
Interview: I.Ya. Froyanov

Low wages causing our brain drain in science

I.Ya. Froyanov is the Dean of the History Faculty of St. Petersburg State University. The interview was conducted by Gabriele Liebig of the Schiller Institute in Germany and St. Petersburg journalist Konstantin Cheremnykh on Oct. 11, 1995.

EIR: Can you tell us about the situation of the university, and the history department in particular? What kind of problems are students and teachers facing?

Froyanov: The situation in contemporary Russian science is gloomy. We are undergoing a very deep crisis, not only due to some obvious circumstances, but also due to subjective factors. For example, inflation is not a lawful by-product of development, but the result of the fact that fools are managing the State. But it would not be the worst thing, if the problem were just those fools. Unfortunately, I have come to the conclusion, that there are also people in our government, who are hired by some foreign forces exercising influence on our country in this way.

One need not be a great intellectual to see that our country is falling into an abyss. According to independent experts, since 1984, State financing of science in general has decreased more than *17.4 times*.

First of all, that led to the freezing of several science programs. Whole institutes are cut off from any finances. The worst thing is, that this situation forces our scientists to go abroad, where they try to find new employment. I'll give you an example at our university: A large number of our scientists go on leave for long "business trips," sign contracts, and work in other countries. And, of course, they earn there much more than here. As a result, our scientists teach students abroad, while our students lose that opportunity. Of course, the education of our students becomes much worse.

The very low wages of scientists in Russia leads to a double "brain drain": it forces scientists either to go abroad, or it forces them into some commercial activity, some speculation, in order to make some money. Of course, such activity has nothing in common with scientific work, and moreover it is totally alien to science. But it consumes a lot of energy potential that is not used for what it should be used—for making science! Thus, scientific morale is being destroyed by money concerns. This, in turn, influences the atmosphere within the university, the relations among scientific teachers.

Ruble or dollar, money usually doesn't unite people, but separates them. This is the problem for our university as well as for our high school education.

EIR: The Schiller Institute in the West, in collaboration with the Schiller Institute in Moscow and St. Petersburg, aims at expanding a dialogue between scientists and politicians in East and West. We have found, that western politicians and the western public just don't know enough about the problems that Russian society is facing, and we therefore invite Russian scientists or politicians to write in our publications, and speak about the Russian crisis, and how they think it could be solved.

Froyanov: It seems to me that there is a unity between your mass media, which don't tell the truth about Russia, and our liberal mass media here, which don't tell the truth either. I suspect a common interest here. The question is: Who is behind that common interest? In former times, the West wouldn't publish what we wrote, and we didn't publish what they wrote. But now we have this very strange concert. I cannot help but suspect behind this an interest that wishes my country ill. From a historian's point of view, I could say: The West never needed a strong Russia, that was formerly so, why should it be different today? And this, although the Russian people are very friendly and peaceful.

EIR: I think, it is not quite true, that "the West" in general, that all western governments have an interest in weakening Russia, even though I can understand that it may look that way. The problem is the hidden power which in part controls, and in part viciously opposes western governments: the financial oligarchy, which runs the global financial system.

Froyanov: That's exactly what I meant, when I spoke of a certain interest, certain circles standing behind the policy to weaken Russia. Of course, I didn't mean the governments or all politicians in the West.

Moreover, after a certain period of our so-called "reforms," I hear that many sensible politicians in the West say that the devastating result of these "reforms" is very dangerous for the world, and not only for Russia itself.

EIR: Therefore we think, that this dialogue with people in Russia, who can give a truthful analysis about the situation, and what can be done about it, can be very helpful to influence the political situation in the West. Our people have to understand, what went so terribly wrong in the former Soviet Union, and what can be done against this financial oligarchy, which is ruining the economies in the East and in the West as well. Because this is the fundamental question for politicians in the West: Do they have the courage to stand up against, and implement political measures that will curtail the power of that bankrupt oligarchy?

Froyanov: My question is: Who is stronger, the International Monetary Fund, or the politicians in the West?

EIR: You have to take into account, that the financial system represented by the IMF is bankrupt. It will collapse soon; in fact, the process of its disintegration is already underway, as the Japanese banking crisis exemplifies. The dynamic of financial speculation has reached dimensions which can't go on. Already you see banks collapsing around the world, in Taiwan, in Argentina, in Japan, even in Germany.

American economist Lyndon LaRouche has warned for a long time, that the global financial system is going to break down. The president of the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland, Mr. Crocket, the unofficial chief of all European central banks, recently said that the control over financial events has proceeded "from the governments to the markets," in other words, the governments have lost control. And without proposing any valid measures to prevent it, he foresees another major financial crisis with losses going beyond anything in the past. We say, if that crash occurs, it is at the same time the crucial moment when the governments can and must regain control over economic and financial developments. At that point they have to make the financial system undergo an orderly bankruptcy reorganization and establish a new credit system that gives priority to the productive part of the national economies, to infrastructure, health care, and so forth.

Froyanov: I understand. I am a historian and not an economist, but it seems to me that this speculative financial bubble is only the visible aspect of an apparatus, which is based on certain secret societies. This is not only the problem of our country, but also for western countries.

EIR: We could mention the Mont Pelerin Society, or the less-known Club of the Isles, which we have described in an extensive report, entitled "The Coming Fall of the House of Windsor" [*EIR*, Oct. 28, 1994].

Froyanov: I saw a funny episode on television. When our economics minister, Yasin, was in the U.S. for talks with the IMF, he said (not thinking how strange it would sound back home): "Here in the U.S. the attitude toward our government is very good, much better than in Russia!" Of course.

Speaking of Russia in the 20th century, it has been tortured throughout the last 100 years. The Russo-Japanese War at the beginning of the century, World War I, the deterioration as a result of this war, the February Revolution, the October Revolution, again deterioration, Civil War, Stalin's repressions, the collectivization and killing of kulaks [wealthy peasants], the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, the so-called reconstruction after the war, and now the "reforms"—what people can endure such sufferings?

But I am sure the Russian people will come out of it; that is a specific national feature: the ability to always rebuild, to regenerate. This also became evident in previous centuries. During wars, towns and villages often were destroyed and disappeared, but 20 or 30 years later, these places would come back to life. Or the rebuilding of the economy after World

War II: It was estimated that it would take up to 40 years to rebuild it, but it was already done in 15 years. This was not because of the regime of the Communist Party, but because the people have a certain quality. And I think, that after all this, we will overcome the devastating effects of the "reforms," too.

EIR: How do you think the situation can be changed politically, so that this "shock therapy," the IMF policy, is brought to an end, and Russia's economy can be rebuilt? Who will do what to bring about that change? What can you yourself do in that process?

Froyanov: That is a very complicated question. I am looking now for leaders among those, who are featured on the historical scene. I must confess, I haven't found such a leader yet. It seems to me that this is rather a question of spontaneous historical development. The prominent Russian historian Sergei Solovyov, who wrote about Russia of the late 17th [and early 18th] century, when Russia was facing the prospect of reforms, [wrote that] the people were ready to go forward to a new way of life, but they waited, waited for the leader. And then he came. Not everything is rational in history, and this leader can come earlier or later.

I also look with some suspicion at today's leaders. Those who made the "reforms" in Russia were pre-calculating very carefully what they were doing, and how. They organized it like a *Staffellauf* [relay race]. Their political activists are grouped in different echelons, one is replaced by the next. But they all represent the same team. People are told: Now there are new people, let's first wait and see, what they will do. It is a devilish game.

EIR: Could you give us a concrete example?

Froyanov: For example, we had [Yegor] Gaidar, now we have [Viktor] Chernomyrdin. And it is very much a possibility, that with [Yuri] Skokov, it will be the same, that he will just be the third echelon. With Yavlinsky, it is clearly the same. There are some people we don't know, but it is all a big circus. It is a tragedy. And this is all planned very carefully. They are considering many variants in this game: If one variant fails, we take this one, and so forth.

EIR: The Schiller Institute's objective, in both the East and the West, is to educate citizens to think as if they were responsible for governing their country. In this context, Mr. LaRouche discussed during our last conference the concept, that we must not look at "current events," but only at current history. And we have to locate current history within the larger context of the historical process. In this way, people must get used to thinking about their own actions in terms of how they affect history.

The educational system of Wilhelm von Humboldt, a close friend of Friedrich Schiller, pursued the same aims, also emphasizing the teaching of ancient languages and histo-

ry. Humboldt said: Education means to connect the individual with mankind. And we think it is very important to reintroduce these concepts into contemporary education.

Yesterday evening, we were talking with a friend about the problem of current history books in Russia, which are somewhat strange.

Froyanov: Yes, we have, for example, some textbooks that are not even written in Russia, but they were written abroad. Here is a history textbook, written by one Jeffrey Hoskin, Moscow edition, 1984; copyright J. Hoskin; title: *The History of the Soviet Union*. There are other textbooks which omit or distort important things. They are written by people who were writing textbooks as early as the Brezhnev period, but now they have changed their color. There are always such political chameleons; it is a very common phenomenon.

EIR: Can you give us an example of the falsification you are talking about?

Froyanov: The problem with foreign authors simply is that they don't know the history of our country as well, because they haven't grown up here.

But concerning our domestic falsifiers, I can give you two names that you probably know very well: Aleksandr Nikolayevich Yakovlev, former Central Committee member of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], and Prof. Yuri Afanasyev, former chairman of the Pioneers' [Communist children's] organization. Yakovlev, for example, speaks about the paradigm of "1,000 years of slavery." Afanasyev says that the Russian people only now have the chance to start a new, democratic life. This is either ignorance, or an outright lie, because we do have an old and strong democratic tradition in Russia. In the period of the Kiev Rus, the first foundations of democracy were laid. The commonwealth life, collectivism, political activity as well. Perhaps this is modified by the form of State of the Kiev Rus. There was a kind of direct democracy. Later, due to some political circumstances, all rights of the commonwealth were transferred to the monarch. And one has to say, that by and large, the Russian monarchs usually fulfilled that task.

During the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, this changed. And then quite suddenly the Russian people were confronted with the perspective of representative democracy. And here the split between the authorities and the people became clear. Many bad, evil people were elected to the first Dumas in the beginning of the century, and they didn't have any authority. So, the first thing to change the situation today, is to revive the spontaneous activity of the people in the tradition of this direct democracy. How to do this, is another question. But new politicians have to consider this. Most important is to give faith back to the people. They have lost hope now. That's why the present reforms don't function. In any case, all that is done far away in Moscow, they say. And therefore, at any moment, everything can be turned upside-down.

EIR: We in the Schiller Institute look at history as a constant struggle between two fundamentally opposed systems: on the one hand, there is the oligarchical system, in which a small group of people exploits the rest of the society by usury or slavery, as in Babylon or in Sparta. The other system is the republican nation-state, or in the case of Athens the city-state, which is organized around the idea of the commonwealth, that the common good has to be promoted. In European history, there has been a symbiosis of both systems for a long time. In the better periods, the republican system had the upper hand, and when the oligarchical system prevailed, major disasters were the result.

We have to recognize that in the last 30 years, the oligarchical system has taken over—speculation, the New Age, the rock-drug-sex counterculture, Satanism—all serving the purpose of the anti-science, anti-industrial progress paradigm shift promoted by the financial oligarchy. We think, in order to evoke new hope in people, we have to promote the positive ideas of the republican commonwealth system. And we have to educate citizens who are able to judge the overall political situation responsibly.

Froyanov: The standard of our higher education is even appreciated in some western countries. In the last period, we are seeing some efforts to impose on us the so-called "multi-level education," the system of bachelors degrees, masters degrees, etc. It is copying the system of the West, and ruins the system we used to have that was working so well. We have to deal not only with a deterioration in science, but also in education. But without science and education, we don't have a future. We try to do something against it. In the history faculty, we have been able to preserve the old education tradition. How long we will be able to withstand, I don't know.

The contradiction you mentioned [between oligarchical and republican systems] may be more important in western Europe. For Russia, the most important confrontation was between Russia and the steppe, the world of the nomads to the east of Russia. At the same time, we had to defend our borders against the West, especially since the 13th century. There was the Teutonic Order, the Poles and Lithuanians, who created tensions on the western border. Russia was under attack from two sides, and sometimes the nation's very existence was threatened. The contradictions within the society were secondary, because in this kind of danger, the nation had to be consolidated. And the Russian State became the instrument of that consolidation.

Maybe for that reason, the State in Russia developed in a stronger way than was actually necessary. State power often suppressed the initiatives not only of individuals, but of whole social groups, such as the peasants or the noblemen. But, in any case, society understood that this was somehow necessary. Ugly things happened, but at the same time, the State also played the role of a social protector. When the liberals today say, everybody must take care only for himself, this is totally against the historical tradition. Is it possible in the

West, that people put money in some bank, and when the bank goes bust, people get angry at the government and demand that the government return them their money? That is rooted in a historical habit: People have been used to the fact that the State somehow takes care of these things. The liberals call it "dependence," but it has historical roots. Unfortunately our previous leaders didn't know our history very well, our peculiarities, and today's leaders know them even less.

EIR: Internationally, there is a vehement campaign against the idea and the institution of the nation-state. But I think we must differentiate between nation-state and empire. A lot of wars came about, because empires were fighting against each other for territory, natural wealth, spheres of influence. On the other hand, the ideal situation would be an entente of sovereign nation-states, each striving to improve the life of their citizens and engaging in cooperation for their mutual development.

Froyanov: What is an empire?

EIR: Roughly, you speak of an empire, if a group within a nation-state comes to power which engages in a policy to extend the territories, economic wealth, etc., beyond the legitimate interests of that nation-state, and does that at the expense of the legitimate interests of other nation-states. As the British Empire, for example, used to do this, and, in this process, always pursued a policy of playing one nation against the other, following the famous recipe of "divide and conquer."

Froyanov: Does that mean that an empire usually has colonies? Look at the British Empire with its colonies thousands of kilometers away, and compare that to Russia: Russia has a compact territory, and the Russian people don't take anything away from others. Of course, there were occupations of other territories in various periods of history. But it also happened that other peoples appealed to the Russian czar to take their country under his protection. In the last century this was the case with Georgia. And those nations, like Georgia, Armenia, or some Siberian peoples, of course wanted to retain their national identity within Russia. In the last century, there was a war in the Caucasus, and Georgia became part of Russia, as did Armenia. Certain enclaves developed in the Caucasus that were not natural. And the Caucasus was a region that many powers took an interest in: Turkey and Great Britain. But to give them the Caucasus, would have meant to open the southern borders of Russia. So the circumstances demanded this occupation. And when [Aleksandr] Solzhenitsyn now says, we should keep out of the Caucasus, this is childish. Take Central Asia: It's again Turkey and the British. If we give up Central Asia, we lose all of Siberia. From another standpoint, you could call it not occupation, but defense of legitimate national interest. Generally we can say: There was pressure from the West and pressure from the East. And under this pressure these territories united in some

kind of organic union. And thus the Russian empire was founded.

Geopolitically it is a very important region; it is a bridge between the West and the East. And if this so-called empire were destroyed, this would be very bad for the West and the East. And it seems to me that some realistic people in the West are already starting to understand this. This geopolitical space is very important for the global situation.

EIR: Isn't the factor of national economic security right now even more important for Russia than the question of territory?

Froyanov: One is connected with the other. Not for 70 years, but for many centuries we were connected with each other, not only politically, but also economically. Also from this standpoint, this space has an organic cohesion. To break it up, means just to hurt everybody. What happens to those peoples now outside the borders of Russia? They either kill each other, or try to get under the wing of the West, or they just don't know what to do with their sovereignty. There is the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example; a war in Central Asia; the fight in Georgia is actually a civil war inside Russia. I think, in the course of history, they will tend to reintegrate with Russia.

EIR: Nevertheless, I think, the solution only lies in the field of solving the economic crisis of Russia.

Froyanov: Of course, the centralization of the Soviet Union was too strong. Of course, a certain sovereignty should be given to the regions, but not in such an unnatural way as to create "Ural republics" or "Volga republics."

EIR: May I come back to the question of direct democracy as opposed to representative democracy, or did I misunderstand you?

Froyanov: I am not against representative democracy. I just said, that our first attempts with it were not very successful. It was badly managed. Maybe representative democracy can be combined with forms of direct democracy, so that people can understand, that they are in charge and become themselves involved in the political process.

My impression is that most people in Russia look at the political process of power from the outside. Moscow and St. Petersburg are not all of Russia. I often travel to the provinces and I talked with village people, because it was interesting for me to find out their attitude toward what is going on in the country. Their attitude is to watch it from outside. I asked: "What is the most difficult problem for you right now?" They said: "We somehow got used to the previous power, and we have to get somehow used to the present power. And this is difficult." This means they really don't care, they don't participate in it. Under those conditions, *any* reform will fail. I remember in the writings of Marx, that he says: An idea becomes a material power when it involves the masses. I think, in this point he was right.