

A look at Russia's new parties

by Our Wiesbaden Bureau

Just as in many of the Soviet Union's non-Russian republics, in Russia itself many new organizations, parties, and movements are springing up, all independent of the Communist Party. The Soviet newspaper *Moscow News*, in its July 1990 German-language issue, introduces some of these new parties. Of particular interest are the Democratic Party and the Russian Christian-Democratic Movement (RHDD). *Moscow News* asked one of the executive committee members of the RHDD, People's Deputy Viktor Aksyushchiz, who quit the Communist Party 11 years ago, about the aims of his movement.

Regarding his organization's principles, Aksyushchiz said: "Briefly, these are three: responsible anti-communism, Christian spirituality, and enlightened patriotism. A few words on what we understand under anti-communism: For us, every human being is the model and image of God such that even our opponents view us as brothers lost in Christ. . . .

"The current situation in the Soviet Union is a catastrophe, both materially and spiritually. We are convinced that in order to climb out of this chasm, the people must grow greater than themselves. History shows that a people only manages this when it strives for supremely high values, the highest ideals. In our view, Christian spirituality is the only thing which can save Russia. For us believers, spiritual values form the basis for all other processes, including the economic transformation of the country."

For the RHDD, "enlightened patriotism" means love of one's own people without national pride, extremism, or chauvinist aggression. Therefore, he said, his organization is completely opposed to the extremist Pamyat.

The RHDD currently has 15,000 members and its own group within the Russian parliament. Its membership is mostly concentrated in Moscow and Leningrad, where the movement is represented on the city and precinct soviets (councils). The RHDD grew out of many illegal discussion circles, Christian clubs, and groups operating under charitable covers. But even today, the Soviet regime is still attempting to use its remaining apparatus to make life difficult for the Christian Democrats. "Everything that we have, is the result of a tough fight. It was only with the greatest difficulty that we

could hold our founding congress; the KGB and the Central Committee of the Communist Party put pressure on the director of the Krasnaya Presnya Cultural Center where it was to take place. They told him not to let us in. The authorities only make concession when they are forced to do so."

The Russian Democratic Party

The Russian Democratic Party was founded in Moscow on May 27. It grew out of the Russian Democratic Bloc, which was largely under the influence of Andrei Sakharov. Leading members of the new party include the world chess champion Gary Kasparov and the People's Deputy Mikhail Tolstoy. The party's founding principles consist of a declaration of universal human rights, Andrei Sakharov's draft constitution, and the program of the Democratic Bloc. According to the party's declaration, "The RDP, acting as a mass democratic party, will contribute to the establishment of actual popular power in the republic. It will work toward cleaning out the remnants of totalitarianism, in order that it might give a new impulse to constructing a sovereign, democratic, and economically viable Russian Federation. The RDP considers it basic to its outlook, that the primacy of ideology over economy be rejected, and that it be reoriented toward the real needs of human beings."

Along with the Christian Democrats, the RDP rejects the idea of a Russia on the chauvinist model, as is espoused by Pamyat.

Elena Bonner's experience in the United States

The existence of this kernel of democratic parties in Russia is largely due to the untiring efforts of the late Andrei Sakharov and his wife Elena Bonner. Bonner recently traveled to the United States, and did not mince words when she warned Americans against being naive about Gorbachov.

She told *Moscow News* that the trip had made her very uneasy. "First, Lithuania. I was asked again and again: 'What's more important: the right of a people to self-determination, or the inviolability of borders?' It's like a powder keg which can explode at any time. . . . The Lithuanians will not let themselves be provoked. Then comes the blockade—a blatant inconsistency. Recently the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. condemned Azerbaijan's blockade of Armenia. Even though the decision was put into effect 'step by step,' as they put it nowadays, it's clear that the supreme power considers blockades to be illegal. But if that's the case, why is it legal to do it against Lithuania? Where is the 'new political thinking' with its priority on universal human values? Are the Lithuanian children sitting in their unheated kindergarten room perhaps not worth something more human from the standpoint of those who have proclaimed the new thinking?"

"Many Americans did not agree with me. In discussions they repeated one and the same argument: 'You can't obstruct Gorbachov.' "