

Mnogaya leta: Advocate of a Russian Church – Soviet State Concordat

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In 1974, the important Russian nationalist *samizdat* journal *Veche* was suppressed by the KGB after a three-year existence and its editor, Vladimir Osipov, sentenced to eight years in the camps. Though this has not been sufficiently understood in the West, *Veche* represented a publication of considerable political significance, serving as a sounding-board for most strands of contemporary ethnic Russian nationalism. In this respect, the title was most appropriate: the word *veche* refers to the medieval popular assembly. Today *Veche* remains the unsurpassed source for every student of this important ideological current in the USSR, a trend which, moreover, continues to have sympathisers in the ranks of the Party-state elite and the Soviet military.*

The KGB has apparently resolved not to permit sequentially numbered Russian nationalist *samizdat* journals to appear in the future. Thus *Obshchina* (Community), a publication of the Moscow-based Religio-Philosophical Seminar headed by Alexandr Ogorodnikov, now in prison, was the object of severe harassment and persecution by the authorities, as was the journal *Mariya*, organ of a most interesting Russian Orthodox women's club, whose leaders were expelled to the West (others have since been arrested).

Given this situation, it was with some surprise that one learned of the appearance in 1980 and 1981 of a *samizdat* almanac, *Mnogaya leta* (Many Years),¹ edited by the conservative nationalist Gennadi Shimanov. Each issue of the almanac contained approximately two hundred pages. One wondered why the regime would permit Shimanov and his authors' collective (Felix Karelin and Vladimir Ibragimov being the most noteworthy contributors) to engage in such activity.

An examination of *Mnogaya leta*, which is now available in the West,² suggests an answer to this question. Whereas *Veche*, while professing its "loyalty" to the Soviet state, had focused on points of conflict between the regime and Russian nationalists — for example, the widespread and

*See Philip Walters' article "Vladimir Osipov — Loyal Opposition?" in *RCL* Vol. 5, No. 4, 1977 — *Ed.*

continuing destruction of Russian historical and cultural monuments, the rape of the environment, demographic and social threats to the well-being of ethnic Russians, the persecution of the Russian Church — *Mnogaya leta* studiously downplays and often ignores such problems, concentrating instead on points of common interest between what Shimanov calls “conservative Orthodoxy”³ and the Soviet State. This orientation strikes one as more than a matter of “tactics”, though tactical considerations are undoubtedly involved: the almanac’s authors sincerely believe that the principal danger to Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church is not the Brezhnev regime (the second issue appeared before Brezhnev’s death) but other “forces”. Moreover, they seem certain that the USSR is evolving, ineluctably, in a positive and hopeful direction.

When one recalls that both Shimanov and Karelin were active in Orthodox dissenting circles in the 1960s — and that Shimanov was interned in a mental ward for his outspoken religious beliefs — it seems odd that they should have arrived at their present position. Two related factors seem to have prompted this change of orientation: a radical disillusionment with the programmes of westernising Soviet dissidents (the *demokraty*) for Russia’s future; and an increasing belief that the West, and especially the United States of America, represents the true spiritual danger for contemporary Russia.

Shimanov, who, one presumes, has never been to America, sets himself up as a specialist in the politics and mores of that alien land. He admits that for the untutored Russian mind the United States can appear quite attractive. “Freedom and riches! . . . What more, it would seem, does a man need in life?”⁴ But, as Shimanov seeks to demonstrate at length, America is a deadly Siren; her vaunted “freedom” is a deceptive mirage. In reality, a “secret dictatorship of capital”⁵ rules the country, largely through its control over the mass media, and America’s vaunted elections represent a complete fraud. The Republican and Democratic parties are both “gigantic parties of big business”.⁶ A strict and exceedingly “cunning” censorship effectively throttles all dissenting views. In sum, America “does not give man true freedom . . .”⁷ (Many of Shimanov’s views go back to Lenin.)

For Shimanov, America today indicates the direction being taken by all of western civilisation; even the Soviet Union is in danger of being enticed by its example. Due to the expert deception with which America masks its true essence, it is able to entrap numerous other societies in the world: “. . . have not these American gifts already brought the whole world to a global crisis?”⁸ Shimanov and his co-authors recoil before this latter-day Babylon with its “disintegration of natural ties, moral vacuum, alienation, terror, and consumer attitude toward one’s neighbours”.⁹ “. . . Western civilisation,” Shimanov proclaims, “has indeed rotted, because are not all these psychedelic and sexual revolutions, doors covered with

armour against robbers, social storms, and the devouring spirit of mercantilism — are they not moral rot?”¹⁰ It is only fair to note that Shimanov nevertheless believes that people still exist in the West with “a love for the good”.¹¹

The *Mnogaya leta* contributors maintain that America is especially dangerous for a Christian. While no-one is *openly* persecuted for his faith, “Everything that is religious is wiped out. . .”¹² “Religion dies under the onslaught of a godless style of life.”¹³ Moreover, in America “pan-legal ideology” steps forth as a “veiled super-Religion”.¹⁴ This situation is obviously more dangerous for a believer than the open atheism promulgated in Soviet society. And it is something which the Western-oriented democrats, who bear “the imprint of a specifically American spirit”, fail to see.¹⁵

America and the West are not merely “rotting”; they are also victims of a fearful conspiracy, one of whose principal aims is to catch Russia in its grasp. This plot, which may be termed the “Jewish-Masonic-Plutocrat” conspiracy, has, of course, had a long and notorious history in both the West and Russia. One finds a belief in it in circulation in France at the time of the Dreyfus affair (where it was known as the “Jewish-Masonic-Protestant” conspiracy), and it was imported into Russia some time in the nineteenth century. Being religious men, the *Mnogaya leta* contributors seek to give the theory an appropriately religious explanation. The author of this monstrous conspiracy, they believe, is neither a Jew, nor a Mason, nor a plutocrat, but the devil himself. The conspiracy is intimately connected with the coming rule of anti-christ, as foretold in Scripture. Yet, despite the acute peril represented by this conspiracy, the authors feel that Russia will find the wisdom and strength to withstand it.

Concerning the Jewish component of the conspiracy, Shimanov and his co-authors repeatedly insist that they are not anti-semites. “. . . there is *no* anti-semitism in Orthodoxy,” the anonymous author of “Letter to Fr Alexandr Men” maintains to his readers.¹⁶ The problem is not Jews, who have many positive traits as a people, but Judaism without Christ and, especially, Zionism. “Why does Judaism deceive the Jewish people?” the author of the letter to Fr Men asks. “Because for the devil it is especially important to turn precisely the Jewish . . . people (and, through it, as many other peoples as possible) away from the true God. . .”¹⁷ And he continues: “. . . the most important task of Zionism and of the various organisations inspired by it, such as Masonry and other ‘secret’ and open societies, is to bring the Jewish people and as much of humanity as possible under the power of the anti-christ, who will rule in Israel as the ‘Messiah’.”¹⁸ “. . . the anti-christ,” Felix Karelin asserts, “must come through Judaism”.¹⁹

Intimately linked with Judaism/Zionism in the *Mnogaya leta* conception are Freemasonry and the western plutocrats. Vladimir Ibragimov

seeks to show in his “Anatomy of a Great Mystification” that this unholy alliance made a serious attempt to seize power in Russia during the period 1915-1917. The Masons/Jews were behind Rasputin and the “great mystification”, which, as it were, “undermined the Russian monarchy from within”.²⁰ The Masons were highly active during the Duma period and in the February Revolution. Oddly, the same Masons who supported Rasputin seemed to have arranged his murder (Felix Yusupov, who organised the plot, was “a probable participant in a Masonic club”).²¹ Nevertheless, “It was not given to the forces of evil to cast a spell on history”,²² at least not in 1917.

One glaring contradiction is immediately apparent in the historical schema of the *Mnogaya leta* authors. “. . . the communist Revolution,” Karelin asserts, “freed Russia, and with it the whole world, from a great danger”.²³ So be it. (We will ignore, for the moment, the 25-60 million victims of the Stalin terror.) But if that is the case, why do the almanac’s contributors write so disparagingly of the early period of Soviet power? “. . . it would be good,” Shimanov advises, “if the Jews were to recognise the international character of the Russian revolution. . .”²⁴ Many of the early Soviet leaders and concentration camp chieftains were Jews and other non-Russians; Djugashvili-Stalin was, of course, a Georgian.²⁵ How, one wonders, could an internationalist clique, heavily infiltrated by Jews, save Russia from the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy? Indeed, how do we know that Trotsky and Stalin were not Masons? There is a glaring lapse in the almanac’s logic at this point.

As for the third component of the conspiracy, the plutocrats, they, as we have seen, are believed to control the United States and much of the West through their stranglehold on the mass media. “The combination of apparent freedom and secret dependence [on the plutocrats],” Shimanov muses, “what could be simpler and more ingenious?”²⁶ In an ambitious essay, Felix Karelin attempts to explain the emergence of the plutocrats with reference to eucharistic theology. “. . . the tendency of one or another people,” he writes, “to participate in capitalist development was in strict reverse proportion to its participation in the Eucharistic Meal”.²⁷ Thus there is a direct connection between absence of holy communion and capitalism. It is noteworthy, he believes, that Judaism has flourished “in those countries in which Calvinism realised its greatest victories: in the Netherlands, England, and, finally, America”.²⁸ In 1917, Russian liberalism made an attempt to turn Russia “into a demi-colony of Western capital”,²⁹ but failed.

Such then is the vast conspiracy, directed by the devil, which seeks to draw Russia into its clutches. It is understandable that the *Mnogaya leta* authors should seek to move closer to the Soviet authorities, whose bayonets protect them from Lucifer’s legions. Essentially, they argue for a concordat between Orthodox Christians and the Soviet State.

The ideological and theological framework for this concordat is advanced by Karelin in his essay "Two Testimonies". Perhaps influenced by the writings of the "Red Dean of Canterbury" and other western apologists for the Soviet regime, he points to the property held in common by the early Christians (described in Acts, chapters 4 and 5) and to Christian monasticism as examples of "Christian communism".³⁰ It was the Christian empire created by Constantine the Great which brought about "the class structure of society" and of Christian government.³¹ In Russia, this false "Byzantine" model of social relations gained strength from the end of the fifteenth century and continued through to the reign of Nicholas II.³² The Bolshevik Revolution, which, happily, brought the "Constantine period" to an end was terribly misunderstood by the participants in the Russian Church Council of 1917-18 and is still misunderstood by many Orthodox Christians today (especially by the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile, an émigré ecclesiastical organisation). Rather than ushering in the age of the anti-christ, the Revolution provided a new, promising setting for the working of divine providence. Patriarch Tikhon, the first Russian patriarch of the Soviet period (and the first since the reign of Peter the Great), after an initial period of sharp opposition to the Bolsheviks, began to see the situation correctly in 1919.

For Karelin, as for the other *Mnogaya leta* contributors, Tikhon represents a kind of Church Father on the question of church-state relations; they fully approve of his supposed "historiosophical position".³³ Karelin writes: ". . . Patriarch Tikhon (for the first time on Orthodox soil!) repudiated the principle of old Christian government. . ."³⁴ Patriarch Tikhon, he continues, "was inspired from above: the Russian Revolution was indeed neither a temporary time of troubles (*smuta*) nor the advent of the anti-christ".³⁵ For the edification of his religious readers, Karelin points to various "signs" confirming the truth of his views. Thus Tikhon's fateful reorientation occurred on 8 October 1919, the day the Russian Church commemorates St Sergius of Radonezh and the eve of the feast of St John the Divine. Karelin also makes much of the Roman Catholic miracle of Fatima and its alleged significance for Russia.

The anonymous author of "To Sergei I . . . v" argues for a concordat in a somewhat different vein. "In general," he writes, "I would like to proclaim something like an apology for our Soviet pashas. No, I have never felt love for them, nor do I now. But all of them are our people, our species (*nasha poroda*), the same flesh and bone as you and I. They are simply more unfortunate than we, having become enmeshed in ideological nets. . . They are our Russian people, not at all stupid and not at all evil. . ."³⁶ Compared to the "forces" at work in the contemporary West, the Soviet ruling élite does not look at all bad: "If you should chance to have a frank conversation with them they will tell you that everything is bad in our country, that you will scarcely be able to build communism

with such a people, but, in response to your liberal hints, they will explain that one cannot let the people get out of hand, that if that were to happen, such things would occur as could not be foreseen even in a nightmare. . . .³⁷ (The Grand Inquisitor syndrome!) There is a need, such Soviet “pashas” insist, for “Party control”. The author of “To Sergei I . . . v” is clearly sympathetic to this expressed fear of anarchy and belief in discipline and control; only the excessive attention to ideology needs to be mitigated.

The rule of the Bolsheviks, the *Mnogaya leta* authors conclude, has been God’s will. “Despite the prognoses of the [1917-18] Church Council,” Karelin writes, “the Russian atheist state has been standing on earth almost sixty-three years. . . .”³⁸ Shimanov believes that, in historical perspective, the October Revolution “did not produce only negative results; the positive results outweigh the negative ones by a great deal”.³⁹ “I understand,” Ibragimov responds to charges by émigré writer Andrei Sinyavsky, “that you are against the cooperation of the Church and the Soviet government. But what if, against your expectations, this cooperation should turn out for the good?”⁴⁰

Mnogaya leta thus offers a critique of the contemporary West and a defence of the proposition that Orthodox believers and the Soviet regime should cooperate. Does it also elaborate a “positive” programme for the direction Soviet society should be taking in the coming decades? A loosely articulated programme of this sort is advocated by the almanac’s authors. The general secularisation of the world, Karelin writes, “is perhaps ending before our eyes”.⁴¹ And in his essay “Primal Sources and Roots”, A. Kazakov sees a “birth of new ideologies” occurring throughout the world.⁴² It is, however, largely left to Shimanov, in his quasi-programmatic “To Leah Abramson”, to suggest what the future Russia might look like.

The false secular models of the West, Shimanov argues here, must be replaced by a “religio-patriarchal organisation of life”, one which, however, does not ignore the discoveries and advances of modern technology. Shimanov does not desire a pastoralisation of the USSR. He is opposed to an “ossification or even primitivisation of scientific and technical, social and cultural possibilities, a halt to development, a repudiation of creativity”.⁴³

Shimanov is particularly interested in the volatile “nationalities question” in the USSR. “The new type of free association (*soobshchestvo*)” he advocates is one in which “the sovereignty of each small nation over its territory would be recognised by the large nation and fortified by the right of each nation to leave the association — a right not subject to discussion [by the large nation] . . .”⁴⁴ Jews disillusioned with Zionism would be offered land somewhere in the USSR — elsewhere Shimanov has suggested the Crimea as an appropriate location — in order to form their

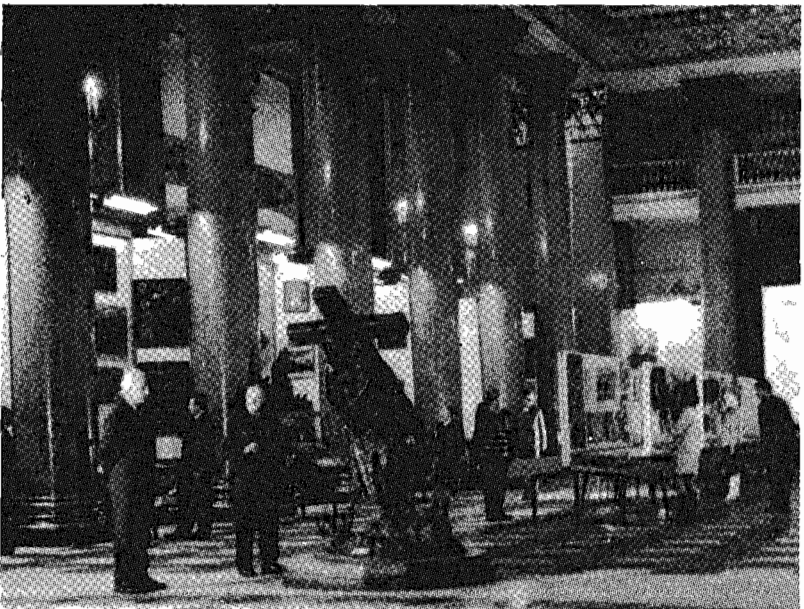
own nation-state. In free “association” with ethnic Russians, the peoples of the USSR and Eastern Europe⁴⁵ would enjoy national security and the right to linguistic and cultural freedom. Since “practically a majority” of present-day Russians are the product of mixed marriages with neighbouring peoples, i.e. are related to these peoples by blood, there would be an added incentive for such associations.⁴⁶

This necessarily sketchy outline of the central ideas presented in *Mnogaya leta* is sufficient to suggest the reasons for the tolerance the regime has demonstrated toward the almanac. The authors’ radical hostility toward the contemporary West could not but have proved welcome, as must their commitment to cooperation between Orthodox Christians and the Soviet State; and their enmity toward dissident Soviet democrats must also have been appreciated. On the other hand, other elements in the almanac’s repertoire would have been less welcome: for example, its emphasis on the “alien” character of early Soviet power (which, according to this interpretation, extended through the reign of Stalin!); its sporadic and muted but nevertheless noticeable criticism of anti-religious persecution; its commitment to a belief in the “Jewish-Masonic-Plutocrat conspiracy”, which, while a useful *substitute* for Marxist-Leninist ideology, does not mesh particularly well with it. Some of the marginal contributors to the almanac could have been seen as expressing borderline sentiments. “Terrible is the world of atheistic ideology,” writes V. Trostnikov, “in which we live”.⁴⁷ And Tat’yana Chernysheva criticises contemporary Soviet architecture for its hideous multi-storey edifices and notes the “beheading” and ruination of Russian churches which took place in the recent past.⁴⁸ One also doubts whether the Soviet authorities would approve *Mnogaya leta’s* liberal stance on the nationalities question.

I now come to my own criticism of the almanac. It is, frankly, difficult to know where to begin. (Indeed *Mnogaya leta* will undoubtedly appear so extreme to many *RCL* readers that they may wonder why I took the time to review it at all. I will attempt to deal with this question later.) The views of Shimanov and his associates on the contemporary West are in large part due to Soviet blockage of information and to the inability of Soviet citizens to travel abroad. I am not claiming that if they were able to spend considerable time in the West they would necessarily become enthusiasts. Solzhenitsyn, whose views on certain questions bear a resemblance to those of the *Mnogaya leta* authors, has been in the West for some time and has been critical of much that he has seen. But Solzhenitsyn realises that the West is not in thrall to a “Jewish-Masonic-plutocrat” conspiracy; rather, he sees the West as in danger of falling into a policy of appeasement before the expansionist threat represented by the USSR and its materialist and atheist ideology. (Solzhenitsyn would also reject with repugnance any suggestion of the need for a concordat

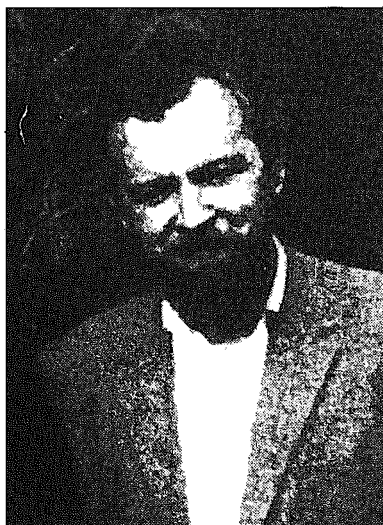
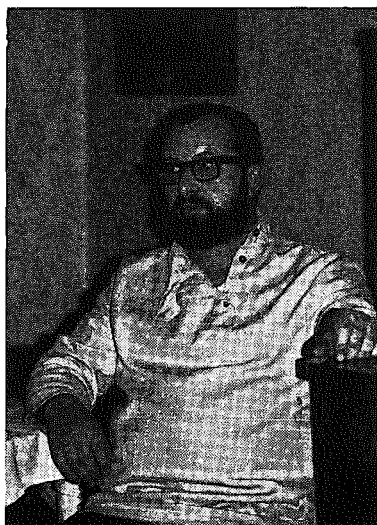


The impressive exterior of the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad, formerly the Kazan Cathedral (above). (Photo © Transworld Feature Syndicate Inc., N.Y.) Below: the interior, showing some of the exhibitions. See article by Mark Elliott on pp. 124-29. (Photo courtesy of author.)





The Soviet writer Zoya Krakhmalnikova, with her grandson Philip, before her arrest in August 1983 (*above*). For an account of her Christian writing activities and sentence, see document on pp. 210-13.



Two of the contributors to the Russian nationalist *samizdat* journal *Mnogaya leta*, Gennadi Shimanov (*left*) and Felix Karelin (*right*). For an analysis of the journal, see pp. 146-60. (All photos courtesy Keston College).

between Orthodox Christians and the Soviet State.) One suspects that the almanac's authors' incredibly distorted and caricatured view of how the West functions *would* change if they could visit the West. They would learn, for example, that elections frequently do mean something and that not all media are uniformly controlled by plutocrats. Needless to say, the "not at all evil" bosses of the USSR are unlikely to let the *Mnogaya leta* contributors come to the West to see for themselves.

Along with their obsessive "conspiracy" theory, the authors' most dubious point is their advocacy of a close cooperation between the Soviet State and Russian Orthodox Christians. "By their fruits ye shall know them." What have been the fruits of the Bolshevik regime over the past sixty-five years? Some Sputniks, some giant hydroelectric stations, a formidable military machine, to be sure. But also a holocaust exceeding Hitler's in the number of victims; the Gulag Archipelago; a country riven by alcoholism, growing infant mortality, juvenile delinquency. To claim that the pathetically weak "Masons" of the February Revolution represented a greater danger to the country than did the Bolsheviks is simply absurd. It was the Bolsheviks who launched the severest persecution in the history of the Orthodox Church, a persecution which continues today, as scores of documents sent to the West by the recently-suppressed Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR confirm.* The most recently revised Soviet legislation on religion also testifies to this.⁴⁹

The attempt to turn Patriarch Tikhon into a "Church Father" in the area of church-state relations is both dishonest and deceiving. If Tikhon had chosen to bless the "White Army" in 1919, he would have been immediately arrested and a hireling put in his place. Furthermore, like Alexander Nevsky, he found himself fighting a war on two fronts: against the Bolsheviks on the one hand and the Renovationists (a dangerous schism and heresy) on the other. This important fact is ignored by Karelin, though he does in one place admit to a distaste for the Renovationists. Simply put, Marxism-Leninism and Orthodoxy are not compatible: Lenin and Trotsky realised this clearly; Kuroyedev, head of the Council for Religious Affairs, realises it; and so should Karelin.

In a few areas, the *Mnogaya leta* authors deserve to be complimented. It was good to see that they reject Stalin and his deeds (not all right-wing nationalists do), and their suggested solution to the "nationalities question" in the USSR, while utopian, is not mean-spirited. If, as they claim, Shimanov and his associates truly wish to attract others, including people in the West, through superior ethical behaviour, I for one would have no objection. They might begin by agitating for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

I have promised to explain why an almanac as extreme as *Mnogaya leta*

*See article by Jane Ellis in *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 4, 1980 — *Ed.*

deserves any attention in these pages. First of all, *most* programmes coming out of the present-day Soviet Union are likely to be extreme. After sixty-five years of totalitarian rule, the USSR is in many ways a very sick country. Class war, genocide, breakneck industrialisation — all have taken a heavy spiritual toll. Konrad Adenauer, seeking to explain the rise of National Socialism in Germany, wrote in his memoirs:

The rapid increase in industrialisation, the concentration of large masses of people in the cities, and, a connected phenomenon, the uprooting of many people, cleared the way for the pernicious growth of materialism among the German people. A materialist ideology was bound further to emphasise the importance of power and of the State which gathered and embodied this power, and to lead to the subordination of ethical values and of the dignity of the individual.

Marxist materialism contributed a great deal to this development. Anyone who works for the centralisation of political and economic power in the hands of the State or of one class, and who therefore advocates the principle of class war, is an enemy of freedom of the individual and is bound to prepare the way for dictatorship in the minds of his adherents. . . .⁵⁰

I am not saying that Shimanov and his friends are National Socialists. Their sincere, if at times bizarre, religious convictions distinguish them from the neo-pagan Nazis. Their views, however, bear a certain undeniable resemblance to fascism, as I shall show later in this essay. As Adenauer maintains, Marxist materialism can easily generate a right-wing extremism. The “Jewish-Masonic-Plutocrat” conspiracy, to take one example, feeds on the Marxist legacy of class suspicions, dark paranoid, and conspiracy theories. One wonders whether it is an accident that Shimanov is the son of former activists in the League of Militant Godless.

Now for some comments on the underlying religious problem of the *Mnogaya leta* authors. Felix Karelin is wrong: what occurred in the late fifteenth century was not an adoption of “Byzantinism” by the Muscovite State but rather a decisive rejection of the Greek patristic synthesis and the spiritual method of hesychasm* by the orientation known as “Josephitism” (*Iosifyanstvo*, named after Joseph of Volotsk [Volokolamsk]). The Greek patristic synthesis and hesychasm, simply put, are Orthodox Christianity in its purity and intellectual-spiritual depth.⁵¹ When Joseph and his followers defeated Nil Sorsky and the so-called Trans-Volgan elders, a period of religious decline set in, which eventually culminated in the tragic Old Believer schism (*raskol*) of the

*The tradition of inner, mystical prayer associated with the monks of Mount Athos and dating from the 4th-5th centuries. Particular importance is attached to the ceaseless inward repetition of the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me”. — *Ed.*

late seventeenth century. That tragedy, in turn, made Peter the Great's secularisation of the Russian Church possible. In the late 18th-early 19th centuries, there was a hesychast revival in Russia through the efforts of *Starets* Paisi Velichkovsky, who had been to Mount Athos. The most famous representatives of this movement were the *startsy* of Optina Pustyn' Monastery, who drew Gogol', Dostoyevsky, Tolstoi, Ivan Kireyevsky, Solov'yov, Leont'yev, and numerous other intellectuals to them.

The Bolshevik Revolution suppressed this remarkable spiritual-intellectual renaissance, and Optina Pustyn' now lies in ruins, though a major Soviet writer, Vladimir Soloukhin, has been attempting to dramatise its plight.⁵² When deprived of the wisdom, balance, and sobriety of hesychasm, the Russian religious mind inevitably sinks in to Josephitism. Dostoyevsky, for one, was quite aware of this — one thinks of the demon-ridden Ferapont, opponent of *Starets* Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, or of the charlatan Semyon Yakovlevich in *The Devils*, or of the various aberrant Old Believers, Flagellants, and Castrates whose shadows darken his great novels. Dostoyevsky believed that not only the atheistic-socialist West threatened Russia, but also a primitive, earthbound indigenous religiosity, unilluminated by the catholic mind of the Orthodox Church. One should note that Josephites are traditionally transfixed by “signs” and gaudy “miracles”, that they place an extreme emphasis on the devil, whose workings they proudly claim to understand fully, and that they maintain an external, rigorous piety.

Cut off from the sources of pure Orthodoxy by the Soviet suppression of information, and affected by the illnesses of Soviet society, the *Mnogaya leta* authors represent a clear-cut neo-Josephite tendency. It strikes one as no accident that Shimanov chooses to append a short story devoted to a courageous but ignorant Old Believer woman to the 1981 almanac.⁵³ Karelin and Ibragimov are haunted by various “signs” and wonders. Interestingly, Ibragimov indicts the court of Nicholas II for having become enmeshed “in a labyrinth of prophecies”.⁵⁴ That is true, but the authors of *Mnogaya leta* are just as enmeshed. Missing are sobriety, discernment, “the testing of thoughts”, self-discipline, mental and spiritual rigour. They claim to read the Apocalypse as an open book. The Optina *startsy* would undoubtedly indict them for *prelest'* (spiritual deceit).

The almanac's contributors also betray the influence of Marxist determinism in their attitude towards the Bolshevik regime. Since it has been around for over sixty years, they argue, its existence must be God's will. But such an affirmation ignores an elementary theological distinction between what God *permits* and what He *wills* to happen. Christ permitted Judas to betray Him, but it would have been better had Judas “not been born”.

A final task in this essay will be to attempt to place the *Mnogaya leta* collections within the present-day Russian nationalist spectrum.*

The two most significant Russian nationalist tendencies today are what Solzhenitsyn has termed “the Russian national and religious renaissance”,⁵⁵ whose adherents I shall call *vozhzhentsy*, after the Russian word for renaissance, and the tendency usually known as National Bolshevism.

Virtually all dissenting nationalists — Solzhenitsyn, Igor’ Shafarevich, Osipov, Igor’ Ogurtsov — can be counted among the ranks of *vozhzhentsy*, as can perhaps a majority of so-called “ruralist” writers whose quasi-Aesopian works appear in Soviet literary journals, for example, Valentin Rasputin, Vasili Belov, Fyodor Abramov. Figures such as nationalist painter Il’ya Glazunov can impressionistically be seen as straddling the fence separating *vozhzhentsy* from National Bolsheviks. Programmatic efforts of the *vozhzhentsy* tendency are the VSKhSON† “Programme” (1964), Solzhenitsyn’s *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (1974), the collection *From Under the Rubble* (1974) and the “Declaration of Principles” of the Moscow Religio-Philosophical Seminar (1978). Most *vozhzhentsy* would agree on the following: the need to jettison Marxism-Leninism as the state ideology; the need for economic and administrative decentralisation; the necessity of building up the Church, family, and school (without, however, re-establishing the Russian Church); decollectivisation of agriculture and the introduction of a “mixed” economy; an emphasis on internal development; withdrawal from involvement in the affairs of other nations. Issues on which there would be less agreement are: the degree of “authority” which the State or head of State should enjoy; the manner in which accommodation should be reached with the minority nationalities of the USSR; the degree to which Russia should have economic ties with the West. A significant proportion of *vozhzhentsy*, interestingly, favour a return to a monarchistic system of government.

Russian Orthodoxy occupies a central position in the thought of *vozhzhentsy* and serves to insulate them against any accommodation with the “communist experiment” or with the intensely anti-religious founder of the Soviet State, Vladimir Lenin. As for relations with the West, though many find the West distasteful on moral and aesthetic grounds, their antipathy is generally a restrained one.

National Bolshevism, the second important nationalist strand, is a more elusive tendency of thought and sentiment which currently enjoys

*The following is a condensed version of a section from a chapter of the author’s forthcoming book, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, which will be published later this year by Princeton University Press and the Hoover Institution Press.

†All-Russian Social Christian Union for the Liberation of the People, headed by Igor’ Ogurtsov — Ed.

popularity among certain segments of the Soviet intelligentsia and ruling Party-State *apparatus*. (If Yevgeni Vagin is correct — and I believe he is — National Bolshevism completely lacks a mass base.⁵⁶) A number of official nationalists, such as many “ruralist” writers, are actually “closet” *vozhzdentsy* rather than National Bolsheviks.

The term National Bolshevism was coined in 1921 by Nikolai Ustryalov, an émigré professor living in Harbin, China, and the most influential contributor to the *Smena vekh* (Change of Landmarks) collection. The *smenovekhovtsy* advocated a rapprochement between the Bolshevik Revolution and the Russian State, to be achieved through a squeezing out of the “internationalist” elements of the Revolution. The original National Bolsheviks were not religious, but neither were they hostile to religion, and, while opposed to a restoration of monarchy, they argued for the need for a strong dictatorship. The similarities between National Bolshevism and fascism are striking: a strong impulse toward deification of the nation; the desire for a strong State, the *stato totalitario*; a powerful leadership impulse (one thinks of the yearning among many contemporary National Bolsheviks for a “strong man” [*kreпки чelovek*]); a belief in the necessity of an elite; a cult of discipline, particularly of the youth; heroic vitalism; an acceptance of military and industrial might, often combined with strong ecological and preservationist concerns; a celebration of the glories of the past.

Sergei Semanov’s collection of essays *Serditse rodiny* (Heart of the Homeland — 1977) represents a useful compendium of National Bolshevik concerns.⁵⁷ In his book, Semanov focuses on the need for and benefits accruing from Soviet Russian patriotism. He promotes a “single stream” interpretation of Russian history, simultaneously lauding Suvorov and Kutuzov, Frünze and Zhukov. Like one of his avowed mentors, the writer Alexei N. Tolstoi, Semanov attempts to combine patriotic and communist motifs in his writings, although Marxist ideological elements are less evident than in Tolstoi, while nationalist (and even Russian Orthodox) elements receive heightened emphasis. Semanov believes (though he expresses the conviction somewhat cautiously) in a “Jewish-Masonic” conspiracy and sees the Russophobic West as essentially controlled by “international Masonic and Zionist financial circles”.⁵⁸

Other recent works of National Bolshevik inspiration are Nikolai Yakovlev’s *1 August 1914*, published by “Molodaya gvardiya” in 1974 in an edition of a hundred thousand copies, and Valentin Pikul’s controversial novel *U poslednei cherty* (At the Last Frontier), which appeared in the journal *Nash sovremennik* during 1979.⁵⁹ National Bolsheviks like to deal with historical topics, particularly the period immediately preceding or following the Bolshevik revolution — this allows them to speak to the present using political examples from the past. Implementation of the

ideas of the National Bolsheviks would probably lead to what Alain Besançon calls “a pan-Russian police and military empire”.⁶⁰

As should be evident, National Bolsheviks and *vozhzhentsy* share a number of concerns and attitudes, and it is this area of common interest that allows one to view both as being in some fashion “Russian nationalist”. Both tendencies are preservationist, seeking to safeguard Russian historical monuments and the Russian environment from defilement and destruction; both deplore present demographic and social trends as unfavourable to the well-being of the Russian people; both are “poly-centric” nationalists, desiring, at least in words, the cultural flourishing of all nationalities in the USSR and elsewhere. In addition, both tendencies exhibit a keen interest in Russian conservative and patriotic thought of the past. The crucial difference between the two tendencies lies in their attitude toward Russian Orthodoxy and in their willingness to achieve at least a temporary *modus vivendi* with Marxism-Leninism.

Orthodoxy represents the pivot of the thought of most *vozhzhentsy*, while National Bolsheviks lean toward a quasi-deification of the Russian people (*narod*). In the eyes of *vozhzhentsy*, there can be no accommodation with atheistic, “internationalist”, Russophobic, anti-village Marxism-Leninism; National Bolsheviks, on the other hand, are willing to make tactical compromises with it. Other differences between the two tendencies centre on the question of military-industrial might and urban growth — which National Bolsheviks would not necessarily oppose, in spite of considerable ecological and preservationist sentiment — and on the wisdom of conducting an aggressive foreign policy. At times, *vozhzhentsy* and National Bolsheviks clash — such a difference of opinion seems to have been at least partly behind the 1973-74 split of *Veche* editors and authors into two opposing camps — but the two tendencies are often able to recognise a certain communality of interest.

As far as the strength of the two tendencies is concerned, the *vozhzhentsy* would appear to have the numbers, while the National Bolsheviks might be better positioned actually to assume power. (I might note at this point that the new general secretary of the Communist Party, Yuri Andropov, does not appear to be a National Bolshevik.)⁶¹ If the National Bolsheviks were to come to power, they would undoubtedly be more receptive to the arguments of the intellectually sophisticated *vozhzhentsy*, with whom they have ideational and emotional links, than are the present Soviet leaders. A possible development therefore, might be a brief National Bolshevik interregnum separating Marxist-Leninist and *vozhzhdenets* periods of rule. The most likely vehicle for a National Bolshevik accession to power would be the Soviet military.⁶²

It should be clear that the almanac *Mnogaya leta* straddles the line dividing what we have termed *vozhzhentsy* from National Bolsheviks.

In their sincere, though often misguided, religiosity, its authors represent the *vozhdenets* tendency; in their fixation with the “Jewish-Masonic-Plutocrat” conspiracy and in their extreme hostility toward the West, they resemble the National Bolsheviks. This equivocation may well be intentional on the part of the *Mnogaya leta* authors; they are making overtures to the National Bolsheviks, seeking an “understanding” which would find a place for Russian Orthodoxy in Soviet society. But such a “compromise” cannot bear good fruit. The *vozhdenets* tendency, with its uncompromising opposition to Marxist-Leninist ideology and its nobility of vision and purpose, offers the only viable Russian nationalist way out of the morass in which the Soviet Union presently finds itself.

¹The hymn “Many Years” is sung in the Orthodox Church on festive occasions such as a parishioner’s name-day or the anniversary of the ordination of a priest.

²Keston College has reasonably complete copies of both issues.

³G. M. Shimanov, “Lie Abramson”, II, p. 153. Here and subsequently, the roman numeral I refers to the 1980 almanac, while II refers to the 1981 issue.

⁴G. N. Shimanov, “Demokraticheskoye pravosoznaniye”, I, p. 63.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁸G. M. Shimanov, “Lie Abramson”, II, p. 146.

⁹Shimanov, “Demokraticheskoye pravosoznaniye”, I, p. 65.

¹⁰Shimanov, “Lie Abramson”, II, p. 148. In general, Shimanov’s comments on America demonstrate the power of the half-truth.

¹¹Shimanov, “Demokraticheskoye pravosoznaniye”, I, pp. 67-68.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 76. Italics in original.

¹⁵Shimanov, “Lie Abramson”, p. 161.

¹⁶“Pis'mo svyashchenniku Alexandru Menyu”, I, p. 227. Italics in original.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹⁹F. V. Karelin, “Teologichesky manifest”, II, p. 35.

²⁰V. Ibragimov, “Anatomiya velikoi mistifikatsii”, I, p. 202.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 186.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 202.

²³F. V. Karelin, “Dva svidetel'stva”, II, p. 25.

²⁴Shimanov, “Lie Abramson”, II, p. 144.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁶Shimanov, “Demokraticheskoye samosoznaniye”, I, p. 69.

²⁷Karelin, “Teologichesky manifest”, II, p. 23.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁰Karelin, “Dva svidetel'stva”, I, p. 24.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 38.

³²Discussed in Karelin, “Teologichesky manifest”, pp. 2-3.

³³Karelin, “Dva svidetel'stva”, I, p. 53.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁶“Sergeyu I . . . vu”, I, p. 84.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Karelin, “Dva svidetel'stva”, I, p. 46.

³⁹Shimanov, “Lie Abramson”, II, p. 144.

⁴⁰V. Ibragimov, “Nazyvaya fakty”, II, pp. 71-72.

⁴¹Karelin, "Teologichesky manifest", II, p. 35.

⁴²A. I. Kazakov, "Istoki i korni", II, p. 126.

⁴³Shimanov, "Lie Abramson", II, p. 160.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁵Shimanov writes in "To Leah Abramson": ". . . both the peoples of Russia and Slavs abroad (and perhaps not only Slavs) will, it seems, take their geographic and historical ties to Rus' into consideration. . ." (II, p. 156).

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷V. N. Trostnikov, "Sud'by lyudskiye", II, p. 46.

⁴⁸T. Chernysheva, "Russkaya krasota", II, pp. 78-80.

⁴⁹For the text of one such piece of legislation, see *Religious Persecution in the Soviet Union: Hearings before the Subcommittees on International Political and Military Affairs and on International Organisations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives*, Ninety-fourth Congress, Second Session, 24 and 30 June 1976. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

⁵⁰Konrad Adenauer, *Memoirs 1945-53* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1966), p. 39.

⁵¹The 14th century Byzantine theologians systematised a tradition which went back to the apostolic church and the Desert Fathers. On this subject, one could cite the writings of Russian émigré theologians Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, and John Meyendorff. For the hesychast tradition in Russia, see my study *Staretz Amvrosy* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972), pp. 17-38.

⁵²See Vladimir Soloukhin, *Vremya sobirat' kamni: Ocherki* (Moscow: "Sovremennik", 1980), pp. 169-234.

⁵³See the appendix to the 1981 almanac: Fyodor Abramov's "Iz kolena Avvakumova".

⁵⁴V. Ibragimov, "Anatomiya velikoi mistifikatskii", I, p. 159.

⁵⁵In response to a personal query from me, delivered through an intermediary.

⁵⁶"Litsom k Rossii: Interv'yu Ye. A. Vagina 'Posevu'" *Posev*, 10, 1976, p. 58.

⁵⁷Sergei Semanov, *Serdtshe rodiny* (Moscow: "Moskovsky rabochi", 1977).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁵⁹Nikolai Yakovlev, *1 avgusta 1914* (Moscow, "Molodaya gvardiya", 1974); Valentin Pikul, "U poslednei cherty" in *Nash sovremennik*, Nos. 4-7, 1979.

⁶⁰"La Technique du Pouvoir en URSS" (An interview with Alain Besançon), *L'Express*, 2-9 December 1978, p. 92.

⁶¹His primary links appear to be with the technocrats in the Soviet intelligentsia, with the defence-heavy industry complex (whose chief spokesman, Defence Minister Ustinov, has offered him critical support), and, of course, with the so-called "KGB mafia". None of these groups has any particular sympathy or affinity for Russian nationalism.

⁶²Michel Tatu believes that the USSR "may be a military dictatorship by the end of the century — possibly by the end of the decade". (*Newsweek*, 22 November 1982, p. 42). And Jerry Hough reports that there are "major American specialists" who privately predict a military dictatorship in the Soviet Union. (Jerry F. Hough, "Soviet Succession: Issues and Personalities", *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1982, p. 27.) A military dictatorship, as distinct from a KGB-dominated dictatorship, would be likely to have a Russian nationalist colouration.