

Barkashov and the Russian Power Ministries, 1994–2000

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The Russian National Unity group (*Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo*, or RNE) is “the largest of the unequivocally fascist organizations in Russia today,”¹ and as journalist Petr Akopov has observed, “[T]he basic mass of the adherents of the RNE are in the power [ministry] structures and among the youth, persons living, above all, in the Russian provinces.”² In this article I focus on the relationship of the RNE to both active and former members of the Russian power ministries, from February 1994—when the members of the organization, like other participants in the October 1993 anti-Yeltsin uprising, were amnestied by the Russian State Duma—through the March 2000 Russian presidential elections.

Alexander Barkashov, the self-styled führer of the RNE, is a political leader who has consistently benefited from close ties to the Russian military and police. In an interview published in early 1995, he said, “We [the RNE] see ourselves as an active reserve for the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.”³ Born in 1953, Barkashov served in the Russian military from 1972 to 1974. Although sources differ as to where precisely he did his service, it is known that he volunteered to go to Egypt to participate in a planned Soviet military effort to assist Egypt during the Egyptian-Israeli war of 1973; the rapid end of the war rendered Soviet aid unnecessary. The virulent anti-Semitism that Barkashov imbibed from a great-uncle (*dvoyurodnyi ded*) who was an instructor in the Communist Party Central Committee during Stalin’s “anti-cosmopolitan campaign” may have been a factor behind his decision to volunteer.⁴

Following his demobilization from the army, Barkashov remained in the military reserves, with the title “lance-corporal in the reserves (instructor in hand-to-hand combat).”⁵ He also reportedly served as a trainer for Soviet military forces being sent to Afghanistan.⁶

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In 1985, reacting to the political ferment being generated in the USSR by the policies of the new Communist Party general secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, Barkashov, who like his father before him had found employment as an electrician-fitter, joined the Russian nationalist informal organization *Pamyat'*, headed by photographer Dmitry Vasil'ev. Within a year he had been elected to that body's Central Council. "By 1989, he was second only to Vasil'ev, in effective control of crucial aspects of the organization's activity: security, combat training, and ideological and sports work with youth."⁷

A well-informed member of Gorbachev's Politburo, Alexander Yakovlev, has revealed that this organization was eventually de facto taken over by the KGB. Yakovlev recalled,

Pamyat' was at the beginning an organization with very noble goals. It consisted of restorers and history enthusiasts who were engaged in preserving monuments of antiquity. Then the KGB inserted its man there—the photographer Dmitrii Vasil'ev, together with his comrades. The organization engaged in "politics"—the struggle with Zionism. The restorers left *Pamyat'*, and the KGB allotted Vasil'ev a new apartment as his headquarters.⁸

When asked by a reporter why the KGB "needed all this," Yakovlev explained:

It was the 1980's, there was the dissident [movement]. A vent was needed to release the pent-up steam of dissidence from society. They [the KGB] selected a goal: Zionism, the culprit for all the misfortunes of the Soviet people. And they selected an executor, *Pamyat'*. It was intended to show the people its enemy. Later ever more extreme Nazi organizations began to detach themselves from *Pamyat'*. *In this way the KGB organizationally gave birth to Russian fascism.*⁹

It seems clear that Barkashov's high-profile role within *Pamyat'* could only have occurred with the approval and the logistical support of the KGB. As the weekly *Ogonek* noted in early 1995, there have been persistent reports that Barkashov "immediately after [his time in] the army formed ties with the Fifth Directorate of the KGB."¹⁰

Barkashov's close ties to high-ranking figures in the Soviet and post-Soviet power ministries became evident during the *dvoevlastie* crisis of September–October 1993, which culminated in the bloody "October events." In their useful book on the RNE, V. Likhachev and V. Pribylovsky write that the RNE was "the largest and most disciplined" of all the detachments guarding the Russian White House. And they continue:

The [B]arkashovites carried out the protection of the inside of the building and of the underground passages, and they maintained internal order on the building's territory, which was under siege, and also, according to certain information, they served as personal bodyguards for the military leaders of the parliamentary opposition (in particular, for V. Achalov and V. Barannikov).¹¹

Barkashov has on several occasions underlined his considerable respect for those two former high-ranking officials: Vladislav Achalov, from 1989 to 1990 commander of Soviet paratroopers and, from 1990 to 1991, deputy Soviet minister of defense; and Viktor Barannikov, from December 1991 until July 1993 Yeltsin's minister of state security (the FSB). In a late 1998 interview, Barkashov

remarked that during September–October 1993 he had served as Achalov’s “deputy defense minister.”¹²

The close ties of Barkashov and his organization to elements in the Russian military and police, although noted by virtually all commentators, have not, in my opinion, been sufficiently appreciated. To take one example of such ties, in early 1995, the newspaper *Moskovsky komsomolets* reported that the RNE’s principal newspaper, *Russky poryadok*, was being produced, in a print run of 400,000, by the “Krasnyi Voin” printing presses of the Moscow Military District of the Russian Ministry of Defense.¹³ If true, that strikes one as extraordinary.

The RNE and the Russian Military and Police

Commenting on the relationship of the RNE to the Russian military and police, journalist Vadim Belykh noted in late 1998: “[T]he RNE has always and everywhere underlined its loyalty with regard to the [Russian] power structures. And they, in turn, for the most part relate with sympathy to the Barkashov movement.”¹⁴ “In the army milieu,” Petr Akopov has observed in a similar vein, “the RNE is supported by both [simple] soldiers and by generals, but most of all it is supported by middle-level officers, former *afgantsy* and veterans of Chechnya. Recently military men who had been deceived by promises of state-provided housing are also entering the RNE.”¹⁵ “In it [the RNE],” an article appearing in *Vecherny Peterburg* noted in early 1999, “there are many former military men. . . .”¹⁶ During spring 1999, it was reported that the FSB and the Moscow Military Procuracy had identified two officers—one a major and one a captain—who were actively distributing RNE literature at a Smolensk military university, an institute that was attached to the Moscow Military District of the Ministry of Defense.¹⁷

Journalist Vadim Belykh underscores “the commonality of views” shared by elite police units, such as the black-beret OMON (a special police SWAT force), and the RNE, “both concerning the ‘present moment,’ and concerning ‘the dominance of the blacks [i.e., peoples of the Caucasus] in Moscow,’ and concerning ‘the Yids,’ and concerning the ‘dungocrats’ [*der’mokraty*, a pun on the word *demokraty*].” Cells of the RNE, Belykh noted, have been created both “in army units and in law enforcement structures.”¹⁸ Journalist Andrei Pavlov has drawn attention to the fact that within the RNE there are “former OMON, [MVD] *spetsnaz*, and SOBR [a highly trained police contingent],” men who are fully “ready for battle.”¹⁹ In late 1998, it was reported that in southern Russia a “growth in RNE membership has been spurred by the failure of the government’s program to provide servicemen with housing, along with cuts in the Interior Ministry’s forces. . . .” An interior ministry colonel was quoted as saying that “‘everybody’—from special forces personnel to regular policemen—is joining the RNE.”²⁰ An article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* emphasized that the RNE enjoyed “the sympathy of the power agencies, and especially of the MVD.”²¹

Former Power Ministry Personnel Spur RNE’s Expansion into the Provinces

To get a sense of the strong military and police presence within the RNE, it is useful to look at who has been organizing RNE chapters in the provinces. (Obvi-

ously the information I possess on this subject can only be fragmentary.) In Krasnodar krai, home to a vigorous Russian National Unity chapter, it was reported that the RNE “has a headquarters provided for them by the MVD.” The local RNE leader, Viktor Zelinsky, “worked in the organs of the MVD for twenty-five years.”²² In Moscow, in 1998, the Barkashovites were provided access to “the firing ranges of the MVD.”²³

In Kareliya, the leader of the local RNE chapter, V. Paevshchikov, was reported to have served formerly in the “army special forces”²⁴—likely a reference to the elite Chief Intelligence Directorate (GRU) *spetsnaz*. Another newspaper noted that under Paevshchikov’s leadership the Karelian chapter of the RNE had solicited membership precisely from “former employees of the GRU *spetsnaz*.”²⁵

In Kaliningrad oblast, the leader of the local RNE chapter was identified as a retired lieutenant in the Soviet navy, Alexander Budanov.²⁶ In Mordoviya, the local RNE leader was Yaroslav Pshenichnikov, a retired military man and “veteran of the Chechen war.”²⁷ In

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Vladimir oblast the organization was said to be headed by a man named Malyshchev, a forty-three-year-old retired policeman.²⁸

In Nizhny Novgorod, the local RNE chapter was reported to have “good relations with the oblast administration of [the Ministry of] Internal Affairs.”²⁹ And in the city of Kirov, a “military-patriotic” youth club run by the RNE was said to have the support and assistance of the local military recruitment office (*voenmat*) and of the police.³⁰

In Tver oblast, it was reported in 1999, the RNE-backed candidate for the oblast governorship was Sergei Svetlichnyi, of Udomlya, a town in which the RNE “is led by former employees of the law enforcement organs.” Svetlichnyi himself was described as “a former policeman.”³¹

In early July 2000, the weekly *Argumenty i fakty* reported that RNE members, dressed in black uniforms, were openly distributing “without hindrance” their organization’s literature on the commuter trains coming into Moscow (only putting on additional clothing as a disguise just as the trains were arriving in the capital, where the RNE is legally banned). The newspaper noted that the police patrolling the trains were, in the main, simple lads from Moscow oblast who strongly sympathized with the anti-Semitic and “anti-black” views of the RNE.³²

The Special Case of Stavropol Krai

Nowhere have the ties linking present and former military and MVD personnel and the RNE been more apparent than in the case of Stavropol krai, which borders war-torn, turbulent Chechnya. By all accounts, that chapter of the RNE has

been and remains the most vigorous in Russia, and it is said to enjoy the strong support of both the krai governor and the mayor of Stavropol city. (When, in July 1999, the minister of the interior, Vladimir Rushailo, angrily inquired of the mayor of Stavropol whether or not he supported the RNE, the latter replied: "Personally I do support it.")³³ In mid-1998, Andrei Dudinov, the RNE Stavropol chapter's head, boasted that "entire companies [*roty*] of military men, together with their commanders, are expressing a desire to enter the RNE."³⁴

Dudinov's assertion may not have been that much of an exaggeration. In his recent book, *The General Staff without Secrets*, Colonel Viktor Baranets, a retired officer who served with the Russian General Staff, writes:

At times, under the axe of curtailment there fell "dangerous" military formations, in which the extent of opposition to the central authority was observed to be the most dangerous. This was the case, for example, with the 21st Airborne Brigade, which was based in Stavropol. Through the channels of its special services, the General Staff received information that the local officer-paratroopers were "ideationally connected" to the regional chapter of the Russian National Unity. There was observed a very high degree of opposition on the part of the personnel to the regime. The Brigade was included in the plan for military curtailment.³⁵

This crackdown on the Twenty-First Airborne Brigade, assuming it occurred, appears to have taken place shortly after Igor Sergeev became defense minister in mid-1997.

The 1997 crackdown, however, may not have been particularly effective. Stephen Shenfield writes that in December 1998 the chief of Yeltsin's presidential administration, General Nikolai Bordyuzha, sent inspectors to both Stavropol krai and Krasnodar krai with orders to analyze the situation there. "These inspections," Shenfield notes, "apparently led to the disbanding of army and internal troop units in which RNE influence had been particularly strong."³⁶ Once again, it is not clear how successful this purge was or what happened to the military and police personnel who had allegedly become infected with RNE's ideology. One thing seems clear: the Stavropol krai chapter of RNE remained highly active.

In 1997, a year and a half before General Bordyuzha's attempted intervention, the situation in Stavropol krai looked like this: At a military-political youth camp organized by the RNE on the outskirts of Stavropol, a squad of teenagers aged thirteen and up, "wearing camouflage fatigues and a swastika," were observed by a *Time* reporter as they climbed ropes, practiced hand-to-hand combat, dodged imitation hand grenades, and learned how to parachute, handle weapons, and administer first aid. By summer 1997, the camp had already graduated four hundred "cadets." The local military were said to be "happy to have the preparation done on its behalf, particularly for specialist units such as the 21st Airborne Brigade and the 101st Brigade of the Interior Ministry. Officers of these units lend a hand in the boys' training, and the military has chipped in with camouflage uniforms, a field kitchen and gas masks." The local police were also said to be pleased as the boys "help them patrol suburban streets and trains."³⁷ In addition to learning military skills, the boys received intensive indoctrination in the ideas of Adolf Hitler (especially *Mein Kampf*) and Alexander Barkashov.

In similar fashion, the newspaper *Izvestiya* reported that officers of the 101st Interior Ministry Brigade were wont to drop by the Stavropol RNE club, as were officers and students from local military schools. Those youths who completed the rigorous training course run by RNE were guaranteed service “in elite army units and in the GRU *spetsnaz*.” *Izvestiya* also reported that the RNE chapter of Stavropol krai planned shortly to open two summer camps, which would be attended by “about 700” children.³⁸

Militarizing Russian Youth

The successful training course in Stavropol krai appears to have been adopted as a kind of model by a number of other RNE chapters throughout Russia. In Bryansk oblast, for example, where there is another officially registered RNE chapter, a similar training course is being run: “From the commanders of military units there come to the RNE thankful letters for training excellent soldiers. Several lads from the organization have already entered into the military schools of Russia.” At the Bryansk training course “each week hundreds [of boys]” join the core *aktiv* for combat training. They are taught “the fundamentals of hand-to-hand combat and how to fire a machine-gun.”³⁹

In Kareliya, which likewise has an officially registered chapter, former army special forces officer Boris Paevshchikov and his RNE colleagues “select adolescents from fourteen years of age and up—exclusively Great Russians, Little Russians and Belorussians.”⁴⁰ In mid-1999, seventy-four boys were reported to be undergoing training at their camp. In Volgograd oblast, a similar training camp has been organized, complete with a firing range.⁴¹

In Amur oblast, according to Colonel V. P. Kolesnichenko of the MVD, RNE members “have conducted public talks in many schools and institutes,” where they are willingly being offered a tribune by school administrators. Nineteen-year-old boys, “who in their majority lack clothing and are hungry,” are being directly ingested into the RNE, a “militarized organization.”⁴² In Kamchatka oblast, the local RNE chapter attracts youth to a firing range that it runs. In Novosibirsk, the RNE runs several sports clubs “which engage in target practice and hand-to-hand combat.”⁴³

In Samara oblast, under the direction of the RNE, youths engage in “hand-to-hand combat, target practice, underwater swimming, and even parachute preparation.”⁴⁴ In Voronezh oblast, it was reported in early 1999, the RNE has organized “free martial arts workshops which are highly popular with high school and technical college students from poor families.”⁴⁵ In Voronezh, the RNE was said to be actively recruiting from among the “declass  element” of the local youth, to whom it offered shelter, clothing and food.⁴⁶ Similarly, in Tver, the RNE was “picking up boys off the street before they fall into the hands of drug dealers.”⁴⁷

In Kaluga oblast, youths “from the middle and lower strata” were being actively recruited into a club run by the RNE.⁴⁸ In its activities, as the newspaper *Segodnya* noted in early 1997, RNE was seeking “de facto fully to replace the DOSAAF,” the Soviet-era Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy.⁴⁹

In mid-1998, the weekly *Novaya gazeta* provided a detailed look at the RNE's recruitment of youth in Vladimir oblast, where "children from age six and up" were being accepted. Sympathetic school principals were said to aid the effort. Young boys were trained in hand-to-hand combat and in the wisdom of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the writings of Barkashov. The adolescents were also actively distributing copies of the RNE newspaper, *Russky poryadok*, around the oblast. The RNE organized similar efforts in Suzdal and in four other cities of the oblast.⁵⁰ In Vladimir oblast, the newspaper *Izvestiya* lamented in May 2000, "even nursery school children" were being accepted into the RNE. Once recruited, they had RNE swastikas sewn onto their jackets.⁵¹

The RNE, the newspaper *Nezavisimaya gazeta* complained in late 1999, has a virtual monopoly on work with Russian schoolchildren and adolescents. "No other organization pays the slightest attention to schoolchildren," while "they [the RNE] work with adolescents everywhere it proves possible."⁵²

Inculcating Neo-Nazi Ideas

The ideological dimension of RNE's recruitment of military and police personnel and of disenfranchised Russian youth should not be dismissed or made light of. In an interview with Alexander Prokhanov, chief editor of the right-wing weekly *Zavtra*, Barkashov revealed the incandescent and deranged hatred that animates both him and his organization: The Jews, he fulminated,

have a two-thousand-year-long practice of an absolutely cynical effort to rule the world. . . . How many states has this effort destroyed? . . . Hitler ruined Russia up to Moscow, but these homosexuals [*kozly*] have destroyed it up to Kamchatka. . . . In reality, [the Jews] are the most destructive force in the world. . . . In the allotted time, they will, I think, establish their rule over two-thirds of the world. And that is God's providence, because in one-third of the world—in Russia in the first place—something different will be accomplished, something which is foreordained to be.⁵³

This is the message of hatred being drilled into the minds of Russian adolescents and into present and former officers of the GRU *spetsnaz*.

In its work with Russian youth, the RNE is, of course, looking to the future, seeking to raise a new generation of indoctrinated neo-fascists and anti-Semites. More practically, it encourages graduates of its military-political training programs to enter military schools and to apply for admittance to elite military and MVD units. As convinced fascists, they would then presumably be able to spread the word among their fellow officers.

Too much should not, however, be made of this youth effort. As journalist Andrei Pavlov noted in a well-informed article entitled "In Expectation of 'X Hour,'" the RNE are not in fact counting on "green youth" to achieve their goals. "The basic stake," Pavlov explains, "is being placed on establishing contact with already 'prepared' cadres—military men, the employees of law enforcement organizations, the special services, and also members of criminal structures—to attract them to their side. Not to recruit them . . . but to keep them, as it were, at a distance, on the side." When "X Hour" arrives, then they will prove necessary. Currently the organization's task is "broadening the number of adherents [of

RNE] in the power and the criminal structures.” The RNE, Pavlov concludes, “has completely real plans to seize power and to conduct ethnic purges. There even exist lists of those who are to be arrested and executed.”⁵⁴

At least some of the RNE chapters are accumulating explosive devices and heavy weaponry. In mid-1997, it was reported that the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department had arrested a warrant officer and RNE member named Kuz'menko, who was serving at an air force unit, for possessing “20 mines, 210 explosive devices, 70 fuses, and 33 electric charges.”⁵⁵ In Samara, in 1999, a man was arrested for having secreted an “aviation bomb” in his home. He also possessed a large collection of RNE literature.⁵⁶ In St. Petersburg, in mid-1999, a gang was arrested, among whose number were “members of the RNE.” Among the weapons they had collected were mines, detonators, and hand grenades.⁵⁷ In May 2000, it was reported that the FSB of Saratov oblast had arrested a five-year member of the RNE (since 1995) who had built up an impressive personal arsenal, including a machine gun.⁵⁸

RNE's Relations with the FSB

As has been noted, relations between the RNE and the Russian secret police (FSK/FSB) were apparently peaceful in the period antedating the October events of 1993. Viktor Barannikov, who was removed as secret police chairman in July 1993, seems to have appreciated Barkashov's political role. Following the failed October 1993 uprising, however, relations with the FSK/FSB became notably more strained. On 3 April 1995, a band of heavily armed men broke into Barkashov's headquarters in central Moscow and, at gunpoint, forced the RNE leader cravenly to apologize to Jews and other minorities. A transcript of the taped conversation was then published in *Moskovsky komsomolets*.⁵⁹ Barkashov believes—and the available evidence tends to bear him out—that the intruders were highly trained secret police operatives acting under orders from Yeltsin's powerful chief bodyguard, General Alexander Korzhakov.

In an interview appearing in *Zavtra* in late 1998, Barkashov affirmed: “[I]n 1995, Korzhakov already understood that Yeltsin was through, and he began independently to plan [General Alexander] Lebed for the post of head of state. Through intermediaries, he proposed that I enter into an alliance and create an organization like the Russian National Assembly.” Barkashov related that he rejected the offers of Korzhakov's intermediaries, including one from Korzhakov's top lieutenant, former KGB general Georgy Rogozin. Barkashov was unwilling, he said, to cooperate with General Lebed, a man he despised. “Korzhakov,” Barkashov recalled, “reacted immediately. He organized an assault on our office. . . . I understood immediately that they were *chekisty*.”⁶⁰

It is conceivable that Barkashov is telling the truth here, but it is perhaps more likely that he is obscuring the real reason for Korzhakov's ire. Since Barkashov had announced that he intended to run for the Russian presidency in the 1996 elections, it is possible that Korzhakov was seeking heavy-handedly to induce him to withdraw from the race and to support Yeltsin. (In April 1996, Barkashov announced that he had decided not to submit signed sheets to be a presidential can-

didate—it is likely that his followers had failed to collect the requisite million signatures—and shortly thereafter he did indeed throw his support behind Yeltsin.)⁶¹ It should also be noted that the RNE, like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, vigorously supported the 1994–96 Russian war in Chechnya. The Barkashovites “declared their preparedness to offer any support to the authorities for the introduction of order into the Chechen Republic.”⁶²

Some FSB officers, especially those located in the provinces, have mirrored the support for the RNE found among many in the military and MVD. To take one example, in the town of Kstovo, Nizhny Novgorod oblast, in late 1998, a local FSB spokesman described the RNE as “normal young men who want to see order in the city.”⁶³ In general, however, relations with the FSB seem to have deteriorated during Yeltsin’s second presidential term. In early 1997, it was reported that the RNE was already “extremely dissatisfied” with the FSB.⁶⁴ And in the fall of that same year, when an RNE activist, Alexander Chulin, was killed in a road ambush near the town of Orekhovo-Zuevo in Moscow oblast (another RNE member was wounded in the incident), Barkashov angrily warned, “The FSB wants war. And it has started a war. For our part, we will not be taking any prisoners in this war.”⁶⁵ An extraordinary statement!

In late 1998, Barkashov and his organization clearly overreached when they attempted to hold a national congress of their organization in the city of Moscow. (An earlier national congress had been held without incident in Moscow oblast.) The mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, reacted harshly—Barkashov had, perhaps intentionally, planned his congress to coincide with the founding congress, in Moscow, of Luzhkov’s Fatherland organization—and initiated a wide-ranging crackdown against the RNE, which soon found support among influential elements in the Yeltsin administration, including the president’s then chief of staff, General Nikolai Bordyuzha, and in the Moscow courts. Eventually the Moscow city chapter of RNE found itself banned, while the Moscow edition of RNE’s principal newspaper, *Russkiy poriyadok*, which had a print run of close to a million, was suppressed. (The newspaper, as well as other RNE literature, continued to be published by RNE chapters located in the provinces—for example, in Tver oblast.)

In December 1998, Barkashov was invited to the FSB (then headed by Vladimir Putin) for a prophylactic discussion:

Taking part in the conversation with the “fuhrer” were the chief of the Department of Constitutional Security, Lieutenant General Gennady Zotov, and the chief of the Moscow FSB, Colonel General Alexander Tsarenko. The generals informed Barkashov that the activity of his organization was under the fixed attention of the FSB and warned him of the inadmissibility of inciting national discord as well as manifestations of political extremism.⁶⁶

This seemingly stern warning, it should be noted, had little apparent effect on Barkashov or on his organization, which continued to enjoy significant support among the other Russian power ministries. On 31 January 1999, some two hundred swastika-bearing Barkashovites marched in Moscow, brazenly defying an official ban on such activities. Similar marches were conducted in a number of other Russian cities.

The SPAS Gambit

In 1999, RNE's apparent ties to elements in the secret police once again came to the surface. Because the RNE had not been registered by the Ministry of Justice at the national level—it had been registered at the regional level in a number of oblasts—it was unable to run a slate of candidates for the Russian Duma in the December elections under its own name. A subterfuge was found when RNE joined up with two other nationally registered small parties, Vladimir Davidenko's SPAS and Valery Skurlatov's Vozrozhdenie. Davidenko was an elected Duma deputy from Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party, while Skurlatov was a familiar name to students of Russian extremism.

In February 1990, when Article 6 of the Soviet constitution, which proscribed the emergence of parties competing with the official Communist Party, was struck down, the KGB entered on a new kind of activity: the formation of ostensibly non-Communist political parties that would nonetheless de facto actively support the programmatic goals of the party. The key to this new strategy, as far as the Russian Republic was concerned, was the formation of a so-called Centrist Bloc of political parties and movements.

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of the Soviet Union was founded in March 1990, just one month after Article 6 was rescinded. The party became a founding member of the Centrist Bloc. Soon after Zhirinovskiy's party was founded, a number of members of his party broke with him, accusing him of "cooperation with the KGB."⁶⁷

A second leader of this specious Centrist Bloc was Valery Skurlatov, leader of the so-called Russian Popular Front. In 1965, as a Komsomol official in Moscow, Skurlatov disseminated the text of a "code of morals" to the Moscow City Party Committee and the Komsomol Central Committee. That unusual document had called for the sterilization of women who had sexual relations with foreigners, for the preservation of Russian racial purity, and for corporal punishment and intensive barrack drill for Russian youth.⁶⁸

Valery Skurlatov had also gained notoriety as a champion of Russian neopaganism:

Skurlatov popularized the pagan mythology of *The Book of Vlas*, a forgery. . . . This chronicle cum folk effort depicted a Russian golden age in the pre-Christian era. . . . The Russians, according to the pagan priests who allegedly had authored *Vlas*, were the first Indo-Aryan people and had spread Aryan civilization to Europe. Their enemies the non-Aryans, especially the Jews, had contrived to subjugate the torchbearers of Aryanism, the Russians, since time immemorial.⁶⁹

"The RNS . . . is an enthusiastic supporter of the current 'second' war in Chechnya, serving a function similar to that of Zhirinovskiy and his LDPR."

In 1990–91, Skurlatov metamorphosed from a quasi-fascist and neo-pagan into a fervent democrat. But it soon became apparent that this had been merely a ruse. From October 1990 to April 1991, the Centrist Bloc took the lead in urging Soviet president Gorbachev to effect a crackdown on all democrats and separatists in the union republics. On 30 January 1991, it was reported on the nightly television news program *Vremya* that the bloc's leaders had been granted a meeting with KGB chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov.⁷⁰

It seems more than a coincidence that Barkashov and the RNE found themselves joined together in 1999 with a party headed by a Liberal Democratic Party deputy and with an organization led by a well-known adventurer with ties to the secret police, Skurlatov. Writing in *Moskovskie novosti* in early 1999, journalist Mikhail Shevelev observed that there was about the RNE and SPAS

an aroma of directedness [*upryavlyaemost'*], which is difficult (but not excessively difficult) to sniff out. It is in the biographies of these activists and in the circumstances of the emergence of the organizations which they lead. When Barkashov joined forces with Valery Skurlatov to run candidates for the State Duma in the December 1999 elections it was recalled that Skurlatov "was suspected of ties with the KGB."⁷¹

Whatever the original calculations of the Yeltsin and Putin regime, it was ultimately decided, in November 1999, not to permit the SPAS bloc to compete in the parliamentary elections. On 11 November, a Moscow court ruled that "SPAS's registration for the State Duma elections was invalid because it presented incorrect information about three regional branches."⁷²

Conclusion

In an excellent forthcoming book on present-day Russian fascism, Stephen Shenfield carefully examines the available evidence concerning the membership count of RNE and concludes that an accurate figure would be in the 20,000–25,000 range.⁷³ Barkashov, for his part, has presented grossly exaggerated membership figures (for so-called RNE *soratniki*, or "co-combatants"): 300,000.⁷⁴

When one takes into account that a number of RNE members have received intensive military training and that not a few have served as military and police specialists in Chechnya and Afghanistan or in various hot spots of the former Soviet Union, it should be clear that "only" 20,000–25,000 members represents a significant number. As Stephen Shenfield himself has pointed out, "First and foremost, the RNE is a *military machine*."⁷⁵

The rapid expansion of the RNE into the Russian provinces in the period following the Duma's February 1994 amnesty has been most striking. The SPAS coalition, which, as has been noted, attempted to run a slate of candidates in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, was based almost entirely on RNE's structural presence in the regions. In early November 1999, the new Russian minister of justice, Yuri Chaika, announced that the SPAS coalition had been officially registered in "48–49 subjects of the Russian Federation." However, in eleven of those regions, Chaika asserted, SPAS had, in reality, "sham structures."⁷⁶

If Chaika's figures are accurate, RNE possessed structures in "only" thirty-

seven or thirty-eight regions of the Russian Federation, that is, in slightly more than 40 percent of the total, in itself an impressive (and worrisome) achievement. But Chaika's estimate may have been intentionally too low. It should be noted that on 11 November 1999 a Moscow court ruled that only three of SPAS's regional chapters represented sham entities (in Orenburg, Lipetsk, and Kostroma).⁷⁷ It is conceivable therefore that RNE may have had active chapters in forty-five to forty-six subjects of the Russian republic, that is, in slightly more than half of the Russian regions, as well as in Ukraine, Latvia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and other union republics of the former USSR (see appendix). True, many of those RNE chapters would have been quite small, but even a small number of veterans of the OMON and military paratrooper groups, not to speak of the GRU *spetsnaz*, could create serious political mischief.

It is difficult to predict how the new Putin regime will affect the fortunes of the RNE within Russia. One might think that a regime with authoritarian goals and with exceptionally close ties to elements in the FSB would seek to rein in and perhaps to destroy the RNE. On the other hand, the regime might, like the Yeltsin leadership before it, seek, in foolhardy fashion, to manipulate and exploit the RNE for its own purposes. (The RNE, for example, is an enthusiastic supporter of the current "second" war in Chechnya, serving a function similar to that of Zhirinovskiy and his LDPR.) If the RNE is not suppressed but rather is permitted to continue its activities and its expansion, then Barkashov and his followers will continue to plot the arrival of "X Hour." As the newspaper *Nezavisimaya gazeta* cautioned in early 1999, "The [B]arkashovites are not trying to attune themselves to the issues of the day. They are waiting until the mood of society approaches their positions."⁷⁸

NOTES

1. Cited from Stephen Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies and Movements* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, forthcoming). For a discussion of RNE's activities between 1990 and 1994, see my article, "Alexander Barkashov and the Rise of National Socialism in Russia," *Demokratizatsiya* 4 (fall 1996): 519–30. See also William D. Jackson, "Fascism, Vigilantism, and the State: The Russian National Unity Movement," *Problems of Post-Communism* (January/February 1999): 34–42.

2. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 February 1999.

3. *Moskovskie novosti*, 15–22 January 1995, 4.

4. See Vladimir Pribylovskiy, "Barkashov, Alexander Petrovich: Biografiya," in *Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo: Istoriya, politika, ideologiya*, ed. V. Likhachev and V. Pribylovskiy (Moscow: Panorama, 1997), 63–67.

5. Alexander Dreiling, "Dvizhenie 'Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo,'" *Politicheskoye monitoring* 4 (April 1995): 125.

6. In Likhachev and Pribylovskiy, *Russkoe*, 5.

7. In Shenfield, *Russian Fascism*.

8. "Alexander Yakovlev: Rossiiskikh fashistov porodil KGB," *Izvestiya*, 17 June 1998.

9. *Ibid.* My italics. On the attempts by the KGB to promote and exploit neo-Nazi sentiments during the Brezhnev period, see the important work by Vladimir Soloukhin, *Poslednyaya stupen' (Ispoved' vashogo sovremennika)* (Moscow: Delovoi tsentr, 1995). Soloukhin originally intended to have this book published in 1976.

10. "Iz dos'e. Barkashov, Alexander," *Ogonek* 11 (March 1995): 19.

11. Likhachev and Pribylovsky, *Russkoe*, 18.
12. In *Zavtra*, 13 November 1998.
13. *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 5 February 1995, 2.
14. In *Novye izvestiya*, 17 December 1998.
15. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 February 1999.
16. *Vecherny Peterburg*, 23 March 1999, 2.
17. See *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 4 April 1999, and *Segodnya*, 17 May 1999.
18. *Novye izvestiya*, 17 December 1998.
19. Andrei Pavlov, "V ozhidanii 'chasa x,'" *Yaik* (Orenburg), 16 September 1999, 4–5.
20. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 October 1998.
21. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 18 July 1998, 3.
22. Likhachev and Pribylovsky, *Russkoe*, 46.
23. *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 19 December 1998.
24. *Severnyi kur'rer* (Petrozavodsk), 12 May 1999, 1.
25. *Guberniya* (Petrozavodsk), 27 May 1999.
26. In Likhachev and Pribylovsky, *Russkoe*, 45.
27. *Stolitsa S.* (Saransk), 4 June 1999, 4.
28. *Novaya gazeta*, 6–12 July 1998, 3.
29. In Likhachev and Pribylovsky, *Russkoe*, 51.
30. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 July 1998, 4.
31. *Tverskaya zhizn'*, 10 June 1999, 2.
32. "Menty i akty," *Argumenty i fakty*, 5 July 2000.
33. In *Vremya MN*, 22 July 1999.
34. *Izvestiya*, 30 May 1998.
35. Viktor Baranets, *Genshtab bez tain, kniga vroraya* (Moscow: Politburo, 1999), 184–85.
36. Shenfield, *Russian Fascism*.
37. "The New Russian Nazis," *Time*, Europe edition, 9 June 1997.
38. *Izvestiya*, 12 July 1997.
39. *Bryansky rabochy*, 27 March 1999, 1, 4.
40. *Severnyi kur'rer* (Petrozavodsk), 12 May 1999, 1.
41. *Gorodskie vesti* (Volgograd), 8 July 1999. See also *Izvestiya*, 28 September 1999.
42. *Amurskaya pravda* (Blagoveshchensk), 5 November 1999.
43. In Likhachev and Pribylovsky, *Russkoe*, 46, 51.
44. *Ibid.*, 54.
45. Mikhail Zherebyatev, "Russian National Unity: A Political Challenge for Provincial Russia," *Prism* (Jamestown Foundation), 26 March 1999.
46. *Moe* (Voronezh), 11–17 May 1999, 4.
47. *Tverskaya zhizn'*, 10 June 1999, 2.
48. *Izvestiya*, 30 June 1998.
49. *Segodnya*, 17 February 1997.
50. *Novaya gazeta*, 6–12 July 1998, 3.
51. *Izvestiya*, 12 May 2000.
52. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 September 1999.
53. In *Zavtra*, 13 November 1998.
54. Pavlov, "V ozhidanii 'chasa x.'"
 55. *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 16 May 1997; *Izvestiya*, 9 June 1998.
 56. *Yaik* (Orenburg), 16 September 1999.
 57. *Kommersant-daily*, 24 June 1999, 3.
 58. *Sibirskie vesti*, 18 May 2000, 2.
 59. See "Ya mogu vse rasskazat'!" *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 4 May 1995, 3.
 60. In *Zavtra*, 13 November 1998.
 61. *Vecherny Saransk*, 27 May 1999, 7.
 62. Dreiling, "Dvizhenie," 125.

63. *Russian Regional Report* (East-West Institute), 17 December 1998.
64. *Segodnya*, 17 February 1997.
65. *Segodnya*, 17 September 1997.
66. *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 24 December 1998.
67. On these developments, see John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 108–09.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Wayne Allensworth, *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-Communist Russia* (Lanham, MD: Bowman and Littlefield, 1998), 224.
70. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia*, 109.
71. Mikhail Shevelev, “Kogo my boimsya,” *Moskovskie novosti*, 27 April 1999.
72. *RFE-RL Newslines*, 17 November 1999.
73. Shenfield, *Russian Fascism*.
74. “Barkashov prodolzhaet naglet’,” *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 24 December 1998. On 17 December 1998, the prodemocracy *Novye izvestiya* estimated that the RNE possessed “50,000–70,000 members,” plus “the same number of sympathizers.”
75. Shenfield, *Russian Fascism*. Italics in original.
76. *Segodnya*, 3 November 1999. In December 1998, Vladimir Putin, then director of the FSB, stated that RNE was officially registered in thirty-two regions of Russia (see *Izvestiya*, 8 December 1998). Also, on 17 December 1998, *Novye izvestiya* reported that RNE was registered in thirty-one subjects of the Russian Federation.
77. See *RFE-RL Newslines*, 17 November 1999. Despite the court’s ruling, RNE may in fact have possessed an active chapter in Kostroma oblast. See *Severnaya pravda* (Kostroma), 26 March 1999
78. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 February 1999.

APPENDIX 1

Officially Registered Regional Chapters of the RNE

Belgorod oblast
 Bryansk oblast
 Kaliningrad oblast
 Kaluga oblast
 Kamchatka oblast
 Kareliya
 Moscow city (registered 1993, unregistered 1999)
 Moscow oblast
 Novosibirsk oblast
 Omsk oblast
 Primorsky krai (unregistered October 1999)
 Samara oblast (registered 1995)
 Saratov oblast
 Sakhalin
 Stavropol krai
 Sverdlovsk oblast (registered 1997, unregistered 1998)
 Tomsk oblast
 Tver oblast (registered 1995, reregistered 1998)
 Vladimir oblast (registered 1995)
 Volgograd oblast
 Voronezh oblast (registered 1995)
 Yamalo-Nenetsky autonomous oblast

It should be emphasized that this list is in no sense complete. In compiling the present list, I have drawn upon information contained in V. Likhachev, V. Pribylovsky, *Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo: Istoriya, politika, ideologiya* (Moscow: Panorama, 1997), 41–61.

The registration of the Kareliya chapter occurred on 7 April 1999 (*NG-regiony* 9, May 1999, 3), while that of the Tver chapter took place on 4 July 1998 (*Tverskaya zhizn*, 1 June 1998; see also *Veche Tveri*, 1 June 1999). The registrations of the Moscow oblast chapter and that of Vladimir oblast are reported in *Molva* (Vladimir), 11 March 1999, 3. For information on Sverdlovsk oblast chapter, see *Oblastnaya gazeta* (Ekaterinburg), 5 August 1999. For the chapter in Voronezh oblast, see *Izvestiya*, 23 May 1998.

Unregistered Regional Chapters of the RNE

Amur oblast
 Arkhangelsk oblast
 Astrakhan oblast
 Chelyabinsk oblast
 Chuvashiya
 Irkutsk oblast
 Ivanovo oblast
 Kirov oblast
 Kostroma oblast
 Krasnodar krai
 Krasnoyarsk krai
 Kursk oblast
 Mordoviya
 Orel oblast
 Perm oblast
 Pskov oblast
 Rostov oblast
 Ryazan oblast
 Smolensk oblast
 St. Petersburg city
 Tula oblast
 Vologda oblast
 Yaroslavl oblast

Again, this list should not be regarded as complete. Much of the information has been taken from V. Likhachev, V. Pribylovsky, *Russkoe natsionalnoe edinstvo*, as well as from numerous central and provincial Russian newspapers.

Chapters of the RNE Located Outside of the Russian Federation

Belarus, chapters in Minsk, Gomel, and Vitebsk
 Crimea, Ukraine, organization officially registered on 16 April 1996; unregistered chapters in Kharkiv and seven other cities located in eastern Ukraine
 Estonia, underground group
 Kazakhstan
 Latvia, chapters in Riga and six other Latvian cities
 Tiraspol, Transdnistria, Republic of Moldova
 Information taken from the central Russian press.