

Russian fascists taken over the coals in D.C.

by William Jones

What was supposed to be a low-key visit by a group of eight Russian writers, representatives of the Great Russian chauvinist outlook, sponsored by the United States Information Agency (USIA), turned into a fiasco as the anti-Semitic Russophiles were confronted with their writings by a wide variety of Jewish organizations and Russian Jewish emigrés, who unmasked the nature of this weird gathering at the Smithsonian Institution April 18.

Led by the chief editor of *Nash Sovremmenik*, Stanislav Kunyayev, the group was to be introduced to the depth and diversity of American culture and to the principles and practices of a pluralistic society. *Nash Sovremmenik* was noted for having published an article by a Russophile named Shaparevich, who complained that Russia had reached a critical turning point where the character of a "greater people" i.e. the Russians, was being denigrated by a "lesser people," referring to the Jewish people. Vladimir Rasputin, the Russian chauvinist writer who was recently chosen by Gorbachov to be on the Presidential Council, his new "Politburo," was to originally have been part of the delegation, but he withdrew when he was appointed to the council.

If the visit was meant to acclimate the American Kremlinology quacks and the U.S. public with this way-out brand of Russophilism, it was not very successful. For nearly three hours, the Russians were grilled on their writings on the "Jewish Conspiracy," the phony "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," and the rest of their discredited intellectual baggage. Kunyayev tried to shift discussion by stressing that he didn't want the "Russian question" or the question of Russian-American relations reduced to the "Jewish question." "You don't know what the Russians are forced to read every day," said Kunyayev, "about how the Russians have become degenerate, how they are becoming a nation of slaves, how it is pointless to revise the Russian character. How can we tranquilly react to these writings?" said Kunyayev. "We would be poor children of our people if we did so."

This effort to focus on less controversial topics was thwarted when one of the Smithsonian academics read a letter signed by 72 Russian authors to *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, explaining how anti-Semitism had been created by the Jews. When he asked the writers who among them signed this letter, there was a strained silence. Two finally admitted to having signed it, one of them being Kunyayev himself. The

Russians then complained that the letter had been taken out of context. When a Russian Jewish emigré complained that the USIA had spent \$60,000 of U.S. tax money to bring these people here, one of the Russians, who previously had said very little, could take it no longer. "I don't think you know anything about our country at all," cried Leonid Borodin, a writer of fiction from Irkutsk. "We are on the verge of a catastrophe. If it explodes, it will have an influence on you and your taxes."

Russia, the land of mercy?

The delegation was also asked what they expected to gain from the appointment of Venyamin Yarin and Vladimir Rasputin, two noted Mother Russia representatives, to Gorbachov's Presidential Council. Nobody would answer that question directly, but Oleg Mikhailov, head of the literature section of the World Literary Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, said, "I talked to Vladimir Rasputin, and he agrees with me that we must return to the spirituality which is only possible in our church."

He said there was a problem, since the Russian Orthodox Church had become inextricably bound to the Communist bureaucracy. "If we enter that temple," said Mikhailov, "we will be happy." When asked by an American supporter of the late Andrei Sakharov why the Soviet Union didn't use its excellent physicists and mathematicians to put the country back on the road to technological progress, Mikhailov replied, "Sure, technology is important, but the most important thing is the soul."

"Russia showed its national ideals 1,000 years ago," said Pavel Gorelov, chief editor of works by young authors at *Molodaya Gvardiya*, the magazine of the Communist Youth movement and a major organ for the Mother Russia revival. "It chose Christianity. It became the land of mercy. That's what we mean when we speak of Great Russia. The motherland and our soul are the same thing." Stanislav Kunyayev, the chief editor of *Nash Sovremmenik*, noted that "Russia was always a great power. It is a myth that it was only created by fire and the sword." He then tried to explain how all the nationalities that ended up in the Russian Empire sought a haven from other despotisms—the Polish, the Persian, and the Chinese. He also said that Russia was unique in that, at times when Russian armies couldn't stop invading armies, "the strength of the people was called upon."

Kunyayev also said that German unification was a "difficult problem for Russia." He also expressed concern about the "undefined turbulence in the Muslim world." Ernst Safonov, editor-in-chief of *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, said that he didn't believe that Gorbachov would tolerate "the destruction of the state and its military might."

After this first debacle for the Russian chauvinists on their propaganda tour, USIA representatives later said that the Smithsonian meeting was somewhat "unique" on this trip and that no further public meetings are planned.