

Mother Russia by Rachel Douglas

Chauvinists strut in Communist journal

An outburst of Russian blood-and-soil cultism gives the lie to Kremlinologists, who see Gorbachov as a "rational" force.

Jerusalem Sovietologist Mikhail Agursky's claim that the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union rang a starting-bell for "a return to so-called ideological 'liberalism'" (*EIR*, April 11) is contradicted by the contents of the CPSU's main journal, not to mention the decisions of the 27th Congress.

Though his 1979 book, *The Ideology of National-Bolshevism*, was about the survival and flourishing of Russian "right-wing" nationalist currents, apocalyptic national messianism, and Russian gnosticism in the Soviet period, Agursky insists, in his *Jerusalem Post* columns, that these are nowhere to be found amid the members of the Gorbachov team.

As Agursky has it, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov opened the party ideology bureaus chiefly to the rational, possibly "liberal," set from the systems analysis and sociology think-tanks, and no Mother Russia cultists need apply. *EIR* has already reported, to the contrary, how at the 27th Party Congress the Great Russians quashed the huge irrigation projects sought by Central Asian republics and eliminated all but a handful of non-Slavs from the Central Committee.

Turning to *Kommunist*, the CPSU journal of theory and policy, we find these moves backed up in writing. In its first 1986 issue (January), the party mouthpiece featured two articles by authors who have been among the most vocal Russian chauvinists.

Academician D. Likhachov and Corresponding Academician V. Yanin, signing themselves as leaders of the All-Russian Society for the Pres-

ervation of Historical and Cultural Monuments (also known as the Rossiya Society, a mass-based Russian nationalist outfit), wrote "The Russian North as a Monument of Native and World Culture." They called for a vast region, encompassing Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces, to be designated a cultural monument and preserved as "a huge museum, stretching for thousands of square kilometers."

In part, this was a polemic in favor of what the 27th Congress then did—reject the irrigation scheme to divert the waters of north Russian rivers. Likhachov and Yanin bemoaned "the possibility that territory, where *chefs d'oeuvres* of national, state, and worldwide significance are located, could be drowned as a result . . . of certain projects now under discussion. . . ."

But, beyond that, Mother Russia cultist Likhachov really flew his colors. He and Yanin lingered with affection over each phase of northern Russia's history: peasant migrations, boyar inroads, and the dense construction of monasteries during the 14th-16th centuries. The north, they gushed, bred "a certain type of population. From generation to generation, people here grew up strong, firm in spirit, enterprising, freedom-loving. . . . For centuries, the Russian North and its popular culture played an active role in the formation of all Russia's culture, statehood, and defense capability."

The area, they said, "continues to serve Soviet culture, as witnessed by the 'village prose' of Abramov, Rasputin, Belov, Astafyev and other writ-

ers, connected with the peasant North." The writers, boosted by Likhachov, exude devotion to the soil of Mother Russia.

The second Russian chauvinist's article in *Kommunist*, No. 1, was a more subtle contribution by Yu. Melentyev, entitled "Spiritual Unity." In a carefully worded discussion of "multi-national Soviet culture," he examined "the process of rapprochement (*sblizheniye*) and consolidation of unity (*splocheniye*) of the fraternal peoples of the U.S.S.R."—avoiding the controversial thesis on eventual merger (*sliyaniye*) of the nationalities, which the new CPSU Program also ignores.

But the very choice of Melentyev, minister of culture of the Russian Republic, as *Kommunist's* author on this theme conveyed a sharper message to party insiders. In the early 1970s, Melentyev was head of the Molodaya Gvardiya (Young Guard) publishing house, a hotbed of Great Russian chauvinism. His magazine printed a famous appeal to resist the Westernization of Soviet society, with "Russification of the spirit." Readers aware of that would note that Melentyev's *Kommunist* dissertation on "multi-national" camaraderie was peppered with: a call to protect and value historical monuments for their "aroma of the past" and ability to kindle "the feeling of the Motherland"; a warm reference to poet Valerii Bryusov, a Russian occultist who joined the Bolsheviks in 1920; and a complaint that the Russian language was being treated with scant esteem in some regions of the U.S.S.R.

Since the 27th Congress, *Kommunist* got a new editor—Ivan Frolov, an activist in the radical ecologist movement linked to the Club of Rome. We suspect Agursky will call him a liberal, too.