12 to 16 hours a day on other matters. But such is the price of independence. And without independence, our activity would be meaningless. Isn't that problem what led to the moral bankruptcy of the traditional human rights defense organizations? We don't want to repeat their fate.