

Death of a Young Political Gadfly—Oleksandr A. Kryvenko in Memoriam (13 May 1963 to 9 April 2003); Or, Reflections on Ukrainian Politics and Foreign Policy in 2003–2005

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The good die young.¹

If you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the State by God; and the State is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the State, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me.²

I interviewed the late Oleksandr Anatoliyovych Kryvenko twice: in Lviv on 29 December 1991, or exactly four weeks after the overwhelming independence referendum and first popular presidential election;³ and in Kyiv on 29 April 2002, two-and-a-half years after Ukraine had been rejected as a possible candidate for full membership in the European Union (EU) and about eighteen months after the discovery of Georgiy Gongadze's horribly mutilated body in a forest near Kyiv.⁴ Admittedly, neither in 1991 nor in 2002 was Kryvenko my first choice for an interview: his name had first been brought up by friends and acquaintances. The manner of his death on 9 April 2003 (he perished in what seemed to be a one-car automobile accident) really jolted my memory. I reviewed the tapes and notes from my 1991 interview and the extensive notes from my 2002 meeting with Kryvenko, and came to the conclusion that I was sitting on major documents from Ukraine's recent history, bearing on Ukrainian domestic politics but also on Ukrainian foreign policy, particularly in the field of Ukraine's relations with Poland and with the great powers of the EU. Hence my belated attempt to give Kryvenko his due.

A young lady in Lviv, who had been most helpful in arranging all my interviews in that city in late December 1991, suggested that I might want to talk to an outstanding leader of the younger generation, Oleksandr A. Kryvenko. I said that I was game, and she led me to a kind of garage or former warehouse, where the editorial board and the mail room of the weekly *Post-Postup* (*Post-Progress*) were located. Kryvenko was the editor-in-chief of *Post-Postup*. But his business card also showed that he was the chairman of the committee (*komisiya*) for youth affairs of the Lviv Provincial Council (*oblasna rada*), where the chief executive was Vyacheslav Chornovil. Beside Kryvenko sat his deputy on the youth committee, Levko Zakharchyshyn.

Zakharchyshyn participated in our conversation or semi-formal interview, but, as a rule, he deferred to Kryvenko.

I did not know who Kryvenko was, but found a relatively complete biographical entry on him in a 1998 book on “Who’s Who in Ukrainian Politics.”⁵ There was no comparable entry on Zakharchyshyn. Zakharchyshyn, who is still alive, played a leading role in the youth movement of Ukraine. He is a leader of Ukraine’s Plast (Scouting), which he headed from 1997 to 2003.⁶ In the 1998 reference book, Kryvenko has been clearly identified as a journalist by profession, even though he did participate in politics and held the office of chairman of the youth affairs committee of the Lviv Provincial Council until 1994. He was born on 13 May 1963 in the city of Lviv. Though his given name Oleksandr is relatively common in Galicia, the surname Kryvenko is not, nor is his father’s first name (Anatoliy). Reportedly, Kryvenko’s father was from the central regions of Ukraine.⁷ Kryvenko attended the Philological Faculty (Liberal Arts Division) of Lviv University from 1982 to 1987. He was on the Staff of the Department (*kafedra*) of Ukrainian Literature at Lviv University. He was one of the organizers and activists of the “dissident” Lviv society. From April 1989 on, he published and edited the newspaper *Postup* (*Progress*). According to fellow journalist Roman Woronowycz, the daily *Postup* “became one of the first popular newspapers that ascribed to an independent, Western style of reporting, but with a heavy dose of sharp wit, biting irony and satire.”⁸ Kryvenko was one of the founding members of the organization Memorial (Dedicated to the Memory), which together with the better-known Russian branch tried to bring to light and sometimes literally unearth the crimes of Stalin and of his successors. He was also one of the founding members of Rukh, or the Ukrainian popular movement for political reform and soon for independence. He was a delegate to the founding Congress of Rukh in September 1989, in Kyiv, though he does not appear to have been in the Congress’s leadership group. According to his entry in the 1998 reference book, he was also one of the charter members of the Organization of Ukrainian Youth (*Tovarystvo Ukrain’skoi Molodi*). Among his hobbies and avocations are listed the theater and esoteric pursuits. From July 1991 until April 1995 he served as founder and editor-in-chief of *Post-Postup*.

Post-Postup was regarded as one of the first newspapers that were rather critical of the government and the establishment. This paper defined Kryvenko as a leader in the field. Reportedly, Kryvenko was quite aware of his mission and the possible dangers involved. He relished the fact that some from the establishment threatened to sue him—and did so. Kryvenko lost, paid his fine and was ready to do it again (with a typical mischievous twinkle in his eyes) if he could only bring the people’s attention to certain issues.⁹

After leaving *Post-Postup*, Kryvenko switched over to electronic media. From May until November 1995, under President Leonid D. Kuchma, he was editor-in-chief of the television news programs *Windows* and *Windows into the World*, which, according to Woronowycz, were developed with U.S. private investment. From April 1996 until

at least February 1998 (the cut-off-date for copy for the 1998 reference book), Kryvenko was the chief editor of the Windows television information agency.

In February 1996, Kryvenko, whose father had been born in central Ukraine and who therefore felt himself at home as much in Kyiv as in Lviv, entered politics on the national level. He became a member of the Political Council of the National Democratic Party, from which he resigned in June of 1997. In September 1996, he was appointed a member of the Prime Minister's Council of Experts, with the rank of councilor. From October 1996 until 1997 he served as the Deputy Chief of the Press Service of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers. This would put Kryvenko in the Press Service under both Prime Ministers Pavlo I. Lazarenko (who formally, at least, held the office until 2 July 1997) and Valeriy P. Pustovoytenko (who assumed that office on 16 July 1997). Lazarenko had originally been a close ally of Kuchma, until he developed political ambitions of his own and became Kuchma's arch-enemy.¹⁰ In any case, Kryvenko left politics in February 1998. He became news director of the very popular television station Studio 1 + 1. According to Woronowycz, he left that station in June 1999 "after editorial policy disagreements how to cover the presidential elections [of November 1999] that were then heating up."¹¹

When I first met Kryvenko in 1991, he was 28 years old, a distinguished journalist and a leading member of the Lviv Provincial Council. Kryvenko was also involved in the cause of Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation, as a member of the Council's group that traveled to Poland and met with their counterparts in Polish politics. I said that I was anxious to talk to him as a representative of the young elite, who might have different ideas from the older elite or the Galician political establishment. In any case, I said, a little teasingly, that they have already predicted the Lviv establishment's Waterloo. As I recall, there was not only an article but a cartoon of Vyacheslav Chornovil and his friends in a current issue of *Post-Postup*. It should also be pointed out that that the written word might be misleading in that it could not convey the charm of Kryvenko's personality. He was tall, very slim and almost elegant in his appearance, and his tone and semi-apologetic demeanor softened the calculated bluntness of his words. He was indeed committed, or what the French call *engagé*, but he was anything but pompous. Serious, yes, possibly even a *militant*, which is the better word for the English term "activist," but never self-satisfied and self-important.

In our conversation, Kryvenko parried my characterization of him as a leading member of the young, anti-establishment elite. He said, I paraphrase, that if I wanted to call him and his friends elite members, that was my own responsibility. But he admitted that there were frictions between him and the people in Chornovil's circle. He said, "I do not know how well informed [about the current political situation] you are, but to help you out with orientation, here are some general propositions. I, Levko Zakharchyshyn and a group of people and another group of deputies in the Lviv Provincial Council, for a number of reasons, perhaps because of our difference in age, or because of a different mental outlook, have somewhat different political views than those shared in today's Ukrainian society by the establishment, as you

put it. As a rule, we refer to them by the official term of *shestydesyatnyky* [men of the 1960s] or by the unofficial term *stari banyaky* [literally, ‘old pots’ or ‘geezers’].” I deeply respected and had talked to some of the “geezers,” for instance Mykola Rudenko in his apartment in Kyiv, and, on the whole, I had been strongly impressed by my fresh interview with Chornovil. Noticing my dumbfounded expression, Kryvenko tried to pass his remark off as a kind of joke, evidently not meant to be published. He never used the unofficial pejorative term again, only the official term *shestydesyatnyky*, but for all his personal charm he knew very well that his unofficial aside would stick in my mind, for good, and that he had provided the strongest emphasis possible for his analysis of the concrete differences between his group and the Galician establishment.

He continued, “The differences lay in a certain kind of opposition [*protystoyanni*], in discussions that were sometimes not enough of the parliamentary type, of legal debates, about, let’s say [*nu!*], [the proper] roads for the development of society in the Lviv Region. This discussion spills out [*vykhlyupovuyet’sya* in the original is much more expressive—Y.B.] from the corridors of the sessions of the Council, from the work of the [executive] organs, ends up on the pages of the press, is reflected in the declarations of public organizations, in discussions on television. As for me, this is *the normal state of affairs*” (emphasis added). For once, Kryvenko used the word “normal” in the affirmative sense of “as it really should be,” as contrasted with the frequent exculpatory use of the word by many Kyiv residents, who mean “it is lousy, but what can you expect from the present Ukrainian government?” Evidently Kryvenko enjoyed such a free-ranging debate. I regret that I did not see him on television, which would have been the natural medium for his cool sardonic wit. After that dramatic introduction Kryvenko explained that he disagreed with the current Ukrainian government in Lviv on not introducing free market reforms immediately. He and his group, which soon would be organized as a political party, wanted a free economic market and a free market in ideas. He was confident that his own paper would become a political and also an economic success. Zakharchyshyn joined the discussion here and said that he regretted very much that former dissidents who had been persecuted by the Soviet regime had “very quickly” adopted some of the Soviet methods of character assassination once they themselves were in power. It was Zakharchyshyn who decried “the pathological non-acceptance of the opinion of others.”

Granted that Kryvenko did not succeed in establishing his own political party and granted that even he could not explain how best to solve the problem of intermittent water supply in Lviv and how to obtain milk without queuing up at 3 a.m., I found his advocacy of the plunge into the free market both refreshing and far-sighted. He regretted that his colleagues from Rukh would cite one excuse after another for avoiding radical reforms. He said that the Communist business structures, created under Gorbachev, were strong enough to prevail against the policies of the Ukrainian government. He wanted the government to open up the field for all genuine entrepreneurs and free-marketers, who then would help take care of the problems of the

economically disadvantaged. He did not want the government to delay the introduction of a really free market as if to protect the disadvantaged from the Communist business structures. Thinking over that part of the interview now, I have been struck to what extent Kryvenko's economic thinking might have been influenced by the experience in Poland, where the free market was introduced almost with a vengeance by Minister of the Economy Leszek Balcerowicz.

We discussed briefly the state of Ukrainian–Polish relations after Kryvenko dropped the remark that whatever non-violent civic actions Rukh would take in Galicia, the Jews would “support” them, while the Poles would merely “tolerate” them. In whatever capacity, whether as an activist of Rukh, or deputy of the Lviv Provincial Council, Kryvenko, who spoke fluent Polish, was engaged in advancing Polish–Ukrainian relations already in 1991. He wisely observed that on the official Kyiv–Warsaw level the relations were good, but that on the human level they were strained. Older Ukrainians were aghast that the historic border city Peremyshl' would never become Ukrainian again, and some older Poles could not emotionally let go of the city of Lviv, which they would call by its Polish name, Lwow. Already in 1991 Kryvenko held out the prospect that the Polish and the Ukrainian youth would achieve a genuine, “normal” reconciliation. The more so that Kryvenko and Zakharchyshyn and their group strongly believed in a liberal political, or civic, concept for the Ukrainian nation, as opposed to the non-democratic ethnic nationalism embraced by many older Ukrainians. Somewhat unexpectedly Kryvenko even praised the newly elected President Leonid M. Kravchuk, saying that he might be a Communist and a KGB officer (sic) but he was a “political Ukrainian.”

Of particular interest was Kryvenko's analysis of the composition of the Lviv Provincial Council, the very body that Chornovil, the Provincial Governor, had called “absolutely unneeded” in the interview earlier in the day. Kryvenko admitted that between 60 and 80% of the deputies were “politicians by accident” (*vypadkovi polityky*). With approaching independence the old caucus organizations of Communists and anti-Communists had broken down and on the surface the Provincial Council exhibited the “seeming monolith” of the Bloc of Democratic Forces. But the 200-person strong Council had some deputies who had been given a sinecure because they had been imprisoned by the Soviet regime; others had participated in one civic action or another. The quorum was set very high at 134 deputies, and frequently the quorum could not be met. In his interview with me, Chornovil had ridiculed the notion of having a parliament in every village, which to him was now a hindrance. Kryvenko would have liked it if Chornovil had picked an inner core of 30–40 professional people from among the deputies of the Provincial Council, but Chornovil, to Kryvenko's regret, had chosen the alternative of ad hoc personal allies. Kryvenko even hinted that “none of the more influential youth organizations” had supported Chornovil's presidential campaign. Admittedly, Rukh had chosen as many as three presidential candidates from among themselves: besides Chornovil, there were the nuclear scientist and democratic politician Ihor R. Yukhnovsky and

the lawyer Levko Lukyanenko. Lukyanenko, who had worked in Western Ukraine, had the distinction of having been secretly sentenced to death for his political activity in 1961. Altogether the interview with Kryvenko and his deputy Zakharchychyn was enlightening: although the difference between Kryvenko and the “geezer” in Rukh had been overdrawn, there were legitimate disagreements on economic and political affairs, with Kryvenko proving quite far-sighted in criticizing the economic half-measures of the new Ukrainian government,

When I interviewed Kryvenko for the second and last time on 29 April 2002, in Kyiv, he was the Director of the Hromads’ke Radio, which is usually translated as “Public Radio,” but is better rendered as “Radio for a Civic Society.” According to Woronowycz, Kryvenko wanted to make his new radio station, which had been established only in February 2002, “as influential a media force as National Public Radio is in the United States.”¹² At the same time, Kryvenko led an anti-Kuchma opposition group, Khartiya 4 (Charter 4), which had been founded in June 2001.¹³

Charter 4 and the Radio’s editorial board shared the same office when I visited him. A crew of roofers was working on Kryvenko’s house and the regular entrance to the building had been blocked off with yellow plastic tape. With the help of the friend’s son, however, who had arranged the interview and who just happened to walk out of the building, I was able to enter through a hidden garden entrance. I mention this because I gained the distinct impression that the roofers could have doubled as a political surveillance team. In any case, before talking to me Kryvenko demonstratively shut the open windows in the conference room.

What I did not fully know, when I revisited Kryvenko in 2002, was that he had acquired an excellent reputation in certain circles, particularly in the West. To quote from his autobiographical entry in a grant application: “I participated in dozens [*desyatkakh*] of scientific and practical conferences, seminars and round tables on the subject of the development of the media in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Switzerland (1991–2000); participated in a special program sponsored by the US Department of State in 1994; taught at the International Institute of Linguistics and Law in 1998 and at the Internews-Ukraine [Agency] from 1999–2000.” As administrative experience he cited that he had worked “for a year as deputy director for press relations of the Ukrainian Government.”¹⁴ Not unexpectedly, after the discovery of Gongadze’s body Kryvenko joined the anti-Kuchma political movement. He became a member of the Presidium of the Public Association “For Truth,” and since 14 February 2002 he had been Acting Press Secretary of the oppositional Forum of National Salvation.¹⁵ Kryvenko was also highly regarded by his colleagues, who elected him a vice president of the Association of Ukrainian Writers.

Wearing another hat, that of the Director of the Ukrainian Polish Journalists Club “Bez uperedzhen” (Without Prejudice), Kryvenko had organized a high-level visit to Poland in the crucial month of March 2001, during which he met with his counterpart in Poland, the Honorable Marek M. Siwec, the Head of the Polish National Security Bureau, who had started out his political career as a journalist. More to the

point, part of the meeting was joined by Siwec's immediate superior, the President of the Polish Republic, Aleksander Kwasniewski. Kwasniewski on his own, but also invoking the authority of the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and the President of France Jacques Chirac, promised the visiting Ukrainian delegation that he would talk to Kuchma and try to resolve the dispute between the government and the opposition politically.

As he told me, Kryvenko himself flew to Poland on 9 March 2001. This particular date is significant because the anti-Kuchma demonstrations on 9 March 2001, the birthday of the Ukrainian national poet and moral leader Taras Shevchenko, had turned rather ugly. This meant that Kryvenko had not guided, or even participated in, the first big public confrontation with Kuchma and his supporters. But was his visit to Poland deliberately timed to follow the probable confrontation on Shevchenko's birthday? I did not ask him that and he did not say on his own. With the financial support of Freedom House, Kryvenko assembled a very respectable group for the seminar in the Polish Sejm (lower house of Parliament) on the subject of "Ukraine and Poland in the Period of Transformation: The Media and the Government."¹⁶ There were three deputies of the Ukrainian Parliament. Oleksandr Moroz, the Socialist Party leader and Kuchma's opponent in the 1999 presidential election, who had also publicized the Gongadze tapes in November 2000, could not go himself, so in his place Kryvenko chose Ihor Koliushko, MP, a member of the Polish Ukrainian Deputies' Group. Second was Stanislav Nikolayenko, MP, and third was Taras Chornovil, MP, the son of Vyacheslav Chornovil, who had been killed in an automobile accident in March 1999. There were two persons representing the liberal arts: Myroslav Popovych, a professor at the Kievan Mohyla National University, and Taras Voznyak, the editor of the elite journal *Yi (Double-Dot I)*. In addition to Kryvenko, there were two journalists: Mykola Veresen', the program director on the Studio 1+1 television channel, a successor to Kryvenko's old position, and Vladyslav Kas'kiv, the President of the Coalition of Public Organizations "Freedom of Choice." With the clashes between the Kuchma and anti-Kuchma forces in Ukraine, it goes without saying that the public seminars and press conferences were very successful, or, in short, mobbed. Much more significant in the long run is the confidential discussion between the six Polish speaking members of the Ukrainian delegation, that is, between the three national deputies (Koliushko, Nikolayenko and Chornovil), Voznyak, Popovych and Kryvenko, on one side, and Marek Siwec, on the other, particularly when this conversation was joined for about 20 or 25 minutes by President Kwasniewski. By the way, when leaving Kryvenko's office I received the clear impression that Kryvenko wanted this story public and that he was somewhat disappointed when he offered it to three unnamed Western journalists who visited Ukraine in the company of the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, but it fell on deaf ears. Kryvenko himself, on page two of his grant report, summarized the result of his trip as follows: "The overarching theme of the meetings, conversations and discussions was the proposition that the Ukrainian-Polish partnership was a 'non-opportunistic'

[*teza pro 'nadkon'yukturnist'*] and strategic one, and that there was a need to continue to meet on a systematic basis for a mutual exchange of ideas." But let us return to the confidential information that Kryvenko gave Bilinsky in April 2002.

When on 14 March 2001 President Kwasniewski joined the discussions that were held without an interpreter between Siwiec and the six Ukrainians, the following points were brought up. Kwasniewski objected to the Ukrainian opposition calling Kuchma a "Milosevic," because it implied that he had been supporting a Milosevic in Ukraine for eight years. There was also some discussion of whether Kwasniewski's offer to Ukraine of the round table at which the Polish Communists negotiated with leaders of Solidarity, which offer the anti-Kuchma forces seized enthusiastically, was historically appropriate. But in the end President Kwasniewski promised that he would convince Kuchma to enter into a dialogue with the opposition, because he knew words that Kuchma would understand. Kwasniewski also said that he had authority from Chancellor Schroeder and President Chirac, the two political leaders of the European Union, to which Ukraine allegedly aspired, to raise with Kuchma the possibility of a political solution to the Gongadze crisis. Furthermore, if new elections were to be held in Ukraine, Kwasniewski told the visiting Ukrainians, he would guarantee that those elections would be held without "substitutions." In any case, Kuchma and Kwasniewski were scheduled to meet the next day (15 March 2001) in Kazimierz Dolny; perhaps the issues could be resolved amicably on the spot.

It was not to be. Later on the eve of the public Kwasniewski–Kuchma meeting, Polish journalists told their Ukrainian colleagues, "We have not ever seen [President] Kwasniewski looking so depressed [*depresywno*]." During the joint press conference on 15 March President Kuchma declared bluntly, "Let the opposition first register with our Ministry of Justice and only then will we talk to them." Lack of fundamental political justice was, however, precisely the problem in Ukraine in 2000 and 2001. But Kuchma correctly gauged that Kwasniewski's, Schroeder's and Chirac's offer of good offices would probably lead to the opposition demanding his resignation, possibly even without a full pardon in the Gongadze affair, and that he could tough it out by buying off strategic members of the domestic opposition and with the diplomatic support of Vladimir Putin's Russia. As a token concession to the European West, Kuchma dismissed his Minister of the Interior, Yury Kravchenko, on 26 March 2001 because Kravchenko featured in the Gongadze tapes. Significantly rumors about Kravchenko's dismissal began circulating in Kyiv as early as March 17, that is, two days after the public meeting between Kwasniewski and Kuchma.¹⁷ But, to return to my interview with Kryvenko, the personal relations between the two presidents cooled and they did not meet again for six or seven months. From my own research I also know that when President Kwasniewski visited Kyiv on the historic tenth anniversary of independence in August 2001, he did it only for one day, 23 August 2001, skipping the big military parade and "birthday party" on 24 August 2001, at which the main guest of honor was Russian President Putin.

On 9 April 2003 Kryvenko was killed when the Volkswagen Golf, in which he was traveling as a passenger, left the Kyiv–Chernihiv highway in the vicinity of Kyiv “at a slight swerve in the pavement and hit a tree.” His car was going at more than 65 miles an hour when it left the road. Was this a genuine accident, or were Kryvenko and his driver “Gizo Grdlidze [Grdzlidze?], a projects director in Ukraine for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] and a diplomat with the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,”¹⁸ who also died instantly, done in? To the best of my knowledge, only one source, the somewhat tabloid opposition weekly *Mist* (*Meest*, or *Bridge*) has made the charge¹⁹ and it is *Mist*, not the more responsible *Ukrainian Weekly*, which provided the alternative spelling for the name of Kryvenko’s driver. I believe that the account in *Mist* may be more accurate than the somewhat restrained obituary by Woronowycz in the *Ukrainian Weekly*. The Volkswagen Golf, whose American version is called the same, is a good reliable car and some very suspicious circumstances characterize that one-car collision. Furthermore, under President Kuchma the official Ukrainian investigation of the murder of another Georgian or half-Georgian, Georgiy Gongadze, has been so botched up that even book scholars may be excused when they no longer insist that the case be proved “beyond any reasonable doubt,” only that the case made be a plausible one.

Woronowycz mentions that “President Leonid Kuchma issued a statement of condolence and called Mr. Kryvenko’s contribution to Ukrainian journalism ‘difficult to over-estimate.’”²⁰ At the same time, it is Woronowycz who points out that the state militia stopped Kryvenko’s car just 15–20 minutes before the collision for speeding and that the investigators did not say whether either of the passengers had been drinking. Woronowycz remains silent on a crucial circumstance: whether or not Kryvenko’s driver and Kryvenko himself were made to leave the car, so that it could have been mechanically tampered with. He does mention an investigator’s hypothesis that the driver may have fallen ill or asleep at the wheel, but how plausible is that after you have just been warned or even given a speeding ticket? The somewhat blunt accusation by Ihor Hulyk in *Mist* suggests an ingenious solution that the unknown killers may have used a laser gun from a distance to temporarily disable the driver for several seconds. Allegedly this was told to Hulyk by an unnamed former local deputy, who in turn learnt this from an equally unnamed former driver of a well-known general. But a key element even in a sophisticated, clean pseudo-accident was that the killers had to be in touch with the surveillance team in order to set up the laser beam trap—hence the stopping of Kryvenko’s car some 15–20 minutes prior to the collision or some 15 miles away from “a slight swerve in the pavement.”

Who profited from Kryvenko’s death? There is no evidence that President Kuchma himself complained about Kryvenko’s gadfly journalism and Kryvenko’s attempt to bring the influence of President Kwasniewski to bear on a solution of the still murky Gongadze affair. (In my judgment, President Kuchma did not order Gongadze’s murder, only surveillance and harassment, but rogue elements in the Ukrainian police killed Gongadze and then made sure that his body would be

found.) As I see it, there are pro-Russian rogue elements in Ukrainian politics for whom the pro-Polish and also pro-American Kryvenko was both an anathema and a constant challenge. In addition, Kryvenko would make fun of them. To be honest, Ukrainian semi-authoritarian politics and the so-called multi-vector, windmill-like foreign policy under Kuchma could only be accepted if you maintained your sense of humor. Kryvenko was a youthful gadfly who had kept his sense of humor—so Kryvenko had to die.

Supplement (25 April 2005)

Volodymyr Pavliv, who had been on the editorial board of both *Post-Postup* in Lviv and also of the weekly *Polityka i Kul'tura* (*Politics and Culture*) in Kyiv from 1999 to 2000, which was another paper edited by Kryvenko, has confirmed all but one of my analyses.²¹ Yes, the objective of Kryvenko and his associates had been “intellectual provocation.”²² Kryvenko had indeed been invited to join the government team of then Prime Minister Lazarenko and he stayed awhile in government service under the new Prime Minister Pustovoytenko. His service in the Cabinet of Ministers led to his appointment as news director of TV Studio 1 + 1. Pavliv even explained why Kryvenko had willingly joined the supporters of Lazarenko: he had thought that more than anybody else Lazarenko would be able to defeat Kuchma in the next presidential election.²³ Almost sensational and completely new to me was Pavliv’s revelation that in 2000 Kryvenko was privately approached by professional journalist, Oleksandr Martynenko, whom he both knew and respected, with the proposition he take over Martynenko’s job of press secretary to Kuchma. Kryvenko, who badly wanted to be able to influence events from within the government, was inclined to accept the offer when tended. But as the informal soundings by Martynenko continued, the Gongadze murder scandal blew up most publicly, with Moroz reading excerpts from the presidential tapes in Parliament in November 2000. Kryvenko immediately backed off, “fate” having “again” saved his “reputation” for moral and political integrity in the nick of time.²⁴ Bilinsky, though not Pavliv, would also note in passing that Kryvenko’s refusal to accept the job of press secretary to Kuchma cannot have endeared Kryvenko to the loyalists among Kuchma’s entourage.

Ultimately, Kryvenko felt that he had been defeated in the war against Kuchma and his regime. He fell into a depression, ceased writing as felicitously as before, cut off almost completely his contacts with his old friends, such as Pavliv, and took to drinking.²⁵ Kryvenko’s depression also appears to have been related to his separation from his wife and five children several years earlier.²⁶

Pavliv is first-rate in showing why Kryvenko became disenchanted with the totality of Ukrainian politics, why he sensed that he had lost the war, not just a battle. Kryvenko objected to Kuchma’s re-election in 1999, on the second ballot, as he did to fellow Galicians voting, on the first ballot, for ex-KGB General Yevhen

Marchuk, who was warmly endorsed by the former political prisoner Levko Lukyanenko. He was even more upset when before 1999 the political opposition, which should have brought about real change in Ukraine, tried to join the government itself. “Instead of telling the people’s community [*suspil’stvu*] the truth, they began their exercise program [*vpravlyalysya*] in political pragmatism.”²⁷

More specifically, Pavliv—and Kryvenko—have accused their fellow democrats of failing to ask the really tough questions about Ukraine. In Pavliv’s words:

Giving as their reason the need to preserve public order [and social peace], the Ukrainian elites, together with the people [*suspil’stvom*], did not engage in a reevaluation of either the ancient or the recent history of their present state, but contented themselves with the creation of popular “non-conflictive” myths. Not having talked through [*prohovoryvshy*] the problems of the past, not having drawn up a [true] balance of our own history, we were unable to work out a common vision for the future. Because of that, we [still] do not have a common public opinion where to go—whether East or West. The groups of oligarchs, which had already been formed at that time and which were gaining in strength, stayed in power throughout all this period. They were not only not doing anything to consolidate society, but they did their level best to prevent such a consolidation.²⁸

In an end note to this paragraph, Pavliv is very explicit on what particular questions the Ukrainian elites failed to ask:

To this day, the Ukrainians have not formed a common opinion on such questions as, for instance, who is a national hero and who a criminal: the soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) or the officials of the NKVD? Is the accession of Western Ukraine to the present Ukrainian state a consequence of the reunification of Ukrainian lands or of Soviet occupation?²⁹

To Kryvenko, this appeared a veritable catalogue of failings—hence his acute perception of, and intense reaction to being defeated in the political war.

Both in his book³⁰ and in our brief conversation at Warsaw University, Pavliv, who confirmed that Kryvenko had participated in a meeting with President Kwasniewski in March 2001, denied that Kryvenko’s death had been caused by the Ukrainian regime. After all, Kryvenko had been drinking. Possibly, allowed Pavliv, the killers were after the Georgian diplomat, Gizo Grdlidze (Grdzeldze), who was driving the car and who was also employed by the OSCE. Very recently, in 2004, a week before our conversation in Warsaw, Ukrainian government sources had criticized the OSCE for excessively interfering in Ukraine’s political affairs.³¹

Not only this, but in his last essay on Kryvenko, Pavliv hints somewhat obliquely that Kryvenko was so depressed that he might have welcomed death, even by suicide. I infer this from the last paragraph on page 64 and the sentence at the end of that paragraph on page 65: “The rest was a matter of technical execution, of how” (“Dali bula sprava tekhniki”). Here I would strongly disagree with Pavliv. According to all accounts, Kryvenko was not behind the wheel of the car when it left the road. To commit suicide, Kryvenko would have had to murder his driver.

This would appear to be completely out of character for Kryvenko, with his sense of moral and political integrity.

This leads me back to the hypothesis that I regard as being the most plausible: Kryvenko and the Georgian and OSCE diplomat were killed by pro-Russian rogue elements in the Ukrainian government. That hypothesis is reinforced by one additional circumstance: in 2000, Kryvenko declined the offered job of Kuchma's press secretary, as any ethical person had to do after the murder of the internet journalist Gongadze.

In late April 2005, as this article is being revised for publication, some may ask: With Viktor Yushchenko being elected President of Ukraine in an internationally supervised third ballot 26 December 2004, has Kryvenko not been posthumously victorious in the political war and Pavliv much too pessimistic in his analysis? Secondly, will Yushchenko's government not promptly clear up the mystery of Gongadze's killing and, thirdly, also prove that Kryvenko died under the influence of alcohol and not as a consequence of an elaborate assassination plot?

There is great promise in the overdue assumption of presidential power by Yushchenko, who had been prime minister when Gongadze was killed. At the same time, the answer to those three questions is, on balance, negative. This is not so surprising if we consider that Yushchenko himself was almost poisoned to death in the course of his presidential campaign, despite having official bodyguards.

It is remarkable that President Kwasniewski, who had on 14 March 2001 promised the Ukrainian opposition an election "without substitution", was finally able to deliver on 26 December 2004, after he had openly enlisted for mediation the diplomatic support of the EU's Secretary General Javier M. Solana and the European Council's then president, the Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. Also present during the mediation negotiations and supporting Kwasniewski was Waldas Adamkus, President of Lithuania, who had been invited by Kuchma. Aid was also given to Yushchenko by US President George W. Bush, acting through US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and US Senator Richard G. Lugar. The cardinal difference between the Gongadze protests of 2000–2001 and the "Orange Revolution" of November–December 2004 was the numbers of Ukrainians willing to engage in non-violent confrontations: several tens of thousands in 2000–2001 and millions across the entire country, including hundreds of thousands on Independence Square in Kyiv, in 2004.³² The Ukrainian Supreme Court, the Ukrainian Parliament under Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn, and the armed forces yielded to popular mass action. Did Yushchenko, therefore, win the political war?

He won a major battle, but the outcome of the war will only be decided in the parliamentary elections of March 2006, to which he had to agree, together with some lessening in the authority of the office of the president. Yushchenko's opponent Viktor Yanukovych, despite Putin's support, was a very weak candidate. After winning the presidency, Yushchenko has literally to reverse course and deliver political goods within twelve months and thereby undo the corruption of ten years. Only after Yushchenko and his decisive and popular Prime Minister Yulia

Tymoshenko consolidate their power in March 2006, will they be able to ask all those questions that Kryvenko found unanswered.

Secondly, by neglecting to take certain precautions themselves, the new Yushchenko administration has set back the process of investigating Gongadze's murder. A key witness, the former Minister of the Interior Yury Kravchenko, whom Kuchma had fired from his police post on 26 March 2001 and then appointed to a high position in the tax police, was found dead with two bullet holes in his head on the morning of 4 March 2005, after he had been summoned the day before to appear in the General Procurator's Office as a witness in the Gongadze case. According to the "preliminary version" of the investigation conducted by the new Security Service, he had taken his own life. Despite the existence of a suicide note, this does not appear plausible. After the fact, several Members of Parliament and a minister and a Deputy Prime Minister criticized the new Yushchenko administration for not having prevented Kravchenko's death, by either assigning him bodyguards or putting him in protective custody.³³

With that political controversy, which arose from probable neglect, piled on top of Yushchenko's drastically compressed political and constitutional agenda, it would seem to me that the ultimate solution of the Gongadze murder of 2000 has—at the very least—been delayed. A fortiori, this applies to the dissolution of what remains a strong gut feeling on my part that Kryvenko was killed in 2003.

NOTES

1. "Appendix 3: Selected Proverbs," *The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus: American Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 1805.
2. Plato, "Apology," trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Bantam, 1986), p. 16.
3. In late December 1991, I had the honor of being received by the Greek Catholic Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk, who had led the "Church of the Catacombs." I briefly interviewed Vyacheslav Chornovil, in his office, and at greater length Ihor R. Yukhnovsky, who had graciously invited my research assistant and I to his home. At his Lviv University office I then talked to Viktor Pynzenyk, who had just been elected to the Supreme Rada (Parliament) in Kyiv and whom I had met before, when he gave a lecture at the University of Delaware. (Pynzenyk was late for his appointment, because he was involved in a minor automobile accident.)
4. In late April 2002, after I participated in an international conference in Kyiv on Ukraine's future—or, to be more exact, non-future—in the European Union, the son of a friend mentioned that he had just started working for Kryvenko and that Kryvenko could give me information that was well-nigh sensational. Since I was leaving Kyiv in two days, my new friend arranged for me to see his new superior the very next day, 29 April 2002, at 11 a.m.
5. "Kryvenko Oleksandra Anatoliyovych," *Kyivs'ke naukove tovarystvo im. Petra Mohyly; Seriya "Khto ye khto v Ukraini"* [Kyiv Scientific Society Named After Petro Mohyla; Series "Who's Who in Ukraine"], *Khto ye khto v ukrains'kiy politytsi; vypusk 4* [Who's Who in Ukrainian Politics, 4th edn] (Kyiv: Tov KIS, 1998), pp. 202–203.

6. I am indebted for this to an anonymous reviewer of the article.
7. Same source as in note 6.
8. Roman Woronowycz, Kyiv Press Bureau, "Leading Journalist Oleksander Kryvenko, 39, Killed in Car Accident Outside Kyiv," *Ukrainian Weekly* (Parsippany, NJ), Vol. 71, No. 15, 2003, p. 4. Henceforth cited as Woronowycz, "Obituary of Kryvenko."
9. Same source as in note 6.
10. Lazarenko's large entry in *Khto ye khto v ukrains'kiy politytsi; vypusk 4*, pp. 216–217, on p. 216 mentions that in September 1997 he became the president of the All-Ukrainian Political Association Hromada[Community]. Lazarenko's trial in a US federal court, on charges of money laundering, began on 15 March 2004. See Editorial, "Pochavsya sud nad Pavlom Lazarenkom" [The Lazarenko Trial Has Begun], *Svoboda* [Liberty] (Parsippany, NJ), Vol. 111, No. 12, 2004, pp. 1–3.
11. Woronowycz, "Obituary of Kryvenko."
12. *Ibid.*
13. Editorial, "Pokhovaly Oleksandra Kryvenka" [Oleksandr Kryvenko Has Been Buried], *Mist* (New York and Toronto), No. 15 (issue 262), 2003, p. 3. This, together with Ihor Hulyk's editorial column, is part one of its front-page story "Pam'yati Oleksandra Kryvenka: Ukraina vtratyta shche odnogo zhurnalista, yakyi vyboryuvav yii nezalezhnist'" [Oleksandr Kryvenko in Memoriam: Ukraine has Lost Another Journalist Who Had Successfully Struggled to Bring Her Independence].
14. Undated grant application. Document supplied by Oleksandr A. Kryvenko. According to an anonymous reviewer of the article, his visit to the United States in 1994 lasted two weeks.
15. "Pokhovaly Oleksandra Kryvenka." Date of February 14 from Bilinsky's interview with Kryvenko 29 April 2002.
16. [Letterhead:] Ukrain's'ko-pol's'kyi zhurnalisty'kyi klub "Bez uperedzhen'" [The Ukrainian–Polish Journalists Club "Without Prejudice"] [addresses in letterhead omitted], "Zvit pro vykorystannya hrantu vid Freedom House (No. PRU-RE-01-03), otrymanoho dlya poyzidky predstavnykiv ukrains'kykh politychnykh i intelektual'nykh elit u Varshavu na seminar v Seymi R[espubliki] P[ol'shchi] 'Ukraina i Pol'shcha v period transformatsiyi. Media i vlada' (13–15 bereznya 2001 roku)" [Report on the Utilization of the Grant from Freedom House . . . Which Was Received for the Travel to Warsaw of Representatives of the Ukrainian Political and Intellectual Elites (to Participate in) the Seminar in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland "Ukraine and Poland in the Period of Transformation: Media and the Government," March 13–15, 2001]. Two-pages document, undated, but signed and supplied by Oleksandr A. Kryvenko.
17. *Keesing's Record of World Events: News Digest for March 2001*, p. 44073.
18. Woronowycz, "Obituary of Kryvenko."
19. Ihor Hulyk, "Kolonka redaktora: Holyi vektor" [Editor's Column: Naked Vector], *Mist*, No. 15 (issue 262), 2003, p. 3. See also note 13.
20. Woronowycz, "Obituary of Kryvenko."
21. At Warsaw University, on 21 July 2004, I briefly talked with Volodymyr Pavliv, a close collaborator of Kryvenko. Mykola Ryabchuk, a member of the editorial board of Kyiv's journal *Krytyka* [Criticism] and a fellow paper-giver and participant in the Warsaw Special Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN), had strongly urged me to contact Pavliv, because he had just published a book on Kryvenko. Pavliv was working as a correspondent of Radio Free Europe and Liberty in Warsaw. The Ukrainian literary scholar Bazyli Nazaruk, of the Department of Ukrainian Philology of Warsaw University, helped me to locate Pavliv. Pavliv met with me during the ASN Convention, answered my questions and graciously gave me his 84-page book dedicated to the memory of Kryvenko.

22. Volodymyr Pavliv, *Syndrom prohranoyi viyny: 12 ese pro Oleksandra Kryvenka* [The Syndrome of Defeat in War: 12 Essays about Oleksandr Kryvenko] (Ivano-Frankivsk: "Lileya. . ." [Lily NV], 2004), p. 21.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15. Words in quotation marks are Pavliv's.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 58, 64.
26. As suggested by an anonymous reviewer of the article.
27. Pavliv, *Syndrom prohranoyi viyny*, p. 62.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 78, n. 43.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
31. Anton Vodiznyi, "Ukraine [Through the Deputy Head of the Foreign Ministry's Press Service—Y.B.] Says It Is Necessary to Reform the OSCE: Does Not Favor OSCE's Monitoring of Adherence to Human Rights," Ukrainian News, Kyiv, 13 July 2004, or Item No. 7, *The Action Ukraine Report-04*, No. 116, 15 July 2004, via morganw@patriot.net
32. Adrian Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution: Essay," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2, 2005, pp. 35–62; accessed through *The Action Ukraine Report*, No. 463, 17 April 2005, ArtUkraine.com@starpower.net
33. See: (1) Ukrains'ke natsional'ne informatsiynе ahentstvo [Ukrainian National Information Agency], "Resonant Event," *Ukrinform: News from Ukraine*, 5 March 2005, This is the fullest account, though with one error: it was on 3 March 2005 that Yury Kravchenko was summoned to testify the next day. This account gives several statements by President Yushchenko and criticisms by Members of Parliament Hryhory Omelchenko, Vladimir Stretovich and Andri [sic] Shkil; Minister of Transport and Communication Yevhen Chervonenko; and Vice-Premier Mykola Tomenko, <www.ukraine.be/news/actualit/a050305.html>. (2) "Kravchenko's Suicide Note Is Made Public. He Accused Kuchma," *Ukrains'ka pravda*, 5 March 2005; trans. Olga Bogatyrenko for UKL [Ukraine List], <www.ukrainianstudies.uottawa.ca/Ukraine_list/ukl340_8html>. This contains detailed description of the two head wounds. (3) Anna Arutunyan, "Ukrainian Journalist Murder Case Gains New Impetus," *Moscow News*, 9 March 2005, <english.mn.ru/issue.php?2005-9-3>. This misidentifies Socialist leader Alexander Moroz as a Communist; good analysis otherwise, especially in the *MN* file on Gongadze.

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