

Racist Pamyat Society is running Russia's neo-Stalinist upsurge

by Luba George

In mid-September, Nahum Nemchenko, a 73-year-old fighter for Jewish rights, was found murdered in his Leningrad apartment. This murder led the *Jerusalem Post* Nov. 1 to implicate the Pamyat (Memory) Society, a Russian chauvinist, anti-Semitic mass organization, on the rise in recent years. Nemchenko's struggle against anti-Semitism in the U.S.S.R. led him to gather material on Pamyat and its sister organization Otechestvo (Fatherland), active in Sverdlovsk.

Two years ago in Sverdlovsk, a Jewish family was murdered, and Nemchenko's friends felt that Nemchenko, who was investigating the case, had learned "too much" about the workings of the Pamyat/Otechestvo organizations. Nemchenko had planned to travel to Moscow as the Leningrad representative to a meeting to protest growing anti-Semitism in the U.S.S.R. The authorities refused to allow the meeting. Shortly after this, Nemchenko was found murdered in his apartment.

Indeed, the "engine" behind the rise of anti-Semitism and the neo-Stalinist upsurge under way in the Soviet Union is the Pamyat Society, officially founded in 1980. The Society, with ideology resembling the Black Hundreds pogromists of Czarist times, is a powerful *legal* mass organization, actively backed by strong forces in the Soviet military-industrial complex, and supported by a majority of the ruling Russian *no-menklatura*.

Among its "godfathers" are such figures as then-KGB chief Yuri Andropov's close collaborator, Gen. Aleksei Yepishev, who, from April 1962 until July 1985, shortly before his death, was the head of the Soviet Armed Forces' Main Political Administration, and Marshal Vasili Chuikov, the World War II hero of Stalingrad, who had for many years, until his death in 1982, headed the Russian chauvinist Rossiya Society, many of whose members were to become the cadre of Pamyat. The Pamyat Society is funded by a variety of conduits from the military-industrial complex and the GRU (military intelligence), as, for example, through the civil aviation ministry.

Pamyat is hard-core "blood and soil" Russian Nazism. Just as the German Nazis had resurrected pagan Nordic gods such as Thor and Odin, Pamyat stresses pagan Russian gods, the pre-Christian "roots" of Rus and the Slavs. Pamyat liter-

ature has even referred to the Kievan Prince Vladimir's A.D. 988 conversion to Christianity as a "Zionist plot to undermine the Slav race." As one Russian exile source told *EIR*, "Pamyat believes in Dostoevsky and Satan." For Pamyat, Dostoevsky's writings, especially his *Diary of a Writer*, where he elaborates the "special mission" of the "Russian Race" to "rule over the world," are the bible defining their own perverse so-called "Christian" side.

This Russian brand of Nazism has gained enormously in strength this year, both benefitting from and steering the shift into a neo-Stalinist policy matrix that has transpired in recent months. Pamyat, contrary to the myth spread in some of the Western media, is no "underground" organization. It is legal, approved, and encouraged. No "underground" organization could exist in the Soviet Union, and hold regular mass meetings of from 500 to several thousand people, in halls granted by the Soviet state, as Pamyat does.

Pamyat was key to the Oct. 21 sacking of Moscow City Party boss Boris Yeltsin, a protégé of Gorbachov who had been one of the main leadership targets of Pamyat. The Soviet collective leadership opted to throw Yeltsin to the wolves, as part of the move to bring Pamyat's Dostoevskian ideology to the fore. In May, Yeltsin received, or was forced to receive, a Pamyat delegation in his office. They had come to protest that Yeltsin was not doing enough to preserve the Russian "historical and cultural heritage." The specific issue which served as the pretext for the meeting was Yeltsin's authorization of the urban renewal demolition of the "Poklonnaya Hill" old section of Moscow. "Save Poklonnaya Hill" had become the battle cry for the Moscow section of Pamyat. Soon thereafter, Yeltsin gave in, and pledged that Poklonnaya Hill would not be demolished. Without very powerful Politburo support, no "grassroots" non-party organization could ever have scored such a resounding victory.

This incident is important, because no high-level party functionary is obliged to "receive" any "protest" delegation, unless the collective leadership demands that he do so.

As Gorbachov admitted in recent speeches, the "fight" against Yeltsin had "begun during the preparations for the January [1987] Central Committee Plenum." The fact that Yeltsin was *not* dumped at either the January or the June CC

Plenums, was due to the fact that Gorbachov protected his follower. That was no longer the case at the Oct. 21 CC Plenum, when Gorbachov opted to sacrifice Yeltsin, and acceded to the demands of the neo-Stalinists.

The Russian Nazis

Who are Pamyat's leaders? We can start with the Society's chief, D.D. Vasiliev, who describes himself as a "non-party Bolshevik." Earlier this year, Vasiliev delivered a speech in Siberia declaring: "Around us there are enemies of the people (*narod*). We have to tear them to pieces. And pound into dust everyone who is in our way. . . . Masons and Zionism in our country are directing their attack at the Russian *narod* and our motherland (*rodina*)." Pamyat's leading figures include very important personalities in the Soviet literary and arts world, including the writer Valentin Rasputin, a hard-core Russian chauvinist, on the board of Raisa Gorbachova's Soviet Cultural Foundation; the notorious Dostoevskian mystic and icon-style painter, Ilya Glazunov; and Vasilii Belov and Yuri Bondarev, leading figures of the Russian Writers' Union. It was this Russian Republic Writers' Union, at their March 1987 Congress, together with the number-two man on the Politburo, Yegor Ligachov, who kicked off the campaign against the "excesses" of Gorbachov's *glasnost* (openness) policy.

Much has been written in recent months about recent speeches delivered by Yegor Ligachov, the Party's ideology boss and the number-two man on the Politburo. Ligachov's speeches, denouncing "excesses" in *glasnost*, and blasting the trend of publishing books by previously banned authors, presaged the new neo-Stalinist upsurge, and are now also being reflected by Gorbachov himself.

Throughout the first half of 1987, it was the Pamyat Society which had spearheaded a mass campaign demanding that books by previously banned authors remain unprinted, and demanding the shutting down of plays and movies that represented "degenerate" Western influences. The Russian Writers' Union, influenced by Pamyat, adopted the same line at its March 1987 Congress. These demands were also part of the list of grievances presented to Yeltsin by the Pamyat delegation.

The first to concede the point of Pamyat's meteoric rise, were Pamyat's critics in the Soviet Union. The July 11 *Leningradskaya Pravda* carried an article by one V. Koshavanets, which disclosed the existence of a Russian National Socialist Workers Party. Koshavanets wrote that, while there are no organized "brown shirt movements" in the U.S.S.R., young people are attracted to such phenomena, because they are "seeking alternatives," which are Russian nationalist. The author cited an interview to *Sovetskaya Kultura* by Komsomol (Party youth) head Mironenko, who declared that the "alternative" the youth are seeking is "the idea of a strong leader," as "a reaction to existing bureaucracy."

The real bombshell came in July, with the launching of a new journal, *Politichesky Sobesednik*, in Minsk, the capital

of Byelorussia, under the auspices of the Byelorussian Central Committee, to regularly feature articles by Pamyat authors. This move provides a clue to the direction of change evident in the Kremlin power struggle. The Byelorussian Central Committee consists of protégés of Nikolai Slyunkov, the first secretary of the Byelorussian Party until January 1987, when he was promoted to Moscow and installed as a Central Committee secretary. At the June Plenum, Slyunkov was again promoted to become a full member of the Soviet Politburo. Directly after that, his protégés in Minsk sanctioned the founding of *Politichesky Sobesednik*.

The new journal has printed major articles by top Pamyat figures such as Vladimir Begun, whose articles bear the signature of the Military Command, for example, his denunciation of those who deny that a nuclear war can be *won* by the Soviet Union, as being guilty of "bourgeois pacifism." Begun has used the new journal to attack the Jewish painter Marc Chagall as a "Zionist," and to single out Jewish dramatists Shatrov and Volodarsky, as "thieves who have stolen the lamp of *glasnost* in order to deprive society of the light of the truth."

Begun's writings compare with Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and are filled with invective against "a world conspiracy between the Elders of Zion and the freemasons." His first book, *Creeping Counterrevolution*, was published in Minsk in 1974, and contained praise for the anti-Jewish pogroms conducted in Czarist Russia.

Two Soviet Jews who had met Begun in October 1978 in Minsk, reported the following statements he fired at them: "Zionism and fascism are the same. If the Zionists had the same strength as Hitler, they would have committed even more crimes than German fascism. Now they have much more strength and the coming struggle will be very hard. Zionism today is the greatest threat to peace and mankind." His second book, *Invasion Without Arms*, was published in 1977, followed by a second edition in 1979, which was a diatribe against Jewish "infiltration" and "subversion" of Russia. Begun declared that Jews can never assimilate: "Jews will always remain Jews."

Other Pamyat types, such as the crazed writer Valeri Yemelyanov, go even further than Begun, if that can be imagined. He actually spent time in a psychiatric institute earlier this year after having murdered his wife; the case itself revealed Pamyat's powerful backing among the KGB, because Yemelyanov was released, a free man, after only a few months. Yemelyanov's act of murder was like something out of a Dostoevsky novel. He hacked his wife to pieces and stuffed the parts of the corpse into a garbage bag. Begun once commented, in a style reminiscent of "tactical debates" within the Nazi hierarchy, that "Yemelyanov goes too far. . . . He proposes to check whether the wives of senior officials are Jewish. I consider this *tactically* wrong."

It is only a matter of time before what is occurring now in Byelorussia, with Pamyat in full bloom, becomes the rule for the U.S.S.R. as a whole.