

## ALEKSANDR BARKASHOV AND RUSSIAN NATIONAL UNITY: BLACKSHIRT FRIENDS OF THE NATION

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Russian National Unity (*Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo*—RNE) is the largest militant fascist group in Russia today. The founder and leader of the RNE, Aleksandr P. Barkashov, speaks of himself as a national-socialist, and praises Hitler's deeds for Germany. The RNE has pledged to establish a system of ethnic segregation in Russia were it to come to power.

This article seeks to analyze the ideology of the RNE as represented by its undisputed leader Barkashov and by the RNE Council which he dominates. Particular attention is paid to RNE's relation to Russian ethnicity. The first part discusses Barkashov and his organization's policies with regard to the *russkii* (ethnic Russian) nation and to Russian nationalism. Then follows a critical review of the RNE's relation to nazism and fascism. The article then considers the RNE's ideas about how the new Russian state should be shaped, *i.e.*, its political and economic program. Finally, the RNE is placed in the wider Russian political landscape by means of a discussion of its political friends and foes.

### Background

Aleksandr Barkashov (born 1953) is an electrician by profession, with no higher education. In 1972–1974 he was a lance-corporal in the *spetsnaz* forces. On the eve of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, he worked as a trainer of Arab commandos. Later, he is reported to have worked as a karate trainer. In 1985 Barkashov joined Dmitrii Vasiliev's *Pamyat* (Memory) group and, one year later, became a member of its central council. In this movement, he engaged in the military and sports training of youth, and in security measures. In August 1990 he left Vasiliev and, together with some other *Pamyat* members, set up the group "Russian National Unity for a free, strong and just Russia"—since 1991 simply "Russian National Unity," or RNE.

The RNE is organized according to strictly hierarchical principles. The backbone of the organization is the *soratniki* (companions), who are subject to strict subordination to the organization. Each one of them heads a *desyatok* (group of ten), consisting of two to ten *spodvizhniki* (comrades-in-arms). In turn, each one of these leads a group of sympathizers (*sochuvstvuyushie*), again in a *desyatok*. Liberal newspapers have estimated that the RNE has around 500 *soratniki*.<sup>1</sup> This figure does not seem unreasonable in light of the number of RNE representatives who fought on the side

of the Supreme Soviet by the White House in October 1993; this latter figure has been put at 137.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1994 Barkashov himself claimed to have 20,000 *soratniki*, 4,500 of them in Moscow.<sup>3</sup> He also claimed that the RNE had branches in 350 cities.<sup>4</sup>

Former FSB director Sergei Stepashin has estimated that the RNE has 2,000 members in all, but this would definitely seem to be too low a figure. As many as 100 local RNE groups have been registered with the authorities. Leading newspapers have noted the RNE's strong regional network; *Izvestiya* has claimed that the organization is fourth in Russia, after the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Democratic Choice of Russia, and the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, when it comes to the number of branches.<sup>5</sup> In 1996, *Komsomolskaya pravda* reported that the RNE has 25,000 supporters (*soratniki*) all over Russia. According to the paper, the organization controls a Moscow training-ground measuring 170 hectares.<sup>6</sup>

The main test so far of popular support for the RNE took place when a candidate fielded by the RNE ran in a Moscow by-election in November 1994. The candidate came in sixth out of twelve, winning 5.9% of the vote.<sup>7</sup> Barkashov did not run in the December 1995 Duma elections, stating that this would have been below his dignity. In January 1996, declared his intention to run for the presidency in June 1996.<sup>8</sup> Later, however, he pulled out of that race, too.

In order to raise money for the organization, RNE members offer their services as security guards for business firms. According to some reports, the RNE also runs some enterprises of its own. The RNE publishes an occasional newspaper, *Russkii Poryadok* ("Russian Order"), where interviews with and writings by Barkashov figure prominently. He has also published a collection of articles, *Azbuka Russkogo Natsionalista* ("ABC of the Russian Nationalist").

### Relating to the Nation

Aleksandr Barkashov has never tried to conceal the "ethnic Russian's first message" of the RNE's ideology: "The very name of our organization tells about the goals and tasks which we are setting ourselves: the political unification of the Russian (*ruskii*) people. To our people, unity is a matter of self preservation," he has said. Russia, in his view, is currently going through a demographic and cultural catastrophe which began under the "internationalist-communists." And the catastrophe is mainly affecting the ethnic Russians.<sup>9</sup>

Who, then, has the right to call himself *ruskii*? Barkashov has been very explicit on this question: "Genetic, blood relations definitely play the primary role in the understanding of nation. Therefore, in order to be considered Russian, it is of primary importance to have Russian blood." Furthermore, Barkashov says, the RNE takes into consideration to what extent one's personal behavior corresponds to the organization's understanding of the Russian national character. "To say that he is Russian who is Orthodox, or he who considers himself Russian, is incorrect. In such



a situation, say, some Georgian or Jew may say: I am a Russian, because I feel like one. And perhaps he considers himself to be Russian in order to hurt the Russian nation."<sup>10</sup>

According to Barkashov, the Soviet regime pursued a "racial program" aimed at the maximum degree of mixture of the Russian people, by means of blending it with the non-Indo-European peoples of the USSR, "so that the Russians would to the largest possible extent lose their national appearance and traits of their national-racial Indo-European (Aryan) genotype." This, in his opinion, leads to the loss of historical memory and the weakening of religious-cultural traditions.<sup>11</sup> In line with this reasoning, the RNE program for the new "national state" devotes considerable attention to issues of race.

According to this program, Russia in relation to "world standards" is discernible as a mono-ethnic state. The non-Russian fifteen percent of the population are national minorities; they should have the right to cultural autonomy, but not to political autonomy. The program defines *russkie* as representatives of "the three Russian peoples"—the Great Russians, Ukrainian, and Belorussians. *Rossiyan*, on the other hand, are the "non-Slav core peoples of Russia, for whom protection and acknowledgment of Russia has become a historical tradition and Russia is the only Fatherland."

During the rule of "anti-Russian forces," carrying out "physical destruction and a policy of artificial assimilation of the Russian People," the genetic pool of the Russian Nation was dealt an enormous blow, according to the RNE. Thus, the organization defines as one of the main tasks of the future National State the "protection of the health and genetic purity of the Russian Nation." Among the requisite policies is a prohibition of any encouragement of mixed weddings.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to the demands of many other nationalist organizations, but very much in line with its policies of race, the RNE holds that every citizen should have his nationality stated in his passport.<sup>13</sup>

The point of departure for all Barkashov's political speculations is the primacy of the *ruskii* nation. From there, he has developed a quite coherent, albeit repugnant, set of ideas. Barkashov openly describes his ideology as being nationalist, unlike most Russian nationalists, including the radical ones, who prefer to talk of themselves as patriots. "What is nationalism? It is love of one's Nation, acknowledgment of the Nation as the highest value, and all the rest, including the state and its political and economic arrangements, as means for the achievement of the highest possible manifestation of the Nation. ... Patriotism is love of the Homeland, and Homeland is already a statist-political term. ... The nation, which for the nationalist is the highest value, to the *gosudarstvennik* becomes a means," Barkashov commented in 1993. He went on to conclude that no ethnic Russian could be a patriot of the present Russian state; thus, only nationalism remained as a possible ideology.<sup>14</sup>

Aleksandr Barkashov claims to be an Orthodox believer, and the RNE's Code of Honor demands from the *soratniki* that they live according to the Bible's

commandments.<sup>15</sup> However, religion does not play any significant role in the RNE ideology; rather, references to Orthodoxy appear to be mostly a matter of pressing the appropriate buttons which the general nationalist discourse demands. This also seems to be the case concerning the Jews: the religious aspect of Jewishness is mentioned, but does not really seem to be the main factor in determining the RNE's hatred of the Jews.

Antisemitism is a key trait in RNE ideology, as it is to that of Vasiliev's *Pamyat*. "The Jews as a religious community have shown their absolute disharmony with Russian culture, religion and statehood," Barkashov said, pointing, as so many latter-day Russian nationalists do, to the fact that Jews were numerous among the 1917 revolutionaries. There cannot be any place for them in Russia, he contended. "We cannot get on. And this is our land, and therefore we have the right to live as we like. ... Let them leave quietly, while they have such an opportunity."<sup>16</sup>

Antisemitism figures prominently in the writings of Barkashov, not least in his *Azbuka russkogo natsionalista*, which is a collection of articles written over the years 1990–1994. Following a Russian tradition, he points to the real (and sometimes faked) Jewish names of Bolsheviks, and he notes the high proportion of Jews among writers, musicians, doctors, etc., in the USSR. Quoting antisemitic, quasi-scientific writings, he leaves no doubt that the Jews are controlling most of the world. He does not even bother to distinguish between Zionists and Jews, as his former leader, Dmitrii Vasiliev has tried to do: "Today the USA rules the West and hopes to rule the world. And who rules the USA? We remind you that 'particularly firm positions were maintained by the Jewish bourgeoisie in the American military industry. Ninety-five percent of the strongest military industrial enterprises of the USA and of all capitalist countries belong to the Jewish bourgeoisie and its allies'."<sup>17</sup>

Barkashov has explicitly made the struggle against power-seeking Jews the very fulcrum of the RNE world outlook. Precisely the importance of a world outlook (*mirovozzrenie*) has been stressed by Barkashov as being an absolute necessity for a political organization; without it there can be no ideology, and only on ideology can one build political and economic concepts, he argues. And the basis for the RNE's world outlook: "All world events are stimulated only by one—the struggle of nations represented by national elites with an internationally organized force, aiming for the role of world elite with the right to rule by means of making all peoples fit the necessary standards, that is depriving these peoples of their distinctiveness, and consequently of their independence." This international force, he holds, has taken shape over thousands of years, and is connected with Judaism, "whose essence is directly opposed to, one may say polar to, not only true Orthodoxy, but to any traditional teaching of world outlook of other peoples, be it Buddhism or Islam."<sup>18</sup> Making that statement, Barkashov added one of his quite rare comments on religion. Here, he spoke of the "formalism" of Christianity in the United States, and the "the stuck-up ostentatious Protestantism" of the English. Both, he said, were examples of heresy, or more specifically, "heresy of the *zhidovstvuyushchie* (that is those who



conform to the external rituals of Christianity, but in essence are following Judaism).<sup>19</sup>

Barkashov has claimed both that the Holocaust did not take place—only “a few hundred” Jews perished in German concentration camps<sup>20</sup>—and that it was a “diversion, ... artificially created to conceal a Jewish-inspired genocide which killed 100 million Russians.”<sup>21</sup> The latter is a recurrent theme among *Pamyatoide* ideologists; with reference to the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, they claim that the Jews are instructed to kill their own to promote the cause of the collective. In line with these ideas, he has also claimed that the two RNE *soratiniki* who were killed fighting on the side of the Supreme Soviet in October 1993 had fallen victim to Jewish ritual murder.<sup>22</sup>

### Relating to Fascism and Nazism

Aleksandr Barkashov's particular sense of logic is demonstrated, as with the definition of nationality, in his relationship to fascism and nazism. Playing with words in much the same way that Dmitrii Vasiliev enjoys doing, Barkashov says that he is not a fascist, but he is a nazi. On one occasion, Barkashov actually said that he was insulted, “as any Russian would be,” by being called fascist: “I am a Russian national-socialist. Nationalism as a tendency should be supported by some social levers.” What is wrong about fascism, it seemed, was the fact that it does not relate to Russian conditions. “A fascist in the direct sense is a member of the party of Mussolini, which came to power in Italy in 1922. Our movement cannot be compared with the national-socialist movement in Germany, or with the fascist one in Spain. Everything must be seen in terms of its time and its place.”<sup>23</sup> This is a line of reasoning which Barkashov has repeated on several occasions.

The RNE's leader's preparedness to go against the grain of traditional Russian nationalism, in unswerving accordance with his nation-first ideology, becomes evident in his relation to the deeds of Adolf Hitler: “I consider him a great hero of the German nation and all white peoples. He was able, by personal will, to inspire the nation to struggle against degradation and the washing away of the national values,” Barkashov has commented.<sup>24</sup> On another occasion, he said that he had a good relationship to the activities of German nationalist organizations, and: “The figure of Hitler I value in every way—politically, historically—positively. He inspired life into the nation, made it rise.”<sup>25</sup>

The character of the RNE is demonstrated by its use of symbolism, black uniforms, *etc.* Disregarding general associations, the RNE uses as its emblem a left-pointed swastika together with four-pointed star. The swastika, Barkashov said, is a “spiritual-religious and genetic-tribal” symbol, primarily of the Russian nation, secondarily of all the white race.<sup>26</sup>

Like many radical political organizations, the RNE stresses the importance of agitation and propaganda. For this, a world outlook is seen as being decisive. “The

main struggle is going on precisely on this front, on the front of the struggle of people's consciousness."<sup>27</sup> The militancy of the RNE becomes clear in that Barkashov does not dismiss the possibility that the RNE might make its voice heard on the political scene by means of violence. And the participation of RNE *soratiniki* in the October 1993 events testifies to the seriousness of this possibility. In 1994, Barkashov was asked about the RNE's plans in relation to the 1996 elections. He responded that the organization would not make its activities dependent on whether there would be an election or not. Any "firm orientation"—either only on elections or only of struggle with force—would lock the political organization, not allowing it to make use of all its possibilities. "By orienting itself only toward force the organization closes itself and quickly rolls itself up into banal terrorism—like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or Lebanese groups. And those who are considering only parliamentary methods are left unable to act in extreme situations," he said.<sup>28</sup> Barkashov has repeated this view on several occasions.<sup>29</sup> Contrary to this message, however, Barkashov earlier in 1994 actually claimed that the RNE would come to power by legal means. The organization would shape public opinion, receive support from the majority of the population and come to power by "absolutely legal means."<sup>30</sup> A rather hollow promise, one should think.

Finally, mention should be made on the role of women in the movement. When asked on one occasion whether there were any female *soratiniki* in the RNE, Barkashov answered that the organization stood on a "traditional patriarchal basis." He then reiterated the well-known Nazi triad: "Women should tend the hearth. As the saying goes, church, kitchen, children." Girls who came to the RNE were explained where their place should be in life.<sup>31</sup>

### Political and Economic Program

According to Aleksandr Barkashov, present-day Russia remains an heir to the "international-Communist, anti-Russian" Soviet Union, despite the pretensions of new leaders. All of today's politicians—from the democrats to the "reddish preservers"—entered the political arena with "general" political and economic convictions and programs. But the Russians, he contends, do not have general, but "concrete National interests."<sup>32</sup> This primacy of the good of the Nation penetrates all the RNE leader's pronouncements on political and economic issues. When asked in late 1994, in his own newspaper, what political and economic system the RNE favored, Barkashov asked rhetorically: "Is it really possible to subordinate the life of a society, of a human collective, to a scheme of political or economic building [*ustroystvo*]? ... Our point of departure is that the human collective is the highest value. Here, we have in mind only the historical, naturally developed human collective—the Nation. And the political and economic arrangements we consider only as means, vocations to organize the life of the Nation in accordance with a national world outlook and concrete conditions of existence."<sup>33</sup>



On other occasions, Barkashov has discussed different political systems, and their implications for the nation. In the world, he says, there exist three basic ideological systems: Communist, liberalist, and nationalist. The first two are basically very similar, in that they ignore the Nation. Barkashov, as is also usual among right-wing extremists elsewhere, compares the national collective to an organism, where all social groups are necessary to ensure its continued existence. The task of the state, then, is to "sharply formulate the national interests and, on the basis of these, to balance the interests of different social groups."<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, in light of this, the RNE distances itself sharply from democracy. In a 1994 programmatic statement, the organization states that democracy is inefficient for addressing the tasks of the nation. Even more serious, according to the statement, is that the regime of parliamentary democracy is "a weapon by whose help the world financial oligarchy thrusts upon the Russian People forms of political life alien to it, and leads the Russian people into delusion in relation to their true interests and goals."<sup>35</sup> In a 1995 statement, Barkashov went back to ancient Greek democracy, interpreting "people's power," the direct translation of "democracy," as having signified something like "power to an ethnic group": "Today's democracy has nothing in common with the ethnic democracy of ancient Greece. Because today the right to elect, and most importantly, the right to be elected, belongs not only to people who have demonstrated their loyalty to the ideals and interests of the nation, but even to people with double citizenship. And those are people who may be under the influence of the interests of other nations."<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, Barkashov becomes almost statesman-like when talking of the state of rights of non-Russian citizens in the future state. In any state there is a constitution, directing the activities of any citizen, Barkashov points out. "If [a citizen] subordinates himself to and fulfills this law of the society, while the state conscientiously fulfills its obligations, then this man may live peacefully in our state, although he does not share our views. But if he will be undermining the system of our values, fighting against them, undermining the unity of our nation, state, naturally, there will not be a place for him here."<sup>37</sup>

The 1993 program of "basic principles" for the *russskii* state contains several points which give us a clearer picture of what the RNE stands for. Here, first of all, it is made clear that Russia is to be a unitary state. In line with historical tradition, the state should be divided into the administrative entities *gubernii*, *uezdi*, and *volosti*. In this state, the interests of the ethnic Russians would be "at the same time the interests of the state." Any expression of "russophobia" would be seen as a grave crime against the state and persecuted.

References to economic questions are hardly made, but it is pointed out that Russia should have a mixed economy, where the state would have control over branches of "vital importance." The program also speaks favorably of the independent farmer. Today's *kolkhozniki* are not farmers in the full sense of the word. By contrast, in the national state the farmers make up the very healthiest part of the

nation: "It is not only a genetically pure and healthy social group, but also a link between the Russian land (soil) and the remainder of the Nation."

Other points in the program also reflect the *Blut und Boden* message. Motherhood and childhood should be protected so as to ensure that the growth of the ethnic Russian population is at least as large as that of other peoples in the country. A "cult of the family" should be established, and healthy families with many children should be rewarded. Conditions should be created under which the mother may choose not to work outside the home. The pay of the manual workers should be "completely equivalent" to the energy spent and sufficient for a worthy life for the worker and his family. The conditions of workers should be consistently improved, and their work should be respected and prestigious. And *russskii* youth should be stimulated to develop all their talents. By these measures, the "disproportions" of the recent years may be countered. Propaganda for sex, as well as perversion, drug abuse, drunkenness, *etc.*, should be forbidden. The freedom of activity of religious confessions, communities and separate clergy will be secured "only to the extent to which it strengthens the spiritual forces of *russskie* and *rossiian*."<sup>38</sup>

The 1994 program for the new national state elaborates further the RNE's views on how that state should be structured. Today's Russian state is described as a "international-parasitic" one, in which the "communo-democratic *nomenklatura*, led by the world financial oligarchy," tried to force upon the ethnic Russians a Soviet system of "soft apartheid." The program repeats that the state should be structured around the old system of *gubernii*. This new state will be a historical heir to the Russian Empire—but that does not mean that it will be a restoration of "obsolete forms of life." Rather, it will be the creation of new ones, "directed towards the construction of a new type of civilization and rebirth of the complete Russian-Aryan Traditions." At the same time, "particular attention" is to be paid to the observance of the rights of the minority groups of Russia. There should be established national-cultural autonomies, through which these peoples would enjoy "free development of their ethnic cultures, languages, ways of life, and also systems of ownership and societal self-government." The borders of the present Russian Federation cannot serve as the basis for such national-cultural autonomies: these borders were drawn up to the detriment of the interests of the Russian People with the goal of dismembering its territory, and in most of today's national republics the greater part of the population is made up of ethnic Russians.<sup>39</sup>

On the issue of international relations, antisemitism again appears as the main formative impulse of RNE ideology. We have already noted some references to "world finance," *etc.* Like so many other radical Russian nationalists, including Vladimir Zhirinovskii, Barkashov habitually reasons that Russia is too rich to have any real friends. By allowing their territories to be used as a springboard for an ominous "international force"—that is, the Jews—Western countries, themselves poor in territory and human resources, have achieved a high standard of living at the expense of other countries and peoples, above all Russia. "Therefore the sources of



our poverty and misfortunes in the presence of our love of work and our wealth should be sought in this state of affairs, and no kind of economic programs, to a greater or lesser extent built on the given state of things, will bring us the least relief," Barkashov wrote in 1994.<sup>40</sup> The "international force" opposing Russia had a multitude of expressions, he said; "as state formations (for example the USA), as international military-political associations (for example the military bloc NATO), as inter-governmental and non-governmental associations (for example the UN, the CSCE, Bilderberg Club, the Club of Rome), as international economic associations (for example the IMF), not to mention thousands of cultural and religious associations." One year later, Barkashov repeated this argument. Russia, he said, was coming under increasing pressure from the two centers of contemporary civilization: the Western one—the industrially developed countries (the United States, England, France and others) with the countries of the "Third World," situated in the sphere of their raw materials interests, and the Eastern one—China, India, Japan and others. The Western center, he claimed, was in a state of deep crisis, provoked by a hypertrophic industry and a demanding population, coupled with a near-dearth of natural resources. The Eastern center, on the other hand, found itself in a pre-catastrophe crisis of over-population. Pressure was mounting on Russia from both West and East; both centers saw their salvation in the riches of the Russian homeland.<sup>41</sup>

In 1995 Barkashov stated that Estonia and Latvia, oppressing their Russian minorities while living on natural resources from Russia, were employing their special services in efforts to influence the political life in Russia. Their main goal, he said, was to prevent the national-patriotic movement in Russia from expanding, and to change Russia's politics with regard to the defense of national interests. He also claimed that there existed US plans for splitting up Russia into a number of "independent" ethnic states, and reducing the size of Russia's population by 35 million. Russia has already suffered terribly; while it is at present a country of 150 million, it should be 400 million.<sup>42</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, the 1993 RNE program calls for the cancellation of all those international agreements which the Russian leadership has entered into which are to the detriment of the Russian nation. Furthermore, the national army is to be the guarantor of the independence and stability of the state: therefore, it should have the strongest and most modern weapons. For this purpose, the military industry will have to be reconstructed.<sup>43</sup>

On a major issue affecting both national and international stability, the military intervention in Chechnya, the RNE and Barkashov have been highly supportive of President Yeltsin's hard-liner approach. In a statement issued early 1995, the RNE said that, as a result of the activities of the Dudaev regime, practically all economic and business activities had been brought to a halt in Chechnya. This had resulted in a spread of Chechen criminal groups on the territory of all Russia, which served as practically the only source of revenue for the present Chechen administration. The RNE considered the actions of the executive as "necessary measures for the securing

of the territorial integrity of Russia and the protection of its citizens from force and arbitrary rule." The RNE demanded that the actions be "consistent and decisive" in order to be effective and said that it was ready to show the executive its support "by ideological as well as by any other means."<sup>44</sup>

In a January 1995 interview, Aleksandr Barkashov said that his support of the regime's policy in Chechnya would only change in the direction of even stronger support if the operation should become long and protracted. In his view, all of Russia's political forces had taken a destructive position on this issue: "It is disgusting to look at their fussing about. Territorial integrity is the state's key task. ... These are not humans who are now defending Groznyy and they are, for their part, being defended by Kovalev, Pamfilova and Gaydar. It means that they are inhuman themselves." The RNE, he said, considered itself an active reserve of the Russian Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs. And according to his information, there were in Russia 80,000 Chechen criminals against whom preventive measures must be taken, all the way to temporary internment and deportation. Moreover, there was a need to establish strict control over television.<sup>45</sup>

### Political Allies

In late 1994, a commentator in the Communist-inclined newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiia* stated an opinion probably shared by many left- and right-wing radicals in Russia. According to that writer—Duma deputy Yuriy Ivanov of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation—an overwhelming majority of prominent actors of the opposition forces in Russia consider Barkashov a provocateur. Ivanov stressed Barkashov's "rabid dislike of all opposition tendencies." Barkashov now in particular attacked the people who were in the White House, above all Ruskoy, to the benefit of Yeltsin. The place of Barkashov, Ivanov considered, was "only next to the 'democrats,' the ardent admirers of Pinochet."<sup>46</sup>

It is indeed true that Barkashov and the RNE have not put much emphasis on cultivating friendly relations with other opposition forces. Starting with his first ally and superior, Dmitrii Vasiliev, Barkashov has alienated most or all of the people he has met on his way. Barkashov claims that he saw through Dmitrii Vasiliev as early as 1985. When he nevertheless joined *Pamyat*, it was because he had his own hidden goals: "Before *Pamyat* I also engaged myself in the formation of a national organization. But it existed in a non-legal situation. As a member of *Pamyat* I got the opportunity to legalize this work. I needed an organization which would have a large influx of people—then it would be possible to make it quite strong," he said, pointing out the amount of press coverage *Pamyat* was receiving at the time.

With the same goals, he said, he entered the Russian National Assembly, led by former KGB General Aleksandr Sterligov. And here, he had great results: a lot of good people joined in, including people from the *glubinka* (approximately, "the depths of the country"). The people he met here have later become local RNE



leaders, he said. He describes Sterligov personally as a "nobody," for whom no one has any use.<sup>47</sup>

The standard RNE accusation against other nationalist organizations is that these are not truly national. Therefore, the RNE has no allies. In 1993, Barkashov commented that there were several nationalist organizations around declaring their goals to be the salvation and the rebirth of the Russian people—Russian assemblies, fronts of national salvation, national-republican parties (paraphrased names of well-known radical nationalist associations). "But the words 'salvation,' 'rebirth' in their speech are turned into shamanist spells, as far as they do not in any way relate to the general state of the world civilization."<sup>48</sup> That same year, however, Barkashov also informed a journalist that he was co-leader of the organization "Slavic Assembly" (*Slavyanskii Sobor*), and added that within this organization, his group had established links with nationalists in Bulgaria, Slovakia and other Slavic countries. There had also been contacts with representatives of France, and Germany. "But thus far we are busy with our doings within the country."<sup>49</sup>

Barkashov and the RNE have also, in retrospect, been critical of their allies in the October 1993 events. Shortly before the October anniversary, the RNE distributed a statement in which Barkashov stated that it was the patriotic leaders who "to a significant degree provoked these events." Beginning in December 1992, the Supreme Soviet had for over a year been forcing President Yeltsin into a corner with no room for compromise, the RNE stated. And Barkashov, who after October was described by Aleksandr Rutskoy as one of the most serious and perspicacious Russian politicians, was not equally impressed by the former vice-president.<sup>50</sup> On another occasion, Barkashov reasoned in a similar way. The deputies had chosen a path of no compromise. "I am not saying that Yeltsin was right, but they did not give [Yeltsin] a chance to live." The reason why the RNE went to the White House after all was, he said, that an abolition of the constitution could have had repercussions also on the RNE and other patriotic organizations.<sup>51</sup>

More recently, Barkashov has found it necessary to distance himself from Aleksei Vedenkin, a political adventurer with a criminal record. Vedenkin achieved instant, albeit short-lived, fame when in the beginning of 1995, he vowed on national television to execute personally the Duma's Human Rights Commissioner Sergei Kovalev and Duma Defense Committee Chairman Sergei Yushenkov. Vedenkin had joined the RNE the year before, and had at times been spoken of in the press as a deputy to Barkashov. The latter described the fuss around Vedenkin as a "provocation." Vedenkin, he said, was associated with "*perestroyschiki*-democrats," including Aleksandr Yakovlev.<sup>52</sup>

As a matter of fact, about the only political actor in Russia today whom Barkashov seems to have some liking for, is President Yeltsin. The RNE leader became a defender of the President after the intervention in Chechnya. As noted, the RNE has promised to support the Russian forces in Chechnya with troops, if necessary. Shortly after the outbreak of the Chechen war, Barkashov was asked if he was not

afraid that the Kremlin might call off the elections. He answered that he himself was opposed to elections, since the Duma had "shown its complete inability, unwillingness, in what it should be doing, that is legislation, and has turned in fact to the epicenter of the anti-state opposition." In other words, it seems that the cause of state preservation was so important to the RNE that the organization explicitly supported the enemy President Yeltsin when he pursued policies which they favored.<sup>53</sup>

In January 1995 Barkashov similarly came out highly critical of generals Boris Gromov and Aleksandr Lebed, who were among the most prominent military critics of the Chechen operation. These two, he said, had decided to earn a little political capital: Gromov's statements were "simply mean," because he knew that there could be no other losses. Barkashov also claimed that Gromov had lost an entire battalion in Afghanistan before entering politics. Lebed, he claimed, had not lifted a finger when Russians were being killed in Transdnier. "Lebed is a classical type of traitor, without honor or conscience." Barkashov added that the RNE considered national-socialists of any nation to be their allies. "If there were national-socialists in Chechnya, they would not permit the criminal Dudayev to get hold of the reins of power."<sup>54</sup>

As mentioned, Aleksandr Barkashov initially intended to participate in the June 1996 presidential elections. However, he pulled out, despite claiming to have collected 1.1 million signatures, meeting the requirements to register as a candidate. The reason he withdrew, he said, was the manner in which candidates such as Gennadii Zyuganov and Mikhail Gorbachev were registered; the signatures supporting these two were handed in so quickly, there was no way that they could have been garnered in accordance with the law. Yet, the Central Electoral Commission registered them. "I decided that I did not have the right to compare the living people who trusted me, with the 'dead souls' of some other candidates," Barkashov said. The RNE leader also claimed that his supporters had been obstructed in their campaign in several places. This was particularly true in regions where communists had strong positions in the organs of state power, he said.<sup>55</sup>

On other occasions in the spring of 1996, Barkashov repeated these claims. Instead of participating in the elections, he said he would continue to struggle for power by gathering supporters and influencing the minds of Russians. And from this point of view, he was quoted as saying, "The present Russian regime is convenient—it does not in any way encroach upon its 'comrades-in-arms.'" However, Barkashov was not prepared to tell his supporters to vote for Yeltsin in the elections, since he was not convinced that Yeltsin would not change his relationship in the near future to nationalist organizations and drive them underground. Furthermore, Barkashov did not like the President's peace initiatives in the Chechen conflict; the aim of the regime should be the destruction of the enemy, he considered.<sup>56</sup> In the end, Barkashov recommended his supporters to abstain in the election. As for Yeltsin, he commented: "Who knows him? Today we do not live badly under him, but suddenly tomorrow he changes. ..."<sup>57</sup>



## Conclusion

The ideology of Barkashov and the RNE consistently promotes the good of one ethnic group at the obvious expense of others. The numerous references to the superiority of "Aryan" ethnic Russians leave no doubts about the racist character of the RNE. The Jews figure as the source of evil to Russia and the rest of the world; the RNE expounds conspiracy theories in a manner very similar to that of extreme right-wing organizations elsewhere today and earlier in this century. The fact that the RNE seems to be an organization of some strength, represented in large parts of Russia, should give grounds for alarm on the basis of this analysis. With its preparedness to use violence to promote its policies, this organization could, if a critical situation should occur in Russian politics, play a destabilizing role.

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## NOTES

1. See "Malenkii fyurer v tsentre Moskvy," *Golos*, No. 17, April 1993; "Russkii Poryadok Aleksandra Barkashova," *Moskovskie novosti*, No. 15, 10-17 April 1994; and "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993. These articles are also the main sources of the biographical data on Barkashov and on the structure of the RNE.
2. "Russkii Poryadok Aleksandra Barkashova," *Moskovskie novosti*, No. 15, 10-17 April 1994.
3. "The rise of the new 'right,'" *The Economist*, 28 January 1995.
4. "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993.
5. *Izvestiya*, 22 November 1994, quoted in Laura Belin: "Ultranationalist Parties Follow Disparate Paths," *Transition*, Vol. 1, No. 10, 23 June 1995 (8).
6. "170 gektarov v tsentre Moskvy zakvacheny boevikami," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 16 May 1996.
7. "The rise of the new right," *The Economist*, 28 January 1995.
8. Ekho Moskvy, as reported by *OMRI Daily Digest*, 30 January 1996.
9. "Pravo na budushchee. Beseda s predsedatelem dvizheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 3-5 (23-25).
10. "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993.
11. "Osnovnye printsiipy postroeniya Russkogo gosudarstva," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 2-3 (15-16).
12. "Osnovnye polozheniya programmy dvzheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo po postroeniuyu natsionalnogo gosudarstva," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 9-1, December 1993-January 1994.
13. "Osnovnye printsiipy postroeniya Russkogo gosudarstva," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 2-3 (15-16).
14. Aleksandr Barkashov: "Natsionalizm ili patriotizm? O neizbezhnosti natsionalnoi revoliutsii," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 1, February 1993.
15. "Kodeks chesti RNE," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 9-1, December 1993-January 1994.
16. "Pod Vifleemskoy zvezdoy i svastikoy," *Srochno v nomer*, No. 31, April 1993.
17. *Azbuka russkogo natsionalista*, Moscow 1994, Izdatelstvo Slovo-1 (reference given to the journal *Agitator armii i flota*).
18. Aleksandr Barkashov: "Tolko molodaya natsionalnaya elita, rozhennaya russkoy natsiey, v borbe spaset Rossiyo ot poraboshcheniya," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 2-3 (15-16).
19. *Ibid.*
20. "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993.

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21. "The rise of the new right," *The Economist*, 28 January 1995.
22. "Pamyati pavshikh soratnikov," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 9-1, December 1993-January 1994.
23. "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993.
24. *Ibid.*
25. "Malenkii fyurer v tsentre Moskv," *Golos*, No. 17, April 1993.
26. "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993.
27. "Pravo na budushchee. Beseda s predsedatelem dvizheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 3-5 (23-25).
28. "Interviyu s Predsedatelem Tsentralnogo Soveta RNE Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 4-5 (17-18), 1994.
29. See, for example, "Malenkii fyurer v tsentre Moskv," *Golos*, No. 17, April 1993, and "Spasitelnaya pobeda," *Inform-600 sekund*, No. 2, July 1994.
30. "Gumanist v chernoy rubashke," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 5 April 1994.
31. "Ya ne fashist, ya—natsist," *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 4 April 1993.
32. "Interviyu s predsedatelem Soveta RNE Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 3, 1993.
33. "Pravo na budushchee. Beseda s predsedatelem dvizheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 3-5 (23-25), 1994.
34. "Interviyu s Predsedatelem Tsentralnogo Soveta RNE Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 4-5 (17-18), 1994.
35. "Printsipy partiynogo stroitelstvo RNE," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 6-7, 1994.
36. Aleksandr Barkashov: "Krizis mirovoi tsivilizatsii, rol Rossii i zadachi Russkogo natsionalnogo dvizheniya," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 1-2 (21-22), 1995.
37. "Chest i Rossiya po-barkashovski," *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 16, April 1994.
38. "Osnovnye polozheniya programmy dvzheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo po postroeniyu natsionalnogo gosudarstvo," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 9-1, December 1993-January 1994.
39. "Osnovnye printsipy po stroeniyu Russkogo gosudarstvo," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 2-3 (15-16), 1994.
40. Aleksandr Barkashov: "Tolko molodaya natsionalnaya elita, rozhdennaya russkoy natsiei, v borbe spaset Rossiyo ot poraboshcheniya," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 2-3 (15-16), 1994.
41. Aleksandr Barkashov: "Krizis mirovoi tsivilizatsii, rol Rossii i zadachi Russkogo natsionalnogo dvizheniya," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 1-2 (21-22), 1995.
42. "Pravo na budushchee. Beseda s predsedatelem dvizheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo Aleksandrom Petrovichem Barkashovym," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 3-5 (23-25), 1995.
43. "Osnovnye polozheniya programmy dvzheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo po postroeniyu natsionalnogo gosudarstvo," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 9-1, December 1993-January 1994.
44. "Zayavlenie dvizheniya Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo po sibitiyam v Chechne," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 1-2, 1995.
45. "Noviy kurs prezidenta Eltsina," *Moskovskie novosti*, No. 3, 15-22 January 1995.
46. "Order na edinstvo," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 25 October 1994.
47. "Spasitelnaya pobeda," *Inform-600 sekund*, No. 2, July 1994.
48. Aleksandr Barkashov: "Krizis mirovoy tsivilizatsii, rol Rossii i zadachi Russkogo natsionalnogo dvizheniya," *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 1-2 (21-22), 1995.
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56. "Fashisty budut sobliudat rezhim. Nyneshniy," *Kuranty*, 19 April 1996.
57. "Za kogo barkashovtsy? Protiv 'krasnykh—znachit za 'belykh'?" *Ogonek*, No. 19, May 1996.