

Did Boris Pankin have his hand in the till?

by Mark Burdman

The London *Times* on Aug. 8 published a bizarre defense of Russian Ambassador to London Boris Pankin, authored by Lord Nicholas Bethell. Bethell expressed alarm that there was a plot by "KGB and Foreign Ministry hardliners" to have Pankin removed as ambassador in the coming weeks, and replaced by Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin.

Informed Russian and British sources discounted Bethell's version of the story as "foolish." A Moscow source told *EIR* that the move to dump Pankin was coming from Russian President Boris Yeltsin himself, who in late 1993 began a public campaign against Pankin. A British Foreign Office expert suggested that Pankin himself had planted the article, using "his friend Bethell" as the channel for the story. Pankin was simply distraught about his imminent demotion. Another British source told *EIR* that Pankin was probably launching a "preemptive strike."

This latter source noted that Bethell, the great defender of "democracy" against "KGB hardliners," himself has had good KGB connections. *EIR*'s book *Derivative Assassination* (1985) documented Bethell's prominent role in the circumstances of the Oct. 31, 1984 assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and pointed to his links to the British Secret Intelligence Service and the KGB.

The Robert Maxwell connection

The Pankin controversy could have significance far beyond the issue of who is Russian ambassador to Great Britain, as important as that may be at a time when British-Russian relations are being upgraded, in anticipation of Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Russia in October. Intelligence specialists note the fact that the Pankin controversy broke less than two weeks after a July 28 German television exposé on the life and death of media magnate Robert Maxwell. That show strongly implied that Maxwell had been murdered in November 1991, as part of a coverup of communist capital flight operations out of the former Soviet Union (see last week's *EIR*). Russian television has also broadcast a show charging Maxwell's involvement in such illicit activity.

While all the facts are not yet in, what is certain is that Boris Pankin was one of Maxwell's chief contact points in the Soviet system. From 1973 to 1982, Pankin was a senior official at the Soviet copyright organization VAAP, the agency with which Maxwell worked to publish English-language biographies of top Soviet communist officials. The

close Pankin-Maxwell relationship is stressed by informed Russians, and is confirmed by British author Tom Bower, in his book *Maxwell the Outsider*, a book which Maxwell furiously attempted to prevent from being published and circulated when it was released in 1988. Some of the senior Russian intelligence sources who gave interviews to German TV had used VAAP as a cover for their intelligence activities.

The activities of the two men also overlapped in Czechoslovakia. Maxwell, of Czech origin, was always loyal to his "Czech connections," and is reliably reported to have had very high-level Czech intelligence contacts up to the day of his death. Following his position as Soviet ambassador to Sweden in the mid-1980s, Pankin became Soviet (then Russian) ambassador in Prague from late 1989 through the period immediately following the failed August 1991 Russian coup, i.e., into the period of Maxwell's death. Pankin is believed to have played an influential role among certain circles around Czech President Vaclav Havel, after that country's late-1989 "Velvet Revolution."

Maxwell and Pankin had another point of convergence, in their dirty operations against Lyndon LaRouche. As Soviet ambassador to Sweden in 1986, Pankin was instrumental in channelling the lie, concocted by East bloc intelligence services, that LaRouche was responsible for the murder of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. During 1986-87, Maxwell collaborated closely with Henry Kissinger, including in what are believed to be strategy sessions against LaRouche; he was also frantically trying to counter LaRouche's influence on the AIDS issue.

Was Boris Pankin involved in capital flight operations, of the type that the German TV broadcast and various Russians indicate that Maxwell was involved in? Is the battle over tracking down this capital flight one of the reasons for Pankin's current woes? The answers to these questions are not yet in, but informed sources say that this is a solid hypothesis. One Russian source said it were plausible that Pankin would have been using Stockholm as a base for underhanded financial operations.

All this is intricately tied to the current economic and financial crisis inside Russia. Yeltsin, who is unwilling to alter his shock therapy policy, is seeking ways to divert attention from the real causes of Russia's problems, and to refocus the population's anger against "corruption." Pankin would be an obvious individual to place in the target sights of this campaign.

One expert on Russia told *EIR*: "What Yeltsin is trying to do, is to distance himself from the corrupt agencies, by blaming others. . . . Yeltsin can survive with this game for some time, but within a year, someone will find the smoking gun tying him into the mess, and then he's finished." The storm over Maxwell is only the beginning: "All this will get very much worse in the next months. All of them over there are up to their necks in dirty money operations, they all have had their hands in the till."