



# Anti-Semitism in the late Soviet Union: The rise and fall of Pamyat movement

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*My cause will be continued by children and grandchildren. They will avenge me. May the God save you from the ire of my grandchildren. When my pupils will raise, you will shudder. I have nurtured so many men that you have never dream of. It is no longer about myself. The seeds have been sown.*

Dmitry Vasliyev

## ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the rise and fate of the Pamyat movement, which became one of the first nationalist groupings in the late USSR. The main idea implied in this analysis is primarily concerned with the task to illuminate the phenomenon of this "People's National-patriotic Orthodox Christian movement", which would deflect from the mainstream of Russian nationalist movements and organizations that appeared after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Namely, it would be particularly valuable to outline ideological evolution of the movement that would transcend onto the path of idealistic monarchism intertwined with aggressive anti-Semitic and xenophobic posture promulgated by the organization. Initiated as a historical association, this movement would later take a shape that could not have been predicted by its creators. Subsequently, another goal embedded in this study is to show both role and legacy of Pamyat for development and maturing of far-right ideology in the post-1991 Russia. In the end, the article explains the main reasons of failure suffered by the movement: both objective and subjective. The study is based on chronological principle and employs a broad range of secondary data in the language of original. From methodological point of view, the article should be seen as an example of "interdisciplinary" study.

**Key words:** Pamyat, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, post-Soviet Russia, nationalism

## RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene por objeto discutir el ascenso y destino del movimiento Pamyat, que se convirtió en uno de los primeros grupos nacionalistas en los últimos tiempos de la Unión Soviética. La idea principal en este análisis se refiere principalmente a la tarea de iluminar el fenómeno de este "Movimiento Cristiano Ortodoxo Nacional-Patriota Popular", que se desviaría de la corriente principal de los movimientos y organizaciones nacionalistas rusos que aparecieron después del colapso de la URSS en 1991. En particular, resulta particularmente valioso esbozar la evolución ideológica del movimiento que trascendería el camino del monarquismo idealista entrelazado con la postura agresiva antisemita y xenófoba promulgada por la organización. Surgido como una sociedad histórica, este movimiento tomará más adelante una forma que no podría haber sido predicha por sus creadores. Posteriormente, otro objetivo incluido en este estudio sería el de mostrar el papel y el legado de Pamyat para el desarrollo y la maduración de la ideología de extrema derecha en la Rusia posterior a 1991. Para concluir, el artículo explica las principales razones del fracaso sufrido por el movimiento, tanto objetivo como subjetivo. El estudio se basa en un principio cronológico y emplea una amplia gama de datos secundarios en el idioma original. Desde el punto de vista metodológico, el artículo debe ser visto como un ejemplo de estudio interdisciplinario.

**Palabras clave:** Pamyat, antisemitismo, xenofobia, Rusia post-soviética, nacionalismo.

## RESUM

Aquest article té per objecte discutir l'ascens i destinació del moviment Pamyat, que es va convertir en un dels primers grups nacionalistes en els últims temps de la Unió Soviètica. La idea principal en aquesta anàlisi es refereix principalment a la tasca d'il·luminar el fenomen d'aquest "Moviment Cristià Ortodox Nacional-Patriota Popular", que es desviaria del corrent principal dels moviments i organitzacions nacionalistes russos que van aparèixer després del col·lapse de l'URSS el 1991. En particular, resulta particularment valuós esbossar l'evolució ideològica del moviment que transcendiria el camí del monarquisme idealista entrelaçat amb la postura agressiva antisemita i xenòfoba promulgada per l'organització. Sorgit com una societat històrica, aquest moviment prendrà més endavant una manera que no podria haver estat predita pels seus creadors. Posteriorment, un altre objectiu inclòs en aquest estudi seria el de mostrar el paper i el llegat de Pamyat per al desenvolupament i la maduració de la ideologia d'extrema dreta en la Rússia posterior a 1991. Per concloure, l'article explica les principals raons del fracàs sofert pel moviment, tant objectiu com subjectiu. L'estudi es basa en un principi cronològic i emprà una àmplia gamma de dades secundàries en l'idioma original. Des del punt de vista metodològic, l'article ha de ser vist com un exemple d'estudi interdisciplinari.

**Paraules clau:** Pamyat, antisemitisme, xenofòbia, Rússia post-soviètica, nacionalisme

## Introduction

History of anti-Semitism in Russia is a phenomenon that can be traced back to the pre-1917 Russia<sup>1</sup>. It would therefore be absolutely inaccurate to suggest that the advent of so-called “tumultuous 90s” (*likhije devianostyje*)<sup>2</sup> accompanied by on the one hand pervasive impoverishment of wide masses of Russians, skyrocketing level of criminality, drug abuse, alcoholism, corruption and on the other hand mushrooming of oligarchy (being primarily assembled of ethnic Jews) was the only factor that proliferated emergence and rapid elevation of far-right parties and movements<sup>3</sup>. Undoubtedly, the advent of the aforementioned social diseases, the lack of clear strategy and vanishing popularity of Communism created a void that many Russians could not reconcile with.

During this tumultuous period two major (though of course unequal in size and proportion) ideological postures appeared. The first one promoted by Boris Yeltsin called for greater liberalization trying to present even more radical agenda than the one that had been put forth by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985<sup>4</sup>. The second approach preached for greater conservatism (in its various forms and shapes). One of them was inseparable from somewhat romanticised vision of the pre-1917 Russia – an image that would not be full without mentioning raging anti-Semitism as one of the most distinctive characteristic of Romanovs Russia. In effect, the disgraceful “pale of settlement”<sup>5</sup> (1791 - 1917) that practically outlawed the Jews from the rest of Russia would be supplemented by even more shameful “pogroms” that claimed lives of many Jews and made as many as 2.5 million of them to abandon the Russian Empire for good<sup>6</sup>. The most tragic and embarrassing aspect of these horrible events was that this ideology was wholeheartedly supported and promoted from above: many representatives of Russian nobility not only turned out to be ardent supporters and members of such anti-Semitic organizations as the Union of Russian People (URP), the Black Hundreds, Russian Monarchist Party, Society of Active Struggle Against Revolution, White Two-headed Eagle and a number of less remarkable movements, yet also expressed their great proudness of this fact. On the other hand, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in growing anti-Semitism in the pre-1917 Russia should not be disregarded as well. It is a well-known fact that certain members

<sup>1</sup> For more information see: Edward Flannery (1965).

<sup>2</sup> Ольга Слободчикова. “Лихие” или “разные”: почему в России снова спорят о 90-х? Available at: [http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2015/09/150924\\_90s\\_argument\\_russia](http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2015/09/150924_90s_argument_russia)

<sup>3</sup> Sergey Sukhankin (2015)

<sup>4</sup> Sergey Sukhankin (2017)

<sup>5</sup> For more information see: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement>

<sup>6</sup> For more information see: Ronnie S. Landau (1992)

of the Russian Orthodox Church were implicated (to some extent or another) in anti-Jewish activities and even instigations for “pogroms”.

In the meantime, the advent of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and creation of the USSR with romantic ideas on international labour solidarity and rejection of all types of nationalism coupled with a prominent role played by the Jews in the course of creation of the Soviet state seemed to have solved the question of anti-Semitism<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, first years of the Soviet sway became a glimpse of hope for the Soviet Jews. Soviet nationality policies did not oppose to creation of national regions and republics within the Soviet architecture<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, with an explicit support of the USSR President Mikhail Kalinin a Jewish autonomous region in Birobidzhan in the Far East was created<sup>9</sup> which was a revolutionary gesture. This trend was however set aside after the so-called “Stalin`s revolution” (1934) and later further aggravated by the debacle in political relations between the USSR and the former Allies leading toward the cold war. The last year of the Soviet dictator`s life was associated with the infamous Doctors Plot<sup>10</sup> that was explicitly levelled against the Jews.

The death of Stalin in March 1953 introduced a visible division within the Soviet intellectual milieu with two main camps coming on the forefront: so-called “liberals” (with a visible role of the Jews) and “conservatives” strongly attached to traditionalism and a visible tilt toward nationalist ideology. Part of this camp was known for blaming the Jews for many misfortunes that befall Russia in the course of its post-1917 historical development. This period also witnessed re-emergence and popularisation of various “conspiracy theories” that maintained the idea of clandestine “Judeo-Masonic organizations” (zydo-masonry) that were connected with the West and plotting against Russia<sup>11</sup>. One of such groups was “Pamyat” (from Russian: “Memory”) that was one of the first ones to explicitly manifest its distinct anti-Jewish posture. Thus, analysis of emergence, matu-

<sup>7</sup> Леммлейн Ашер. Ленин Владимир. Электронная еврейская энциклопедия. Available at: <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/12414>.

<sup>8</sup> В.И. Ленин. К вопросу о национальностях или об «автономизации». Available at: <http://library.maoism.ru/Lenin/Lenin-autonomisation.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Chimen Abramsky (1978) *The Biro-Bidzhan Project, 1927–1959*, in Lionel Kochan (ed.), *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp.64–77.

<sup>10</sup> Борис Соколов. “Дело врачей”: начало и конец (04.04.2003). Available at: <http://graniru.org/Society/Health/m.28183.html>; Смиловицкий Л. Л. «Дело врачей» в Белоруссии: политика властей и отношение населения (январь-апрель 1953) // Репрессивная политика Советской власти в Беларуси: Сборник научных работ. — Мемориал, 2007. — Вып. 2. — С. 276.

<sup>11</sup> <http://elitehistory.info/index.files/uriki/OtechestvoIPO.htm>

ring and the fate of Pamyat as well as its impact on Russian anti-Semitic and far-right nationalist traditions constitute the main objective of this research paper.

The work also aims to illuminate the following topics:

1. Pre-conditions for re-emergence of anti-Semitism in the USSR in the period of “developed Socialism”;

2. The role and place of Pamyat in Russian far-right nationalist traditions;

3. The legacy Pamyat and its impact on post-1991 anti-Semitism in Russia.

While working on this research, the author has employed a broad range of primary sources including video materials, interviews, memoirs of the leaders of Pamyat movement and Dmitry Vasilyev in particular. Second group of sources - secondary literature sources - have also been employed. In this regard, it should be noted that the absolute majority of both primary and secondary literature sources are in the language of origin (Russian). In the final analysis, it ought to be highlighted that the topic has not been extensively studied, which should be seen is an additional value of this research.

### **Jewish question in the period of “developed Socialism”<sup>12</sup>.**

Soviet official propaganda argued that in the USSR anti-Semitism (as well as all other forms of inter-ethnic hatred) were inconceivable. This however did not correspond to the actual state of affairs. In the early 1950s Jewish community was permeated with strong rumours about the upcoming deportation to Siberia. In 1952 Ministry of State Security (MGB) prohibited Jewish songs at restaurants and public places, whereas in 1963 the Soviet public (at least those who were permitted to know) were appalled with horrible killing of an entire Jewish family (including children) in the city of Sverdlovsk (currently Yekaterinburg)<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, some elements within Soviet intellectual elite made attempts to theoretically condemn “Jewish nationalism”<sup>14</sup>.

The most dramatic change of the course occurred in the year 1967 when so-called Six Day War broke out. As it turned out this event would usher in a new lap

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<sup>12</sup> Речь Брежнева по случаю 60-летия Октябрьской революции 1977 год. Available at: <https://ok.ru/video/17709533788>

<sup>13</sup> Следствие вели... с Леонидом Каневским. Дело о погроме (документальный сериал). Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_raJ6oazkw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_raJ6oazkw)

<sup>14</sup> Трофим Кичко. Іудаїзм без прикрас. Изд-во АН УССР, Київ, 1963.

of anti-Semitic campaign in the USSR<sup>15</sup>. Initially, this abrupt turn of events was met with a fair share of surprise: not only was Israel composed of “quarter of our former people”<sup>16</sup>, yet also many prominent Israeli politicians such as Golda Meir and others had had ties with the USSR. The outbreak of hostilities between Israel on the one hand and Egypt, Syria and Jordan (supported by virtually all Arab countries) on the other led to a drastic change of position of the Soviet political leadership, leading to the debacle in Soviet-Israeli political relations and worsening position of the Jews within the Soviet society as well.

The first group of consequences (“political”) lead to a campaign against Zionism that reportedly had come into alliance with “American Imperialism”. The second – was primarily concerned with a blatant attack against Soviet Jews on a routine basis. The Jewish “national awakening” (particularly visible after 1967) went hand in glove with growing drive for immigration from the USSR<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, being excluded from many venues of public life the Soviet Jews would take part in so-called “dissident movement” on an increasingly wider scale.

The abrupt collapse of political relations between Moscow and Tel Aviv witnessed yet another discouraging transformation of Soviet policies pertaining to the Jews: “anti-Zionism” was rapidly evolving into an ill-concealed anti-Semitism. The Soviet Jews were suddenly ceased to be accepted to various prestigious positions such as Ministry for Foreign Affairs, KGB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In the meantime, mass culture and mass media started to be extensively used as a speaking tube of anti-Semitism. In addition to the avalanche of anti-Jewish literature (such as anecdotes), the image of the Jews was being distorted with the help of the television. For instance, in 1977 a documentary movie titled “Buyers of soles” (*Skupshiki dush*) was aired. It was meant to show that the “anti-Soviet Zionist agents have permeated the USSR”. Another documentary “Secret and obvious” (*Tajnoje i javnoje*) was initiated with a sound of a pistol shot and a commentary stating that “In a such a manner Jewish woman Kaplan was trying to assassinate Vladimir Il`ych Lenin”. The same movie commenting on the German tanks entering the Soviet city claimed that “Hitler was brought to power with the help of the Jewish financial capital”. In the year 1986 an openly anti-Semitic novel written by Vasily Belov, *Всё впереди* (*Everything's Ahead*) was published. Appearan-

<sup>15</sup> Антисемитизм в 70 - 80е годы. Советский Союз. Электронная Еврейска Энциклопедия. For more information see: <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/15402#0401>

<sup>16</sup> Владимир Высоцкий. Из авторской песни «Лекция о международном положении...» (1979). For more information see: <http://enc-dic.com/winged/A-tam--na-chetvert-bvshinash-narod-2501/>

<sup>17</sup> Б.Морозов. Еврейская эмиграция в свете новых документов. Тель-Авив, 1998

ce of the novel was met by no less anti-Semitic comments put forth by a famous Soviet writer Viktor Astafyev who accused the Jews for numerous wrongdoings against Russia<sup>18</sup>. Incidentally, one of the most significant changes was physical elimination of the Emperor Nicolas II and his entire family, which Astafyev said had been carried out by “a clear-cut Zionist Yurovsky”<sup>19</sup>.

An effort of the aforementioned groups was supported by the Soviet intellectual elites who tried to theoretically justify rampant anti-Semitism: the famous formula “Zionism – the weapon of Imperialism” would be changed by the new one “Imperialism – the weapon of Zionism”<sup>20</sup>. For instance, according to L. Korneev<sup>21</sup> it was “Jewish financial capital that had by the middle of the nineteenth century taken under its effective control powers... in the Russian Empire, Germany, France, England, the USA, Italy and Austro-Hungarian Empire”. Aside from this, the Soviet official ideology started searching for a link between Zionism and Judaism (religion)<sup>22</sup>.

However, the outbreak of mass-scale anti-Semitic frenzy did not seem to be possible a time for two main reasons. First, Leonid Brezhnev (the General Secretary of the USSR) held negative opinion of anti-Semitism (which may also have been related to the supposition about his wife Jewish origin). For instance, Brezhnev was even said to have openly expressed an idea about granting more autonomy to the Jews concerning the “Jewish language”, education and national traditions<sup>23</sup>. Secondly, historical experience has shown that major outbreaks of ethnic nationalism in Russia have been primarily related to the worsening economic conditions and internal instability which was not the case for major part of Brezhnev`s tenure. The (in)famous formula boiling down to the following concept - “they pretend to pay, we pretend to work” (oni delajut vid, chto nam platiat, mi delajem vid, chto robotajem)<sup>24</sup> – was quite effective being able to mask growing economic difficulties, mushrooming criminality, stagnating economy and social discontent that started to take shape in the final year of Brezhnev`s epoch.

<sup>18</sup> К. Азадовский. Переписка из двух углов Империи (2003). Available at: <http://magazines.russ.ru/voplit/2003/5/azadov.html>

<sup>19</sup> For more information see: Плотников И. О команде убийц царской семьи и её национальном составе // Урал. — 2003. — № 9. Available at: <http://magazines.russ.ru/ural/2003/9/plotnik.html>

<sup>20</sup> А. Романенко «Классовая сущность сионизма». Л., Лениздат, 1986

<sup>21</sup> Л. Корнеев «Враги мира и прогресса», М., изд-во «Правда», 1978

<sup>22</sup> For instance, see: В. Бегун «Сионизм и иудаизм», Минск, «Знание», 1972; В. Бегун «Ползучая контрреволюция», Минск, «Беларусь», 1974.

<sup>23</sup> <http://jhist.org/russ/russ001-20.htm>

<sup>24</sup> <https://rg.ru/2015/10/08/rodina-brejnev.html>

Along with growing sub-cultures and underground groups that were unhappy with Communist ideology and widening socio-economic polarity within the Soviet society, first openly anti-Semitic organizations started to appear. Among of the first ones to emerge on the scene was national-patriotic front Pamyat.

### **From national-patriotic societies to emergence of the Pamyat.**

Interestingly enough, yet a formation that would give raise to Pamyat did not have an explicit nationalist background. Rather, it would be more appropriate to argue that the origins of the movement were tightly intertwined with such notions as “patriotism” and promotion of Russian national culture and traditions. For this purpose, in the year 1965, all-Russian Society for Securing of Historical and Cultural Sites was created. This was followed by an intensive campaign on popularisation of reading and exponential growth in number of various societies of so-called “booklovers” of which perhaps the most well-known was named named “Souz”.

Nonetheless, very soon the head of the State Committee of the USSR on printing and book sales Boris Stukalin (who was considered to be a proponent of ideas close to “Russian nationalism”) would turn his attention to the phenomenon, which resulted in creation of all-Union Voluntary Society of Booklovers (1974). As it would be clear later this was an extremely important milestone in emergence of Russian nationalist movement. In the second half of 1970s under the auspices of the all-Russian Society for Securing of Historical and Cultural Sites a historical association “Vityaz” (Russian equivalent for the notion “knight”) was established - Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments. The association came up with two major tasks that ought to be classified as immediate and somewhat more far-reaching. First, the association set the goal of preparation for the upcoming celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Kulikovo (September 8, 1380) - an event that has a profound meaning for Russian statehood and occupies a prominent role in historical memory of the Russians<sup>25</sup>. The second objective was related to fostering of “informal historical, cultural and educational organizations” as well as pulling together activists-bibliophiles and amateur historians. The association included prominent figures such as I. Glazunov (a famous painter), S. Malyshev (historian), and A. Lebedev (Colonel of the MVD). At this stage, however, no recorded proofs of far-right ideology or explicit anti-Semitic sentiments were traced.

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<sup>25</sup> In spite the fact that the victory over the Tatars did not bring immediate collapse of the Tatar yoke (which formally was gotten rid of only in 1480 as a result of so-called the Great Stand on the Ugra river) this is known as the beginning of the end of the Tatar domination over the Russian principalities, and simultaneously marked the beginning of the era of domination of Moscow.



In the year 1980 (some accounts claim 1982) “Vityaz” was renamed into “Pamyat” (from Russian: “memory”). Initially, under the leadership of Gennady Frygin (who was closely related to the Ministry of aviation of the USSR) activities conducted by the society did not significantly diverge from its historical “predecessor”. However, it was the year 1985 that would have a decisive meaning for the movement: Frygin was replaced by Dmitry Vasilyev – a person who would later openly admit his sympathy toward far-right and anti-Jewish ideology in the meantime claiming his adherence to the Russian Monarchist tradition<sup>26</sup>. As it would turn out later Pamyat would give a start to a number of notorious neo-Nazi and far-right radical groups and organizations. Incidentally, creator of the notorious Russian National Unity movement (RNU) Alexander Barkashov also came out of Pamyat<sup>27</sup>.

Unfortunately, this and many other disturbing signals did not receive proper attention from the side of Mikhail Gorbachev, who was elected as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985. The Soviet leader clearly undermined the role and power of nationalist sentiments concealed under the glacial of official propaganda incessantly claiming that the “national question” in the USSR had long been gotten rid of.

In the second half of 1980s the USSR resembled a powder keg especially in its so-called “national margins”: economic stagnation, deficit, raising criminality and vanishing sense of injustice, dragging war in Afghanistan, horrible Chernobyl tragedy and emerging parallel societies were supplemented by rapidly raising ethnic nationalism that threatened to burst out in several parts of the Soviet state<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, general inability to find a proper equilibrium between political and economic reforms created an extremely dangerous situation that threatened internal stability and cultivated development of various sorts of radicalism.

Moreover, disenchantment with ebbing Communist ideology put forth a new dilemma: what was going to replace this no-longer-appealing model? Under these circumstances, part of the Russian society started to turn to the model that was once dismantled by Communism: romanticised portrayal of the pre-1917 Russia. Regretfully, romantic nostalgia over the “Russia that we lost”<sup>29</sup> was inseparable from ugliest and most unpleasant traditions that also existed in the Imperial Russia – ethnic nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. These were key dis-

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<sup>26</sup> For more information see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6-TragXNMA>

<sup>27</sup> Умер воевода “Памяти” Дмитрий Васильев (18.07.2003). For more information see: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/397235>

<sup>28</sup> For more information see: “Hello, do you hear us?” (1990, documentary). Available at: <http://www.mycentury.tv/red-square/item/365-hello-do-you-hear-us.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Станислав Говорухин. Россия, которую мы потеряли (1992, documentary). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEOqssnAAMs>.

tinctive features of “Pamayat” that by 1986 found itself in the forefront of emerging Russian nationalist movement.

### **Pamyat in zenith: the final days of the USSR (1987 – 1991)**

First attempt by Pamyat to clearly pronounce itself as an emerging force came about in May 1987, when its members rallied on what is now Manege Square. The event must have had significant magnitude: Boris Yeltsin (at a time First Secretary of the CPSU Moscow City Committee) had a meeting with the assemblers. However, in spite of seeming success this did not lead toward transformation of Pamyat into the main player among nascent nationalist movement.

On the contrary, it appeared that Pamyat started to experience problems somewhat resembling those faced by Ukrainian nationalists – the lack of unity and internal coherence<sup>30</sup>. Within this same year, the organization demonstrated first signs of looming subdivision leading toward defragmentation of the movement on several smaller fractions (bearing however the same names). Among most known were: National-patriotic front “Pamayat” (headed by D. Vasilyev), Universal anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic front “Pamyat” (Igor Shcheglov) and other less significant groups and fractions. Perhaps, the only element that bound these newly emerged formations was based on a firm (and rather aggressive) anti- Judeo-Masonic posture<sup>31</sup>.

According to some estimations (probably, the word rumours would be more appropriate in this regard) it was the Committee for State Security (KGB) that stood behind emergence of Pamyat<sup>32</sup>. It has been frequently argued that ideas emanating from Pamyat were endeared by some top-Soviet political functionaries. However, the course of events showed that the Soviet political leadership clearly felt ill at ease with emerging Russian nationalist movement which threatened to get out of control. Starting from this point on official Soviet mass media started to criticise Pamyat (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Moskovskaya Pravda*) and some of its members were purged from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. For instance, in her article published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* Soviet

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<sup>30</sup> Alla Hurska. Far-right Movements and Ideology in Contemporary Ukraine: Formidable Image vs. Weak Essence. CIDOB, Barcelona, February 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Общество “Память”: откуда взялась националистическая организация в СССР. Русская Семерка (20/11/16). Available at: <http://russian7.ru/post/obshhestvo-pamyat-otkuda-vzylas-naci/>.

<sup>32</sup> This version however has neither solid confirmation nor can it be utterly dismissed

journalist E. Losoto openly accused Pamyat of its ideological connection to Fascist ideology<sup>33</sup>.

By this time however in the range of debris of initial Pamyat, it was Vasilyev's faction that should be seen as the main "legal successor": it not only managed to attract the largest number of supporters, yet also wittingly declared itself a political organization, which immediately granted it a totally new meaning. This was however a mixed blessing. On the one hand, many representatives of European intellectual elites felt threatened and perplexed with emerging sentiments of this kind in the USSR that was at this point seeking western financial support. On the other hand, activities of Pamyat magnified attention from the side of European far-rights such as Jean-Marie Le Pen, which created an international resonance.

Another remarkable event was related to the event that occurred on January 18, 1990 and its immediate aftermath. On this day, a group of people committed beating of Anatoly Kurchatkin who was a member of famous pro-Perestroika organization of Russian writers "Апрель". It was assumed that the deed was committed by members of Pamyat, yet there were not enough concrete evidences to argue the case in court. In January 23, Kurchatkin presented a passionate speech during airing of "Vzgliad" television programme whose popularity was enormous at a time<sup>34</sup>. Namely, he claimed that "...we are dealing with such a type of national conscious that could be defined as "dark nationalism"... we are avoiding the word "fascism"... We need to call things by their proper names: this movement is political, it is a "fascist" movement"<sup>35</sup>. It was a curious event indeed: even to the prior to the collapse of the USSR the term "fascism" was started to be used in respect to some movement in the Soviet state.

On the other front, it seems to be curious and in some sense even instrumental to trace evolution of ideology pursued by Pamyat from its emergence toward the last days of the Soviet Union and its ideology. What is perplexing was a steep latitude of oscillation from "national-Bolshevik" (initially characterized by overwhelming support for Stalinist ideology) posture that could be traced in the interim of the emergence of the movement until 1989 that would later be abruptly replaced by "Orthodox-monarchist" sentiments and practical condemnation of Communist ideology and methods exercised by the Bolsheviks. Namely, it would not

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<sup>33</sup> Лосото Е. В беспамятстве. Куда ведут руководители так называемого объединения «Память» // Комсомольская правда. 1987. № 123. 22 мая. С. 4.

<sup>34</sup> История телевизионной программы "Взгляд" (02.10.2012). For more information see: <https://ria.ru/spravka/20121002/763558698.html>.

<sup>35</sup> For more information see: Рекемчук А. Е. Мамонты. М.: Издательство "МИК", 2006.

be superfluous to recall that the most “mature” version of ideological postulates endeared by Pamyat boiled down to the urgent necessity of restoration of Monarchical rule in Russia whereby explicitly portraying deep and profound disappointment with Communism. However, taking into consideration limitations and shortcoming of Russian historical experience, leaders of the movement claimed that the best model should be seen as so-called “elected monarchy”. The most distinctive feature of this theory was that the locus of decision-making power was to have been vested in the hands of the “Russian people”: the Monarch was supposed to be elected by the Zemsky Sobor (Russian quasi-parliament that was active within 1549 - 1684). Despite this ideological transformation, Pamyat did not abdicate from its xenophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric. On the contrary, this return to adoration of Monarchy seemed to have amplified ethnic hatred toward the Jews and their negative role for most decisive stages of Russian historical development.

### **The collapse of the USSR and the fate of Pamyat.**

The Belavezha Accords (December 8, 1991) signed by Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk and Stanislav Shushkevich dealt the final blow to the USSR (established in 1922)<sup>36</sup>. The collapse itself did not produce the same impact as its immediate aftermath: the entire post-Soviet space was being torn apart by a wave of violence stemming from centuries-old inter-ethnic hatred. All of a sudden Central Asia, the Caucasus and Transnistria came to be marked by newly emerging tinderboxes. Russia itself did not escape a splash of ethnic nationalism intertwining with separatist sentiments. Mounting tensions reached its zenith with the outbreak of the bloody and highly unpopular among Russian population first Chechen campaign/war (1994 - 1996)<sup>37</sup>.

These tumultuous events did in many ways stipulated skyrocketing popularity of ultra-nationalist sentiments among ordinary Russians: this had to do with both anti-Caucasian and anti-Jewish feelings<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that within 1994 – 1999 the overall number of far-right and nationalist

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<sup>36</sup> Союзный парламент попрощался со страной сдержанно и печально // «Независимая газета», 28 декабря 1991, № 170. Available: <http://yeltsin.ru/press/newspaper/detail7372/>.

<sup>37</sup> For more information see: Sergey Sukhankin. The 'Caucasus Knot': The New Lap of Violence. International Catalan Institute for Peace, Working Paper No. 2014/5, Barcelona.

<sup>38</sup> This could be explained with the fact that Boris Berezovsky (one of the most well-known Russian oligarchs and a politician of Jewish origin) was severely criticised for his stance on the Chechen conflict and even accused of financing terrorist formations. For more information see: Мартагов: террористов финансировал Березовский (16.05.2012). Available at: <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=8595>.

groups counted dozens of them<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and the Liberal Democratic Party of the Russian Federation (LDPR) started to bid for leading positions in the Russian State Duma (the lower house of the Russian Parliament). This circumstance enticed many European scholars to start serious discussion about immanent fascist peril that Russia was facing at a time<sup>40</sup>.

Meanwhile, the year 1991 became probably the most successful period for Pamyat, which was reflected in both the number of its members and growing geographical network of its presence to the ability to carry out propaganda campaigns. First, it needs to be mentioned that within 1991 – 1994 the overall number of member may have reached 400 persons, whereas branches of the movement were created in 52 subjects of the Russian Federation. Secondly, by the beginning of 1991 the movement was able to obtain its own newspaper (*Pamyat*) and a radio station (“Motherland, memory and you”). Also, Pamyat started to disseminate propagandist leaflets and audio recordings.

On September 29, 1991 the leader of Pamyat for the first time appeared in a radio program. In this juncture, it would be worthwhile to present parts of this speech of Vasilyev primarily due to the fact that it fully showed ideological transformation of the movement: “Dear compatriots, brothers and sisters! The long-suffering Orthodox people! I am speaking to you at this arduous period for the Russian land. Many tempests and hurricanes have dashed upon the holy land, yet never has she witnessed such a difficult period as we are currently going through. The Russian people have forgotten bequests of their predecessors: wholeheartedly keep Russian land... they have succumbed to the diabolic temptations betraying the creed of their predecessors, sowing malice among their brothers, sisters, betraying their mothers and fathers, vilifying ancient wisdom of grandparents. They have ceased to sing Russian songs and speak Russian language... The kikes have captured Russian freedom! They are taunting and torturing without any shadow or compassion! And where are our people?!... I am wondering if Russian land has ceased to bring knights the Super-warriors?! Where are you, Ilya Muromets, Dobrynya Nikitich and Alesha Popovych?!<sup>41</sup>... Are you going to serve to damned kike and tolerate his sneering for the eternity!? Has not the time

<sup>39</sup> Владимир Прибыловский. НАЦИОНАЛ-ПАТРИОТИЧЕСКИЕ ПАРТИИ, ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ И ГРУППЫ В 1994-1999 гг. КРАТКОЕ ОПИСАНИЕ (по состоянию на июнь 1999). Available at: <http://www.anticompromat.org/nazi-p/naz99.html>

<sup>40</sup> Andreas Umland: *Vladimir Zhirinovskii in Russian Politics: Three Approaches to the Emergence of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia 1990-1993*

<sup>41</sup> Heroes of the Russian national folklore

come to start minting swords to relive the Russian lands from these abominable freaks!... May the God, the Tsar and the nation guide us!”<sup>42</sup>.

In spite of seemingly appealing rhetoric based on patriotism and anti-Semitic sentiments<sup>43</sup> Pamyat failed to become the flagman of Russian nationalist movement. Partly, it was stipulated by a growing number of internal frictions that later led to further fragmentation of the movement. On the other hand, the majority of Russians (even though being of negative stance on the Jews and their role in Russian historical traditions and post-1991 transformations) were not proponents of unbridled anti-Semitism.

Another heavy blow to Pamyat was dealt in 1992 when one of the main ideologists of the front A.R. Shtilmark defected from the movement creating a group entitled “Black Hundred” (following the patterns of the pre-1917 ultra nationalist tradition). Most likely, the internal conflict was caused by a bitter dispute between two fractions led by Shtilmark and Vasilyev over the candidature of President Yeltsin and his vision of the new Russia. Growing process of weakening of the remnants of Pamyat are also related to its behaviour during the events in the fall of 1993: the constitutional crisis a political stand-off between the Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament that ended up with military clash and shooting of the parliament. Although, even though it has been suggested on numerous occasions that the leadership of the movement had tacitly supported Yeltsin, officially Pamyat opted to stay neutral. On the other hand, members of Pamyat on more frequent occasions criticized President Yeltsin for his “Jewish entourage” claiming that his wife was Jewish thereby negatively affecting President`s understanding of internal conditions and the overhaul of challenges faced by the country. And still, the second all-Russian congress of the National Patriotic Front Pamyat supported Yeltsin`s policies related to the Chechen question simultaneously severely criticizing Russian mass media. In terms of ideology the year 1994 clearly manifested final crystallization of ideological posture of Pamyat that was expressed in the following formula: We are neither Nazis nor extremists, we are devoted followers of Monarchism. Our ideal is – Rus` as an Orthodox Monarchy”<sup>44</sup>. In effect this meant a complete breakup with the residues of national-socialist ideology as

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<sup>42</sup> Игорь Молотов. Черная дюжина. Общество смелых. Available at:

<https://lib.rus.ec/b/610490/read>

<sup>43</sup> Алла Гербер. Антисемитизм в России генетический? (07.07.2011). Available at:

<http://ieshua.org/v-rossii-geneticheskij-antisemitizm.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Ю.Г.Коргунюк, С.Е.Заславский (1996): *Российская многопартийность: становление, функционирование, развитие*. М.: Центр прикладных политических исследований ИНДЕМ. Vi.: [http://partinform.chat.ru/rm\\_6.htm](http://partinform.chat.ru/rm_6.htm)

the one that bears traits of social-democracy, which was deemed to be detrimental for Russia due to its implication with the Jews.

Another drawback that significantly abridged general ability of Pamyat to increase its weight had to do with practical rejection of participation in political activities. By the same token, elections in the Federation Council (1993) were neglected. Only in the year 1995 Pamyat was proclaimed by Russian Ministry of Justice as an inter-regional organization. Nonetheless, valuable time had been wasted and the organization was not able to assemble required support for entering the Duma (the lower chamber of the Russian Parliament).

Having suffered a defeat leaders of Pamyat opted for creating ad-hock alliances with weak fractions and movements (such as Russian Conservative`s Union and “Rus`Dezhavnaja” movement). The ultimate purpose boiled to a somewhat naïve idea to create a greater nationalist movement that was to have acquired a name “The Movement of Russian National Renaissance” preaching for monarchism and positioning itself close to the famous formula proposed by Sergey Uvarov in 1833<sup>45</sup>. Pamyat however contended that the old formula (“Joint spirit of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality”) was to be replaced by “God, Tsar and the Nation”. This did not have necessarily to do with a string inclination toward monarchism, yet it was largely explained with the fact that Russia first needed to (re)establish necessary foundations, whereas the restoration of monarchy could ensue only within 10-15 years. Nonetheless, the life span of this new organization turned out to be very brief: without any visible achievements, it went to oblivion after several months of unsuccessful activities. Interestingly enough, yet Pamyat and its leadership continued to see Russian President Yeltsin as a person capable restore monarchy in Russia – in many ways, this argument did play a pivotal role in the decision of the movement to support the incumbent president in 1996 during probably one of the most intense presidential campaigns of contemporary Russia.

Taking into consideration the fact that political activism bore no traits of remarkable achievements within this period, it would therefore be appropriate to concentrate attention on two most salient aspects: ideological evolution and first attempts to identify some sort of an economic program.

Speaking about the latter one could find it to be a patchwork of ideas where some classical concepts are interrelated with naïve utopia. For instance, such postulates as non-tax economy and virtual absence of the private property on the

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<sup>45</sup> Алексей Миллер. *Триада графа Уварова* (11.04.2007). For more information see: <http://polit.ru/article/2007/04/11/uvarov/>.

land somehow interrelated with autarchy, state crediting and introduction of the full states control over external trade relations.

In the year 1998 as a response to severe economic hardships caused by the outbreak of acute financial crisis Vasilyev came up with the manifest “Time to live like Russians!”<sup>46</sup> which included the following prescriptions:

1. Acquisition of the entire mass of dollar liquidity from the Russian population for the purpose of transferring it to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the government of the US as a rebate for Russia`s debts;
2. Prohibition of all “Zionist financial Banks” acting on the Russian territory;
3. Imposition of a ban on independent fixation of interests rates by private Banks; unilateral converting of the Russian rouble with increasing of its value at least ten times in comparison with the US dollar;
4. Severe penalty for using foreign currency on internal market of the Russian Federation;
5. Immediate modernization of Russian manufacture;
6. Reconsideration of privatisation.

This unambiguously suggest that in terms of economic policy Pamyat envisaged the US dollar and transnational capital to be the main weapons levelled against Russia by “International Zionist-Imperialism”. However, taking into account key postulates of “economic strategy” forged by Vasilyev, it would be impossible to overlook visible anti-globalist tilt and somewhat naïve belief in the ability to solve economic problems with hedging the country form external competition. Undoubtedly, such posture was more commensurate with pre-1991 patterns rather than pre-1917.

“Political” part of the program was formulated by the end of 1990s, it included the following aspects<sup>47</sup>:

1. The October Revolution was in fact a “Zionist occupation” that distorted the entire course of Russian history;

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<sup>46</sup> Дмитрий Дмитриевич Васильев. Я русский и делаю русское дело. Газета «Русские идут», 2008, pp. 202 – 222

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pp. 192 – 194.



2. Internationalism – is a theory of eradication of national distinctive features of other nations. Russians were a nation upon which a war was declared;

3. Genocide of the Russians was continued through forceful populator of Russian lands by representatives of Asia and the Caucasus. As a result, Russian national traditions are being devalued, history and culture eliminated, violence is cultivated, prostitution, alcoholism and drug abuse are becoming a commonplace.

Careful analysis of both economic and political programs of Pamyat movement in the late 1990s (when it had reached its zenith of popularity) may lead one to believe that on frequent occasions common sense gave the way to sentiments. It is rather difficult (if possible at all) to deduce a kernel of rationalism in frequently contradictory postulates presented by leaders of the movement. Rather, it would be more appropriate to classify these not as a full-fledge political/economic program, yet as a reaction to gruesome and in many respects genuinely disappointing transformations experienced by the Russian Federation. The widespread poverty, humiliating results of the Chechen conflict (that was predominantly construed as a defeat of the federal centre), mushrooming criminality and deepening polarity within Russian society – these frustrating events should be seen as the main source of disgruntlement of Pamyat leadership that could not keep up with both the pace and rapidity of changes experienced by Russia.

### **“New Russia” and the end of Pamyat: the final accord.**

On July 16, 2003 (which coincided with the death of Nicolas II) the leader of Pamyat Dmitry Vasilyev perished. As it turned out, the death of such a charismatic leader would incur irreparable damage to the movement leading toward its further disintegration. The new leadership appeared to be incapable of containing these processes. Nikolay Skorodumov who was elected in 2004 as the new head of the organization could not forestall brewing conflicts among members of Pamyat. As a result of yet another serious dispute a number of members walked out of the movement in 2005, whereby dealing yet another blow to the organization and its reputation.

Among most noticeable events that Pamyat took part in after the death of its former leader Vasilyev was the year 2006, when members of the movement took part in traditional “Russian March” that brought together various nationalist forces. This however did not lead toward resurrection of the movement. On the contrary, further course of development would show that in many ways this event was one of the last ones conducted by Pamyat.

In June 2009, the head of the Moscow-based branch of Pamyat Georgy Borovikov decided to create his own organization (according to other version he was purged from the organization for propagating ideas close to National-Socialism) that would be entitled the Russia Fascist Order. Later it would be re-named into Russian Liberation Front and under this name the organizing will be undertaking its activities. In spite of regular rallies held by members of Pamyat, this movement has lost vestiges of popularity mostly concentrating on activities in on-line social groups (for instance, such as vkontakte.ru which is the largest social network in Russia<sup>48</sup>).

### **In lieu of conclusion.**

Indeed, as it has been stated before Pamyat was not destined to become the flagman of the nascent Russian nationalist movement. In effect, its activities and achievements have been dwarfed by other ultra-nationalist groups and movements. In the range of factors that in the end did not allow Pamyat to achieve heights that would be taken by movements of similar ideology were political passivity, naïve anti-globalism and general failure to produce intellectual legacy in the form of coherent theoretical reflections. Nonetheless, Pamyat and its role in Russian nationalist movement should not be brushed aside completely.

In this juncture, it would be worthwhile to quote Oleg Platonov in his assessment of Pamyat and its historical meaning: "After the death of Brezhnev Russian movement entered a new phase. The type of Russian patriot was changed dramatically. Being used to concealment of his patriotic feelings during the Soviet period he is no longer afraid of expressing them. For the first time in many decades Russians started to unite: first for the purpose of protection of their holy places and later against their common enemies. Having started from tiny springs, Russian movement gradually turns into a full-size river. Certainly, if Andropov had lived longer he would have tried to crash Russian movement. However, his successor Chernenko continued policies of Brezhnev aimed at appeasement of opposing forces, whereby giving the patriots time to organize themselves. These three years from Andropov to Gorbachev allowed Russian movement to acquire new quality, which found its reflection in creation of Pamyat movement"<sup>49</sup>.

On the other hand, it should not be disregarded it was Pamyat that appeared as one of very few (if not the first one) organizations in the late Soviet Union that

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<sup>48</sup> For more information, see: Национально-патриотический фронт "ПАМЯТЬ" Официальное представительство НПФ "Память" в социальных сетях.  
[https://vk.com/npf\\_pamyat](https://vk.com/npf_pamyat)

<sup>49</sup> Олег Платонов. Русское сопротивление на войне с антихристом. Русская народная линия, 27.10.2006. For more information see:  
[http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2006/10/27/russkoe\\_soprotivlenie\\_na\\_vojne\\_s\\_antihristom/](http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2006/10/27/russkoe_soprotivlenie_na_vojne_s_antihristom/)

stood in the beginning of restoration of radical, ultra-nationalist, openly xenophobic tradition whereby ushering in a new page of anti-Semitism in Russia.

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