

# Russian Nationalism and the Orthodox Revival\*

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It is common practice to date both Russian neo-nationalism and the Russian religious revival back to the late 1960s, when the first Russian nationalist and Orthodox Christian tracts began to appear in *samizdat*, sometimes jointly and at other times quite separately.<sup>1</sup> *Samizdat* is a good yardstick of the genuineness of a trend of thought, being free from institutionalised censorship and thus more accurate than the official press in mirroring developments in society. Nevertheless, the printed press should not be ignored, especially those authors who are subjected to frequent party-line attacks, those who find it difficult to print their works, and those whose works are immediately bought out by their readers yet rarely see second and third printings. Here we primarily have in mind the rural writers (*derevenshchiki*), whose publications go back to the '60s. At first their works were marked above all by patriotic anguish for their motherland — Russia — and its people. In their writing, the national element appeared long before a conscious discovery of the Christian “soul” of the nation as the kernel of its spiritual health. This discovery, or at least its revelation, has been very cautious and gradual, at first appearing almost exclusively in a cultural and aesthetic form. In representative art, more and more landscapes appeared with onion-domed churches in either the background or the foreground, at first without crosses, more recently with crosses. Films with similar landscapes gradually evolved to include genuine religious themes with national-nostalgic overtones. The symbiosis of the national and the religious (together with severe national self-criticism) was particularly striking in Tarkovsky's film *Andrei Rublev*, in which

<sup>1</sup>Dimitry Pospelovsky, “The Resurgence of Russian Nationalism in *Samizdat*”, *Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter 1973), pp. 51-74.

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the destruction of Russian churches by greedy local Russian princes using Tatar troops had very topical overtones, recalling the destruction of churches by the Bolsheviks. Russian nationalism is undoubtedly a potent force. It takes, however, several forms — more than are commonly recognised in the West. Its relationship to Orthodoxy will certainly be significant in years to come.

### *Categories of Nationalism*

The various trends of nationalism can be categorised in relation to the religious revival (*vozrozhdeniye*). The pro-regime nationalist camp who try to marry elements of Marxism-Leninism with nationalism are commonly known as “National-Bolsheviks”. A more amorphous umbrella-like group overlapping with the National-Bolsheviks, but more concerned with culture, art and national spiritual issues, are referred to as the “Russites”, or the “Russian party”. Its more principled and religiously oriented “wing” could be called the “soil-bound” or nativist trend (which includes the best of the ruralist prose writers), while the more politicised-ideological and obviously “underground” representatives of the soil-bound (*pochvenniki*) element are somewhat inaccurately known as “neo-Slavophiles”.

All these terms are somewhat misleading. In Russia the term National-Bolshevism was first used with reference to the so-called “Change of Signposts” movement in the early twenties, both in the émigré communities and in Russia proper. Having just survived the bloody calamity of the Civil War, adherents of this movement argued that Russia needed a strong centralised dictatorship to rebuild and restore her strength. With Lenin’s virtual abandonment after 1922 of the export of the revolution, with the restoration of limited private enterprise, and with some intellectual freedom and a degree of relaxation in religious persecutions in 1923-27, these elements (including many so-called “fellow-travellers” in the literary and artistic spheres) began to see in Lenin the pragmatic national dictatorship which they sought. Mistakenly believing that the ideology of international communism would soon be thrown overboard also, they were Bolsheviks inasmuch as they accepted the Bolshevik principles of centralised dictatorship, with its far-reaching powers and its elements of socialist egalitarianism, but they did not subscribe to the ideas of Marxist internationalism or militant atheism. Whether believers or unbelievers, they recognised the positive importance and contribution of a national church (Orthodoxy in the case of Russia) in building up a powerful state and a sense of national unity. Obviously, after the drive for collectivisation and industrialisation — which was

accompanied by a frontal attack on the church and on any form of intellectual autonomy — the illusions of the original National-Bolsheviks were shattered, and most of them ended up behind bars.<sup>2</sup>

Stalin's flirtation during the Second World War with both nationalism and the church revived some National-Bolshevik trends. But his official nationalism in the immediate post-war era became a grotesque parody of National-Bolshevism. The Russian nation was proclaimed the greatest and most progressive in the world. Almost all the scientific inventions of the last two centuries were ascribed to Russians. A frenzied persecution and mass purge of so-called "cosmopolitans", which was largely a cover-up term for the Jewish intelligentsia, took place. At the same time, however, Russian national culture was suppressed and the best living Russian writers and artists were expelled from their professional associations and deprived of the right to live by their professional work. The works of many Russian writers of the past, for example Dostoyevsky, were suppressed. In fact, there was a "Russian nationalism" without Russia, a process of sovietisation of all the peoples of the USSR, an attempt to reduce them all to a single common denominator, a single language, which naturally had to be the language most commonly known, namely Russian.

Towards the end of his reign, Stalin again turned his attention to Marxism and to Marxist ideas of world revolution, interpreting them in his own peculiar way. This coincided with a reactivation of the anti-religious front. Communist internationalism, and even the promise to construct a communist society in the USSR by 1980, was renewed under Khrushchev; and this was again accompanied by brutal persecution of the church. But no efforts could salvage the ideology after the mortal blow of destalinisation.

Illusions of "Marxism with a human face" persisted in the 1950s and 1960s on a considerable scale. These coincided with Marxist revisionism of a more or less pluralistic type and overlapped with a growing interest in the West, and a desire to emulate Western social democracies. As part of the search for such traditions at home, interest in Russian 19th century Westernism, particularly its socialist and populist traditions (from Herzen to Chernyshevsky, Mikhailovsky and Dobrolyubov), also grew. But to those who studied this intellectual tradition it became clear that Russian radical Westernism had led directly to Russian Marxism and to the 1917 Revolution, with the capitulation of the liberal-democratic forces and the victory of

<sup>2</sup>For more details on the "Change of Signposts" movement and the National-Bolsheviks see: M. Agursky, *Ideologiya natsional-bolshevizma* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1980), *passim*; and Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982* (Crestwood, New York, 1984), pp. 87-89.

Leninism. The Marxist-Leninist "alternative" to so-called Stalinism was compromised by the bloody suppression of Hungary in 1956, the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the revival of concentration camps in the post-1956 USSR. The resulting disillusionment with Marxism led to disillusionment with the Russian Westernist tradition in general and to a search for alternative ideas in non-Westernist schools of thought, from the Slavophiles to the Religio-Philosophic Renaissance of the early 20th century.<sup>3</sup> Adoption of the latter school of thought was particularly understandable because, like the current "seeking" generation, the leading thinkers of the early 20th century Russian Religio-Philosophic Renaissance had also emerged from disillusionment with Marxism.

In this climate of ideological collapse, National-Bolshevism reappeared from within the establishment, receiving constant if unevenly-growing support from some party ideological circles, and particularly, it seems, from the Komsomol, the armed forces, some KGB and GRU (military intelligence) elements<sup>4</sup> and some Politburo members.<sup>5</sup>

Although Suslov was known to have been a "true believer" in Marxism, the one does not rule out the other: having realised that Marxism as an ideology capable of inspiring people had collapsed, he tried to salvage its remnants by grafting nationalism onto it.

Solzhenitsyn defined National-Bolshevism as an ideology which attempts to salvage disintegrating communism, fusing it with Russian nationalism . . . This current recognises no blemishes in either the Russian communist or the national past. All the bad deeds committed by our country are interpreted as good ones.<sup>6</sup>

In the Soviet Union this is also known as the "single stream" (*yediny potok*). In contrast to Marxist historiography, which saw the

<sup>3</sup>Pospelovsky, "The Neo-Slavophile Trend and Its Relation to the Contemporary Religious Revival in the USSR", in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, Pedro Ramet (ed.) (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984), pp. 43-45.

<sup>4</sup>Alexandr Vasil'yev, "Real'naya ideologiya pravayashchego sloya", *Posev*, No. 9 (September 1986), pp. 26-28. Similar information was supplied to this author by Yuri Kublanovsky, an outstanding contemporary Russian poet and a 1982 exile from the Soviet Union, an Orthodox Christian from a communist family background: oral interview, Paris, July 1983.

<sup>5</sup>According to Dunlop, one of the Politburo protectors of the nationalists was Mikhail Suslov, the supreme ideological boss under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. His death in 1982 and replacement by the strongly anti-nationalist Andropov coincided with renewed attacks in the ideological press on Russian nationalism. John B. Dunlop, *The New Russian Nationalism* (New York, 1985), pp. 12-15.

<sup>6</sup>A. Solzhenitsyn and Igor' Shafarevich, *Dve Press-konferentsii* (Paris, 1975), p. 49. The term "National-Bolshevik" was first used by Karl Radek in 1918 in relation to the Hamburg German CP organisation which he accused of co-operating with extreme German nationalists. Agursky, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

Bolshevik revolution as a break with the past, the single stream ideology treats the Soviet period as an organic continuation of Russian history, a legacy of the sum total of Russian history and culture. The National-Bolshevik philosophy of history is not unlike the fashionable contemporary anti-Russian and historically deficient writings of such Western historians as Richard Pipes, Fr Nicholas Chirovsky, or the late Tibor Szamuely. National-Bolsheviks attempt to salvage some bits and pieces of Marxist ideology by grafting it onto the tree of nationalism, the latter interpreted as *étatisme* with a characteristic pride in the power and might of the empire. Being essentially a secular ideology concerned with vindicating the existing *status quo*, including the police regime, it has to invent justifications for the totalitarian system by perpetuating the doctrine of enemy encirclement and of the enemy within. Jews form a convenient scapegoat as a nationally rootless alien element who can be blamed for the nihilistic “excesses” of the revolution and the first two post-revolutionary decades, with their destruction of Russian culture, cultural monuments, and churches. By now it should be clear that the links between the National-Bolshevism of today and Nazism are multiple and quite intimate. There is even reliable inside information that portraits of Hitler and collections of Nazi paraphernalia can be found in many GRU and KGB officials’ flats. And it was their sons who staged some minor Nazi parades with swastikas, as reported in the Western press around 1982.<sup>7</sup>

The “true” National-Bolsheviks’ attitude to the church is negative, but supports the cultural-aesthetic aspect of the church as an expression of the national genius which the particular limitations of the medieval mentality could make manifest only in a religious idiom. This is the line maintained by the official Soviet atheistic establishment and its monthly *Science and Religion (Nauka i religiya)*. It was the National-Bolshevik strain in the leadership which permitted the founding of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of the Monuments of History and Culture (VOOPIK in Russian). At one extreme of National-Bolshevism — let us call it the Nazi fringe — Christianity is condemned as a Judaeo-Masonic plot to deprive nations of their identity,<sup>8</sup> and the church as an institution is denied a constructive role in the Russian nation-building process.<sup>9</sup> At the

<sup>7</sup>Vasil'yev, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Reports of young fascist parades, *int. al.*, in: *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 7 July 1982; *Posev*, No. 7 (July 1982), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Ivan Samolvin, “Letter to Solzhenitsyn”, in *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian “Samizdat” — an Anthology*, Michael Meerson-Aksenov & Boris Shragin (eds.) (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 420-48. Also: V. Yemel'yanov, “Sionizm na sluzhbe antikommunizma”, a *Znaniye* public lecture in Moscow on 7 February 1973 (Summary in *Demokraticheskiye al'ternativy*, V. Belotserkovsky (ed.) (W. Germany: Achberg, 1976), pp. 215-18).

<sup>9</sup>This is the typical line of *Nauka i religiya* and of the whole professional anti-religious

other, the church is praised as a positive cultural, intellectual and moral force in the history of the nation. More obviously National-Bolshevik in character was *The Young Guard* (*Molodaya gvardiya*) which, in the late 1960s, published a series of articles praising the moral and patriotic role of certain Russian medieval saints, including St Sergi.<sup>10</sup> This was too much at the time. A purge of the nationalistic editorial board of the journal followed in 1971.<sup>11</sup> The following year, Russian nationalism was attacked by a leading party ideologist, A. Yakovlev, in terms of pure Marxist internationalism. Yakovlev paid for this by being exiled to Canada as Soviet ambassador. Andropov, however, returned him to ideological work in the Central Committee and soon made him head of its Propaganda Department. It was also under Andropov that *Our Contemporary* (*Nash sovremennik*), which had taken over from *Molodaya gvardiya* the role of National-Bolshevik and openly nativist voice, was temporarily curbed. It even had to apologise for the church writings of Vladimir Soloukhin.<sup>12</sup> Under Gorbachev, open recognition of the moral collapse and massive corruption of Soviet society and the cultural and ecological near-catastrophe connected with them,<sup>13</sup> has resulted in unprecedentedly open admissions of the church's positive role. There have been statements by literary figures which have drawn official attacks and even a resolution by the CPSU Central Committee criticising such trends, if rather obliquely.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the chorus of writers has been joined by Soviet scientists. In a round-table discussion reported in the Soviet press concerning the catastrophic rise in the incidence of divorce — now reaching fifty per cent of all marriages in Moscow — a psychotherapist says: "traditions have changed, parental authority has collapsed . . . there is no fear of

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establishment, particularly N. S. Gordiyenko, e.g. his "Kreshcheniye Rusi". According to Professor Yuri Luryi, who used to know Gordiyenko in Leningrad, the latter is a strong Russian nationalist of the National-Bolshevik type, although he is Ukrainian by birth.

<sup>10</sup>See my "Rusky natsionalizm marksizm-leninizm i sud'by Rossii", *Grani*, No. 111-12, pp. 444-46, note 42; and Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 218-27.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* See also: Pospelovskiy, "Nationalism as a Factor of Dissent in the Contemporary Soviet Union", *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Fall 1974), p. 102.

<sup>12</sup>See Dunlop, *The New Russian Nationalism*, pp. 19-25; see also, review in *RCL* Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 228-30.

<sup>13</sup>Major Soviet literary figures have written on the subject; e.g. S. Zalygin, "Intellett i literatura", *Pravda*, 29 September 1986, p. 3; on speech of B. N. Yel'tsin, the then new First Secretary of the Moscow City Party Organisation, to a conference of Moscow Propaganda Department officials 11 April 1986 (*Samizdat* text in *Posev*, No. 10 (October 1986), pp. 29-33).

<sup>14</sup>"O zhurnale 'Kommunist'. Postanovleniye TsK KPSS", *Kommunist*, No. 12 (August 1986), pp. 3-10; "V Tsentral'nom Komitete KPSS . . . 'O merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiyu izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva . . .'", *Pravda*, 11 September 1986, pp. 1-2.

God . . . In other words, the external mechanism for keeping families together has weakened.”<sup>15</sup> It is surprising that statements favourable to the church and/or to a Christian scale of values have continued to appear in the central press even after a CPSU Central Committee Resolution of August 1986 in the party ideological journal *Kommunist* calling for a more vigorous anti-religious campaign.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that wherever National-Bolshevism as a calculated policy gives way to genuine spiritual and intellectual searches, its better adherents are attracted by the church and her teachings and an evolution takes place in the direction of personal conversion and towards a more humane, broader form of nationalism. The officially-published writer Dimitri Likhachev calls it “patriotism versus nationalism”, and attributes to the former love for one’s own nation and for one’s neighbour.<sup>17</sup> Likhachev is known as one of the leading ideologists of the “Russites”, a broad amorphous nativist stratum encompassing the more tolerant fringe of the National-Bolsheviks (the more-or-less genuinely God-seeking elements among them) as well as nationally orientated Orthodox Christians and Christian-orientated patriotic writers and other men of arts. Citing Dostoyevsky, Likhachev characterises true patriotism as an ability to see one’s own faults, as the virtue of self-criticism: “There is love for virtue hidden in the condemnation of evil”. Love, goodness, compassion, tolerance and respect for other nations and their cultures are the conditions of true patriotism, according to Likhachev. He sees them present in the Russian national character and in Russian culture, and traces them to the teachers of the Slavs, Saints Cyril and Methodius, and the “Sermon on Law and Grace” by St Ilarion of Kiev.<sup>18</sup>

To see the evolution from National-Bolshevism of the rather ugly type we have described to a Christian-patriotic world-view, let us remind ourselves once again of the 1969 debate between the literary critics. At that time, a leading writer for *Molodaya gvardiya* (a National-Bolshevik journal), when pushed to the wall by his opponents, proclaimed the Orthodox Church as the cultural core of the values he was defending and Dostoyevsky as his guiding star for the future. This was a position which the Politburo National-Bolsheviks could only condemn, as was demonstrated by the purging of the journal two years later.

In *samizdat*, the most salient expressions of National-Bolshevism

<sup>15</sup>As quoted from *Moskovski komsomolets* by Christopher Walker, *The Times* (London), 31 October 1986, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup>See note 14.

<sup>17</sup>Likhachev, *Zametki o Russkom* (2nd ed; Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1984), pp. 39-44.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

were Mikhail Antonov's doctrine of a symbiosis of Slavophilism and Leninism and the anonymous manifesto, *A Nation Speaks (Slovo natsii)*. Antonov, a member of an anti-Semitic nationalist dissident group headed by Fetisov, was in fact under the influence of Danilevsky's Pan-Slavism, and not of Slavophilism. In contrast to the Slavophiles, Danilevsky praised Peter the Great, justifying national aggression and imperial expansion as a historical necessity. In contrast again, he denied the applicability of Christian ethics to politics. "The Benthamite principles of utilitarianism . . . and self-interest," he wrote, were the only behaviour criteria for states.<sup>19</sup> Danilevsky's ideas of cycles in history, during each of which one race is supreme, could well be used as a platform for the racialism prominent in both Antonov's writing and in *A Nation Speaks*. Yet both documents, like so much of contemporary Russian nationalism, are also expressions of a defensive concern for national preservation in the face of the catastrophic decline in Russian birthrates and the Muslim population explosion in the Soviet Union. The writings of Solzhenitsyn and other Christian nationalists expressed this concern in a call for Russians to return home "to the north-east" from the other Soviet republics, and in a desire to get rid of at least parts of the empire so as to restore Russianness to the Russian nation. The racist Antonov and *A Nation Speaks* echo the Komsomol National-Bolshevik ideologist Skurlatov in calling for a condemnation or banning of mixed marriages. They condemn "the chaotic-destructive" role of de-nationalised Jews. Antonov even defends the allegedly constructive role of Hitler and Stalin who, in his opinion, represent the Germano-Slavonic spirit, and laments the fact that the structures created by both dictators were shattered after their deaths.<sup>20</sup> Although the same platform of ideas forms the starting-point for *A Nation Speaks*, its constructive proposals are more tolerant. It recognises the right of non-Russian nationalities — including Western but not Eastern Ukraine — to secede. It follows the concepts of the original Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky in proclaiming the moral responsibility of nations as collective personalities (*sobornaya lichnost'*), thus condemning the European ex-colonial empires for walking out of their colonies without completing their civilising missions and indifferently letting the prematurely independent African nations bleed themselves

<sup>19</sup>Danilevsky's *Rossiia i Yevropa*, pp. 31-32, as cited in Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 503-506. See also Antonov's "Ucheniye slavyanofilov — vysshi vzlyot narodnogo samosoznaniya v doleynskiy period", *Veche*, Nos. 1 (January 1971), 2 (May 1971), 3 (September 1971) (Radio Liberty *Arkhiv samizdata*: AS 1013, pp. 16-35; AS 1020, pp. 4-27; AS 1108, pp. 5-49). On *A Nation Speaks* see my "The Resurgence of Russian Nationalism in *Samizdat*", pp. 59-63.

<sup>20</sup>As above, and "Zapiska Valeriya Skurlatova" summarised in Roy Medvedev's *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii* (Amsterdam: the Herzen Foundation, 1973), p. 105.



to death in inter-tribal and "ideological" wars and civil wars. Both documents proclaim the positive and important role of the church in history but plan to use the church again as an ideological co-opting instrument by the state.<sup>21</sup>

There are also the in-between elements, National-Bolshevik in their attitudes to history, adherents of the "single stream", but as practising Christians not completely immune to Christian universalism and some compassion for "the other"; these could be called Christian Bolsheviks or Christian Totalitarians. One of the most notorious of these is Gennadi Shimanov. A self-taught historical determinist of the Hegelian, rather than the Marxist, mould, he sees the Soviet regime not only as a historical necessity, but also as a God-sent way of preserving Russia from the pluralist democracies whose triumphant materialistic hedonism destroys faith in God and causes demoralisation. In his view, because of the collapse of Marxism, the Soviet government will sooner or later be forced to adopt the Orthodox Church as its ideology. Once this happens, the totalitarian system, by virtue of its centralisation and its police, will be able effectively to reconvert Russia to Christianity — something which would be impossible in a secular pluralistic democracy.<sup>22</sup> The most systematic exposition of Shimanov's Christian Bolshevism can be found in the two issues of the almanach *Many Years (Mnogaya leta)* which he and a handful of his adherents issued in 1980 and 1981. The scarecrow of Judaeo-Masonry is prominent. Yet the almanach is not anti-Semitic as such, and not only because at least one of the authors (Felix Karelin) is a Jewish convert to Christianity. Shimanov stresses more than once that he is not an anti-Semite and that he respects those Jews who either choose to go to Israel as their national home or who become totally assimilated by converting to Orthodox Christianity. He even suggests the idea of creating a Jewish homeland in the Crimea for those Jews who choose to stay in Russia without full ethnic and religious assimilation. He claims that the Jewish role in recent Russian history has been negative and destructive because Jews in Russia have lacked a national home and hence have remained a rootless element hostile to those with roots.<sup>23</sup> But he does not want to see Jews meddling in Russian affairs if they are unassimilated or only secularly assimilated. His arch-enemy is secular Jewish nationalism of the

<sup>21</sup>*Slovo natsii* (AS 590); Pospelovskiy, "The Resurgence of Russian Nationalism in *Samizdat*", pp. 59-63 and "Slovo natsii ili slovo natsi?", *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, No. 38 (29 September 1971).

<sup>22</sup>Shimanov *Ideal'noye gosudarstvo* (*Samizdat* ms. in Keston College Archives); also Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, p. 187, and other material in both issues of *Mnogaya leta*, e.g.: F. V. Karelin, "Teologichesky manifest", *Mnogaya leta*, No. 2, pp. 1-43.

<sup>23</sup>Shimanov, "Lie Abramson", *Mnogaya leta*, No. 2 (*Samizdat*, 1981; Keston *Samizdat* archives), pp. 131-63; Dunlop, *The New Russian Nationalism*, pp. 40-45.

contemporary Zionist variety. Shimanov sees this as a branch of Masonry, whose alleged aim is to destroy both Russia and the Orthodox Church. It is in these terms that he attacks Father Alexander Men', a Moscow Orthodox priest of Jewish background who is very successful at converting Jews to Orthodox Christianity. Shimanov attacks Men' 's concepts of a Judaeo-Christian branch of the Orthodox Church and his friendliness towards Roman Catholicism as a joint Zionist-Masonic-Roman Catholic plot to undermine Russian Orthodoxy by diluting it with cosmopolitanism.<sup>24</sup> In its consistent promotion of the "single stream" theory, *Mnogaya leta* justifies the murder of Nicholas II and his family as a tragic historical necessity.

However, no attempt whatsoever is made to idealise the Soviet system. In a letter to a would-be emigrant, an anonymous author (supposedly known to the editor), advises him to remain in Russia but not because its system is better. On the contrary, Russia has already been destroyed through politics and will be brought to ruin again. The present regime "is ruining Russia". But to emigrate from one's country, to abandon one's people, is to oppose God. The author cites Gogol': ". . . if you don't love Russia you won't be able to love your brother; without love for your brothers, a love for God will never flare up in you." In conclusion, he refers to the wave of emigration from the USSR as "a fixing of boundaries between the Devil and God".<sup>25</sup>

Distinct similarities can be pointed out between Shimanov's attitude to emigration and that of Zoya Krakhmal'nikova, a former Communist Party member and an adult convert to Orthodoxy, a writer and compiler of *samizdat* almanachs of religious readings, for which activity she served a term of imprisonment and internal exile (but was released before completion of sentence). Her husband, Felix Svetov, a Jewish adult convert to Orthodox Christianity, was viciously attacked in Shimanov's *Mnogaya leta*. Although Krakhmal'nikova is not as extreme as Shimanov in condemning emigration from Russia, she sees it as a failure of the spirit and of love, the fullness of which is a function, an expression, of faith and of love of God. According to her, to stay in Russia by choice is, in contemporary conditions, an act of sacrifice. In contrast to those who emigrate and then in many cases begin to condemn Russia as a nation in order to justify their action, Krakhmal'nikova cites the case of a Christian girl who wavered over whether to apply for emigration. Shortly after conversion to Orthodox Christianity, the girl was mobilised by the state for harvest work on a collective farm. There she saw "the saddest picture of

<sup>24</sup>P. I. Ivanov (apparently Shimanov's pseudonym), "Pis'mo svyashchenniku Alexandru Menyu", *Mnogaya leta*, No. 1 (1980), pp. 217-28.

<sup>25</sup>"Sergeu I-vu", *Mnogaya leta*, No. 1, pp. 80-90.

Russia: the abomination of desolation of the holy place (the church), poverty, spite, blasphemy; she learnt in full measure the despair of fear. Having returned to Moscow, she now declared: 'No, how can I abandon *them*?' " This, in Krakhmal'nikova's view, is a true Christian's attitude to one's nation.<sup>26</sup> It is, we may add, a precise illustration of Christian "nationalism", which is shared by all kinds of Russian Orthodox Christians and by those nationalists who have come towards Christianity through first embracing the national idea, in whatever form.

Despite the forebodings of some Western writers, who prophesy the horror of the day when Russian nationalism replaces Marxism as the ruling ideology in the Soviet Union, so far all indicators point to a pattern in which nationalists gradually encounter the Orthodox Church and Christian culture through their embrace of Russian nationalism and their investigation of Russian history and culture. They cannot avoid encountering St Ilarion, St Sergi of Radonezh, St Serafim, the Optino Monastery and its elders (to whom most Russian writers from Gogol' to Dostoyevsky and Tolstoi made pilgrimages), the Slavophiles and the thinkers of the Russian Religio-Philosophic Renaissance. Their Christian universalism, and the Christian ideas of charity, love, and brotherhood taught and practised by them inevitably rub off even on the National-Bolsheviks. And if not all of them go as far as to embrace Vladimir Solovyov's definition of nationalism as "Love thy neighbour's nation as thyself", at least a trace of this is likely to influence their world-view and attitudes in one way or another.

We have dwelt so long on the National-Bolshevik group because this is the fringe of nationalism in the USSR most feared in the West, and also because it is a school of thought which might find more of an echo in the Soviet ruling circles than any other form of nationalism. Nevertheless, its influence among the Russian intelligentsia in general, let alone the common people, is minimal. Shimanov, for instance, is hardly known inside the USSR, and those who do know of him — including Russian nationalists — consider that his ideas are quite mad and completely without influence even among independent nationalist circles, still less among those of Orthodox Christians.

Much more typical are the soil-bound (*pochvenniki*) elements, however broad and unspecific this term may be. We have already noted the broad, tolerant, and clearly Christian patriotism (or naturalism) of Likhachev, one of the leading *de facto* ideologists of the Russites. The development of the writer Vladimir Soloukhin has been governed by his ever deeper involvement with the Christian

<sup>26</sup>Krakhmal'nikova, "Krizis krasoty", *Nadezhda*, No. 6 (*Samizdat*, 1980 — Frankfurt/M., 1981), pp. 379-96.

culture of Russia. In one of his latest works he comes to the defence of the early Slavophiles by arguing that they knew and loved Western culture, were by no means nationalist exclusivists or chauvinists, but believed that Western culture had become too rationalistic. Its ability to nourish world civilisation was therefore coming to an end. Russian culture would take over that role by virtue of its spirituality, but the transfer would depend on the assimilation by Russian culture of all that the West had already contributed.<sup>27</sup>

The artist Il'ya Glazunov exploits both the national and the religious sentiments which are now emerging, producing poster-like paintings such as the *Return of the Prodigal Son* where the father looks like a Russian peasant and is surrounded by Russian historical heroes and national saints. This has assured him true mass popularity in the country. His exhibitions, where saints rub shoulders with Brezhnev's daughter (whose portrait has presumably been removed from exhibitions since Gorbachev's ascendancy), Castro, and the like, draw millions of viewers who queue for hours and hours to buy a ticket. The attraction is not, of course, Brezhnev's daughter, but the saints and national themes, as the entries in the visitors' book at one such exhibition show. Glazunov's ability to sniff out the atmosphere and allow himself just the right proportion of "dissent" to survive official criticism while making capital out of his stance as a true patriot who suffers for Russia's plight, makes his behaviour rather suspect.<sup>28</sup> Glazunov's posture won him praise as a "true Russian patriot" from nationalists as diverse as Soloukhin and Vladimir Osipov, a neo-Slavophile dissident.<sup>29</sup> He managed to win the trust and admiration of even the less intellectual and more emotional church people, such as Father Dmitri Dudko, who was soon to fall into a nationalistic trap set for him by the KGB.<sup>30</sup> In the words of Krakhmal'nikova, some see Glazunov as satisfying the terrible "religious hunger" in the contemporary USSR. "This is Russia," say the Slavophiles. Other believers call it "sales business, making money out of Christ".

<sup>27</sup> "Vremya sobirat' kamni", *Sobraniye sochinenii*, Vol. III (1984), pp. 432-33.

<sup>28</sup> It is said that the official ideology has discredited itself so much that in order to enjoy any respect and popularity in society a person, particularly an artist, must take up a non-conformist posture of one type or another. People like Glazunov, the Kirghiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, the poet Yevgeni Yevtushenko and the film director Konchalovsky take up precisely such a posture — that of "tame dissidents". They are thus assured of sufficient respect and popularity in the nation at large without risking their security with the establishment.

<sup>29</sup> Osipov, "Russky khudozhnik Il'ya Glazunov", *Veche*, No. 9 (1973), AS 1665.

<sup>30</sup> "O vystavke khudozhnika Il'yi Glazunova", *Russkaya mysl'*, 24 August 1978, p. 5.

*The Soviet State and Nationalism*

Vladimir Zelinsky, a *samizdat* author and Orthodox convert, tracing the path by which the contemporary Russian comes to the church, writes that, on entering the Orthodox Church, the Soviet-Russian "discovers the motherland in the church . . . In many cases, joining the church means a return to the motherland. With others the reverse is the case: one finds the church in the depths of one's fatherland".<sup>31</sup> He even quotes the contemporary French sovietologist Alain Besançon, without giving the source, as saying that Russian thought has always been divided into two camps "and their line of demarcation has been the singular question of their attitudes to faith".<sup>32</sup>

This is probably the crux of the Soviet regime's failure to co-opt Russian nationalism while attempting to separate it from the church. We have seen that the strategy has not worked even with National-Bolshevism. Hence the constant zig-zags in Soviet policies towards nationalisms (not only Russian nationalism) in the USSR, as well as towards the "native soil" literature and art. As soon as *Molodaya gvardiya's* nationalists began to write in glowing terms about Russian saints, the editorial board was purged. In the same year, however, a Russian nationalist journal on religion, history and culture, *Veche*, appeared in *samizdat* under the editorship of Vladimir Osipov. *Veche* had a fluid editorial line, but in only four years, from 1970 to 1974, it developed a nationalistic platform which recognised the priority of Christian values, under whose influence it was evolving.

There are several examples of the reverse process: turning to the church and religious philosophy leads to the discovery of national consciousness. Cases in point are the Religio-Philosophic Seminars of Moscow and Leningrad. The "pre-history" of the Leningrad seminar goes back to meetings and discussions on religion, literature and philosophy held at the flat of the poet Joseph Brodsky and directed by him. Such activity was given impetus by the 1971 Leningrad unofficial art exhibition, which was attended by some 2,000 people altogether and which resulted in the formation of the unofficial Movement for Spiritual Culture, under whose auspices the Religio-Philosophic Seminar began to meet in 1974.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "Prikhodyashchiye v Tserkov' ", *Veche* (a right-wing émigré journal taking its name from the defunct Osipov *Veche*), No. 7/8 (Munich, 1982), p. 137.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>33</sup> Oral testimonies to this author by former seminar members, the Zakharov-Ross couple, Vadim Filimonov, Lev Rudkevich and Mrs Nedrobova, Vienna, 20-22 January 1979; and Tat'yana Goricheva, Frankfurt/M., September 1980. See also *RCL* Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 92-112, and Vol. 9 No. 3-4, pp. 111-26.

*Conversions and National Consciousness*

Zoya Krakhmal'nikova severely criticised Glazunov's nationalistic pseudo-Christianity, suspecting it of satanic substitution. I have encountered similar hostile attitudes to Glazunov and National-Bolshevism among other representatives of today's Russian Orthodox intelligentsia, including some of the clergy. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the enthusiastic reaction of the hundreds of thousands (in some cases millions) of visitors to the Glazunov exhibitions reflects a colossal spiritual hunger for a non-Marxist vision of Russian history and culture which, for lack of anything better, is satisfied by Glazunov's art. My study of 190 samples randomly chosen from nearly 1,500 comments in the visitors' book (many are group comments, that is, the totals are considerably more than 190 and 1,500 respectively) revealed that 32 per cent of the signatories could be categorised as nationalists at loggerheads with the "single stream" line of National-Bolshevism. Religious and nationalistic sentiments were difficult to separate in most instances, but the nationalistic sentiment predominated in 24 per cent and the religious in eight per cent of the comments. The "nationalism" represented in all 32 per cent of the entries took the form of sorrow and compassion for the Russian nation and national culture under the Soviet regime, with people thanking Glazunov for "rehabilitating" the historical Russia, her culture, her church, her saints and other historical figures.<sup>34</sup>

Many Russians maintain that the upsurge of Russian nationalism has been a response and reaction to the existence of nationalistic separatism among the other nationalities of the Soviet Union, which is often combined with an anti-Russian antagonism which confuses communism with Russianness and blames it on the Russians.<sup>35</sup> Yet, as one interviewee told this author, "It is impossible to separate Russian nationalism from [Russian] religiosity; this would be contrary to the nature of the Russian people and its history."<sup>36</sup>

Yuri Kublanovsky, one of the foremost modern young Russian poets, an adult convert to Orthodox Christianity from a communist family, considers himself an "enlightened Christian" of the "native soil" type and a follower of Solzhenitsyn. He sees the growth of Russian nationalism not only as a response to local republican

<sup>34</sup>Pospelovsky, "The Neo-Slavophile Trend", p. 56.

<sup>35</sup>Interviews with recent émigrés: Israel, July 1983 (the source asked not to be identified); Yuri Kublanovsky, Paris, July 1983; Pyotr V. Kinev, New York, May 1981. Also: Pospelovsky, "The Neo-Slavophile Trend", p. 51.

<sup>36</sup>The source, who preferred to remain unnamed, was born in Moscow in 1927 into an old intelligentsia family. She is a practising Orthodox Christian married to a practising Russian Jew.

nationalisms but as the result of

the crisis of socialist ideology among the middle-class intelligentsia, which came to a head towards the end of the '60s. The more the intelligentsia began to turn to the church, as in my case, a parallel appreciation of national history also developed. The symposium *From Under the Rubble* and the figure of Solzhenitsyn played a great role in this process.

In contrast to this Russian nationalism, he says:

there is also the *nomenklatura*, the KGB and the party nationalism. These also understand that the old ideology needs renovation . . . I am familiar with young Christian converts, some ten years my junior, [i.e. born between 1955 and 1960] who are sons of generals. You enter their flats. The corridors are hung with portraits of Marshal Zhukov and all sorts of official diplomas. Then you go into the son's room. There is an icon in the corner and portraits of Nicholas II, Konstantin Leont'yev, . . .

Kublanovsky deplores this narrow nationalism, often equivalent to imperialistic monarchism, and sees it as a perversion of the Christian type of compassionate nationalism which means love for one's own and for one's neighbour. He discerns both types of nationalism among the converts, often depending on the family background and culture of the new convert.<sup>37</sup>

Another source, a medical doctor and a Jewish convert to Orthodox Christianity, agrees: "Nationalism is a decisive element in the Russian religious revival." After his conversion, Dr G. (he prefers to remain anonymous) attended a museum guides' evening school in one of Russia's ancient towns, full of medieval churches, where he was surprised to encounter genuine "religious propaganda" in the lectures of one of the instructors, an artist by profession:

You should have heard how inspiring were his lectures on the Mother of God and on the frescoes he showed us in the cathedral. I was overwhelmed. This committed us profoundly to Russian ecclesiastical culture. The face of the town and the cultural level changed in literally two to three years. A team of Moscow University students appeared. They formed the core of this change and became absolutely outstanding guides and instructors . . . awakening the people's interest in and respect for their past, their cultural-religious past. Attitudes began to change . . . Now I hardly know of a single case [in that town] where a new-born child

<sup>37</sup>Oral testimony, Paris, 1 August 1983.

would not be baptised . . . even in party members' families, although [there it would be done] surreptitiously — at home, not in the church . . .<sup>38</sup>

A much more sceptical Jewish observer, born in 1931, who worked as a museum guide in the churches and monasteries of Vladimir and left the USSR in 1975, refuses to equate the mass conversions and baptisms and the thousands of young people gathering around churches at Easter and Christmas with a genuine religious revival among the masses. Yet he also sees a necessary link between national consciousness and religious feeling when he says: "I believe there is fundamental religious revival [because] the national memory has been destroyed." Yet he believes that national memory can be revived; and he and his museum guide colleagues tried to awaken this memory in the tourists as best they could. That caused concern to the KGB (in the years of Andropov's KGB leadership), and pressure began to mount to reduce the length of tours from five to two hours, and to talk less about history, concentrating instead on the Soviet present. His former colleagues write to him that most of them have left their work, refusing to function according to the new instructions.<sup>39</sup>

This testimony may be compared with that of a Jew who may be said to represent the next generation both in terms of his birth (1949) and his emigration from the USSR (1981). Yuri Shtern left at a time when most Russian *samizdat* sources, as well as Russian clergy in private conversations, were beginning to speak about mass religious revival, whereas in the 1970s they had spoken more in terms of gathering momentum towards the development of a mass phenomenon. A mathematician, who calls himself a non-believer but observes Jewish religious traditions, Shtern was close to Christian conversion for a while and knew many newly-converted Christians in Moscow. He says of Russian nationalism, "preoccupation with the national traditions, the roots, . . . is a starting point for . . . Russian neo-Christians" which brings them to conversion. He even sees the Jewish movement as a reaction to this Russian movement: "The Jews began to feel that they lacked what the Russians were finding for themselves in the spiritual domain."

For several years Shtern read Russian religious philosophy, participated in new converts' discussion circles, and visited old churches and monasteries, until he began to feel that all this was good, "but it was not mine" and that his fate was to return to Judaism. He makes a clear distinction between the Christian nationalists and the state-supported National-Bolshevism, arguing that the whole Soviet

<sup>38</sup> Oral testimony, Jerusalem, June 1983.

<sup>39</sup> Rafail Nudel'man, oral testimony, Jerusalem, June 1983.



Marxist system is based on hatred, and therefore the nationalism which it tries to implant in place of its totally compromised Marxism is a nationalism of imperialistic aggression and hatred "for the other". However nationalistic the original impulses for conversion may have been, "believers show a much greater understanding". Shtern places much of his hopes in the role of the guided tours — which have now begun to include visits to functioning churches — in acquainting the masses with the faith and the church.<sup>40</sup>

A prominent priest in the contemporary Russian church, a man born in the late 1930s into a communist-military family, joined the church as a young adult. The early impulse which brought him not only to the church but also to the seminary was a form of Russian nationalism. In his own words, it was anger at seeing the degradation, demoralisation and destruction of the Russian nation and culture, brought about by Marxist materialism and militant atheism, that led him to enrol at the seminary, which he perceived as the antithesis of all the official values, as the only remnant of the genuine Russia and the continuity of Russian culture and values. A real faith in God came later, while he was at the seminary, and with it came the decision to be ordained. As a priest, he continues to see himself as a fighter for Russia, for the souls of the downtrodden Russian people.<sup>41</sup>

What about the common people, the peasants? Alas, they do not write about themselves. According to some first-hand information, however, a trickle of nationalistic ideas has begun to penetrate the countryside as well. Tat'yana Goricheva, a former Soviet philosopher who came to God as a mature young scholar, spoke in the late 1970s to numerous priests who claimed that in the villages too adults were returning to the church. She summed up the motives of a young working man or peasant for returning to the Orthodox Church as: "I am Russian. To be Russian is good. Goodness is Christian. Russian Christianity is Orthodoxy. Therefore, in order to be Russian I must be Orthodox."<sup>42</sup>

Does this mean that only an ethnic Russian or a person embracing Russianness can be spiritually at home in the Orthodox Church? Not at all. In fact, even the official *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* has found it necessary to draw distinctions between a broad Christian patriotism — love for one's country on the model of love and concern

<sup>40</sup>Oral testimony, Jerusalem, July 1983. An American visitor to the USSR (September 1986) actually saw such — very respectful — guided visits to functioning churches during services. Oral testimony to this author, London, October 1986.

<sup>41</sup>Oral testimony (source may not be named for obvious reasons), July 1979.

<sup>42</sup>Tat'yana Goricheva, a former lecturer in Marxism-Leninism, who returned to the church when 26 years of age, was one of the founders of the Leningrad Religio-Philosophic Seminar and of a Christian feminist movement, and was expelled to the West in 1980. Oral testimony, Frankfurt/M., September 1980.

for one's family — and, on the other hand, egotistic, chauvinistic nationalism and idealisation of one's own nation while belittling others, which are contrary to Christianity.<sup>43</sup> We may remember that the Christian Soviet scholar Likhachev made identical distinctions between patriotism and nationalism. Krakhmal'nikova uses the same argument in an attack on anti-Semitism as “blasphemy against the Virgin Mary and Jesus and hence against the whole Orthodox Church, which glorifies the Theotokos as All-Holy and Pure, as a Daughter of the Jewish nation and the Mother of our Saviour . . .” This again implies a “soil-bound” approach. The Mother of God was a daughter of the Jewish nation, and so a Jew, by becoming a Christian, establishes his roots in the “soil” of the Virgin and of the Apostles; or, by implication, the church embraces all nations, becomes the spiritual home of each nationality.<sup>44</sup>

This is once again reminiscent of the words of the Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'yov, a nationalist of sorts, whose prescription for Christian nationalism is “love other nations as thine own” — a formula which one Soviet Russian Orthodox author, in a tract defending the sense of national rootedness and national compassion as organic characteristics of a Christian, echoes: “The perdition of the Russian people now taking place is my pain . . . Someone who lacks his own national feelings will not appreciate another's . . . Man cannot live without a sense of his motherland as a ‘life-creating sacred place’.”<sup>45</sup>

A learned priest and scholar from the younger generation of Soviet Christians, who was quite apprehensive of the National-Bolshevik flirtation with the church as a potential danger, a possible future attempt by the regime to co-opt the church in internal as well as foreign affairs, still believed that: “If Russia is to have a future, it will be only in a national-Christian renaissance, that is, in a confluence of nationalism-patriotism with the church, where spiritual priorities are left to the church, and the church is not subordinated to political aims . . .”<sup>46</sup>

The current Gorbachev regime seems to be courting the nationalists more seriously than did its predecessors. It allowed the promotion of ruralist writers to the top positions in the Writers' Union. It gave in to

<sup>43</sup>P. Urzhumtsev, “Khristianstvo i natsional'ny vopros”, *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1962 No. 4, pp. 42-47.

<sup>44</sup>“Vozvrashcheniye”, pp. 349-50. Several Jewish converts to Orthodox Christianity have confirmed to this author that through conversion to Christianity they began to feel, for the first time in their lives, their “flesh and blood” Jewishness, a blood kinship to the Virgin and to the Apostles. As secular Jews they had felt quite rootless.

<sup>45</sup>A. Nazarov, “Natsional'noye vozrozhdeniye — nasushchnaya neobkhodimost'”, *Vestnik RKhD*, No. 135 (1981), pp. 280-81.

<sup>46</sup>Oral testimony by a priest who necessarily remained anonymous, a mathematician before his conversion, seminary studies and ordination. June 1979.

the ecological lobby, having at last withdrawn the plan to reverse the northern rivers, which would have flooded the geographical core of Russian culture and church architecture.<sup>47</sup> The novels of Rasputin and Astaf'yev and other ruralists prove the inseparability of the "native soil" (or ruralist) literary trend from the process of religious revival and its values. All of these authors, as well as Likhachev, whose writings in defence of the north and attacking the river-reversal plans suddenly appeared in the chief ideological organ of the Soviet Communist Party, are simultaneously Russian patriots, ecologists, active members of VOPIK, and advocates of the re-Christianisation of Russia. Attacks in official party documents and central press statements in late 1986 criticising manifestations of the Christian world-view in Soviet literature and art show that the regime is once again trying to separate religion from nationalism.

<sup>47</sup>D. Likhachev, V. Yanin, "Rusky sever kak pamyatnik otechestvennoi i mirovoi kul'tury", *Kommunist*, No. 1 (January 1986), pp. 115-19; speeches by Zalygin, Rasputin, Likhachev and others at the Eighth USSR Writers' Union Congress, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 2 July 1986; party and government resolution annulling the plans to reverse northern rivers, *Pravda*, 20 August. Also: R. Vorob'yev, "Porazheniye perebroschikov", *Posev*, No. 10 (October 1986), pp. 41-44. The same issue of *Posev* contains the unofficial (*samizdat*) transcript of the Yel'tsin address which begins by deploring the destruction of 2,200 important historical and architectural monuments in Moscow alone since 1935: "Gryazny kolodets", pp. 29-33.