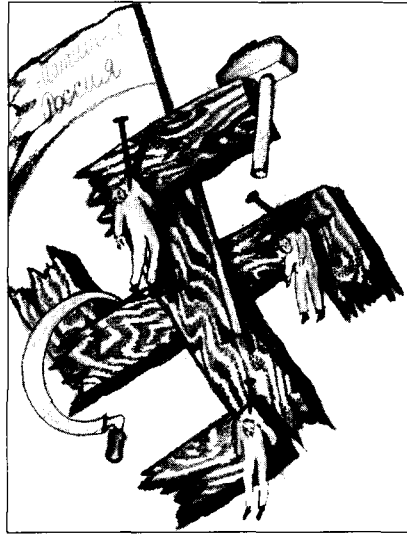


Radical Populism on the Volga

Russia's Neo-Nazi Opposition

by Wayne Allensworth



On May 8, 1995, President Boris Yeltsin addressed an auditorium filled with gray-haired war veterans, their chests bedecked with rows of ribbons and medals, and told them of the cost of victory in the Great Patriotic War. Citing new archival research, Yeltsin revealed the "terrifying figure" of 26,549,000 Soviet citizens "lost" in the war against "Hitlerite fascism." Yeltsin then closed his speech with remarks that may have seemed cryptic to some observers. "Many in Russia and beyond its borders are now wondering," he claimed, "why, half a century after the collapse of fascism, immunity to fascist and racist ideas in our society has weakened. . . . We must purge Russia of the fascist plague, completely and forever."

It may be that Westerners believed Yeltsin was referring to the bombastic Vladimir Zhirinovsky or, perhaps, to the "red-brown" neocommunist who had done so well in the December 1993 elections and who were already campaigning to expand their influence in the State Duma. But the immediate cause of Yeltsin's concern was probably something else, a relatively new, and far more radical, force whose activities had prompted the president to issue a decree early last year on combating "fascism." This force, dubbed the "new opposition" by Russian journalists, is more willing to resort to violence than the old "red-brown" opposition. Like the Zhirinovskites, the "new opposition" boasts of having no ties to the discredited communist *nomenklatura* regime, and has worked particularly hard to recruit young people. Unlike Zhirinovsky, however, they are impatient and weary of talk. Russian greatness will be restored, not by *boltuni* (windbags) in the State Duma, but by implementing what they call the "national revolution."

The "new opposition" made its conspicuous debut at the Russian White House during the September-October 1993 showdown between Yeltsin and the recalcitrant Supreme Soviet, when an organization known as Russian National Unity (RNU), under the leadership of a former electrician and karate instructor named Aleksandr Barkashov, provided what was

probably the largest (from 100-300 men) and best-armed contingent of White House defenders. The RNU fighters, accompanied by brethren warriors from the "Legion of Werewolves" (the organization's leaders were later arrested after plans for a series of terrorist attacks were uncovered), were made all the more conspicuous by the stylized swastikas that decorated their paramilitary uniforms, and by their declared aim, according to one ubiquitous Werewolf, of shooting "first the democrats and then the communists."

There was ample reason to take the young stormtrooper seriously: volunteers from Russian neo-Nazi and neofascist organizations, which appear to be growing exponentially in the ruins of postcommunist Russia (one Russian journalist claims that RNU is the fourth largest political organization in Russia), have fought in the Balkans War, mostly alongside the Serbs (some prefer the Croats, seeing them as the true torchbearers of the "Aryan" ideal), and in the many "hot spots" where civil war and insurrection have flared up in the former Soviet domain. Barkashov personally offered his services to the state at the height of the conflict in Chechnya, but the offer was not accepted. No matter. The "new opposition" continues to prepare for the day when they will seize power by organizing sympathizers to distribute the burgeoning number of neo-Nazi and neofascist newspapers, books, and videos (and finding a sympathetic helping hand in some government-run printing facilities), establishing training camps for their militant "storm detachments," targeting young people, along with military and security personnel, for recruitment, and establishing ties with trade unions and local officials in the regions.

Their message is one we have heard before: the Russian "genotype" is the purest "offshoot" of the "Aryan" race and is destined to dominate the world. For Russia to reestablish her greatness and save the "Aryans" from extinction the world over is a simple matter to be achieved through a violent seizure of power followed by the implementation of a program of eugenics that calls for the extermination of Jews, Caucasian "blacks," invalids, drunks, and imbeciles. The Russian war machine will

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gear up once more to insure economic prosperity, and an anti-crime crackdown will restore order. Like most vile racists, the neo-Nazi “national revolutionaries” deify the Russified “Aryan” race, attributing special mystical qualities to it, while hating true religion, particularly Christianity, though some celebrate ancient Russian paganism and black magic as a sort of New Age alternative, and others see an emasculated Russian Orthodoxy (so long as Christ is portrayed as an “Aryan,” and the Golden Rule applies only to other “Aryans”) as a useful instrument for a national-revolutionary regime to exploit.

One may be startled by the growth of a blatantly Nazi ideology in Russia, which provided the bulk of the Soviet human waves slaughtered in the struggle with Hitler, but Russian neo-Nazism is the legitimate child of Stalinism. When the “Great Leader and Teacher” chose “Socialism in One Country” over Trotsky’s internationalist “Permanent Revolution,” it was merely a matter of time before National Bolshevism became the prevailing ideology of what was the Soviet Russian Empire. In fact, many hopeful Russians of extreme nationalist persuasion thought that Josef Vissarionovich would eventually scrap communist ideology altogether. After all, he had brought back Russian nationalism, albeit in a new form, declared war on the Jews (Trotskyites, “cosmopolitans”), and restored the Empire. A younger generation, freed from the emotional baggage of memories of the Great Patriotic War and hungering for something to believe in, something to belong to, is not put off by the national-revolutionary variant of Stalinist national socialism.

Still, the appeal of national-revolutionary propaganda may not be its science fiction version of history, or its preoccupation with conspiracies (one national-revolutionary propagandist interpreted the selling of Herbalife products in Moscow as part of the “cosmopolitan”-Masonic plot to pollute the precious body fluids of “Aryan” Russia), but rather its honesty. Russian journalist Aleksandr Burtin, commenting on the growth of “fascist” influence in Russian trade unions, diagnosed the real danger for Russia as not so much fascists telling lies, but “fascists telling the truth.” According to Burtin, the great danger facing the chaotic mess of postcommunist Russia is that conventional politicians, satisfied with their own power and insulated from the distraught masses, will remain unresponsive to the complaints of workers who haven’t been paid in months, to old people reduced to begging, to ordinary Russians appalled by the vulgarized Westernization of their country that manifests itself in strip joints, casinos for the “Mafiosi,” and pornography, and to patriotic citizens concerned about the influence of international organizations in formulating Russian policy. Until the politicians address these issues, the field is left open to the only force that seems ready, willing, and able to do something. Indeed, as national-revolutionary luminary Eduard Limonov told Burtin, “There is no need to think that this economic reform was foisted on us by Israel or the CIA. It is profitable to those who live here . . . to those same bureaucrats who ruled you [under the Soviet regime]. They know where to steal and what to sell.” As Burtin so succinctly put it, “True fascism is an alternative to false democracy.”

That such conditions help produce a sense of apathy and resignation for some and frustrated impotence among others, and that violent action, however futile, should appear attractive to those so inclined should be no surprise. We, too, have our own extremist groups whose exaggerated conspiracy is a wildly distorted mirror image of similar frustrations

expressed by ordinary people. In fact, it appears that some members of the most extreme fringe organizations in America have found friends abroad. The *New York Times* reports that neo-Nazi and skinhead groups in Germany have benefited from manuals on building explosive devices obtained from their American counterparts. In Russia, American authors not infrequently share the insights of their racist wisdom with Russian neo-Nazis through such publications as the Radical Right Party’s journal *Ataka* (Attack), and the Russian National Union’s *Shturmovik* (Stormtrooper). The People’s Nationalist Movement publication, *Zemshchina* (Land of the Boyars), employs a New York-based correspondent, and Russian radical Vladimir Marochkin boasts of his personal friendships with American and British skinheads and neo-Nazis. If the American Aryan Nation plans the demise of Z.O.G. (the Zionist Occupational Regime), Russian “patriots” rail at V.O.R. (in Russian, the Provisional Occupational Regime, whose initials spell the word *vor*, thief).

The end of the Cold War has spawned a host of such movements, with their curious mixture of conspiratology, pseudoreligion, mass movement populism, racial “science,” and potential for violence, around the world. In Ukraine, the Ukrainian National Assembly (UNA) made its first big splash on the world stage via a July 1995 clash of its paramilitary “self-defense” units with police in Kiev. The clash was ostensibly brought on by the refusal of the authorities to allow the burial of the Ukrainian Church’s deceased patriarch at Kiev’s St. Sofia Cathedral, still officially operated under the auspices of the Moscow Patriarchate, but UNA leaders made plain their true intentions in the days following the violence in Kiev. After uniting all nationalist forces in Ukraine (mission—temporarily—accomplished), the current government, judged a Russian-sponsored “occupation” regime by the UNA, would be toppled and a “patriotic” one installed.

In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, American elites would do well to consider the Russian example and ponder the cost of leaving the truth-telling to extremists. Black racists and white radicals are right to the extent that they attack the corrosive effects of statist and globalist policies. Liberal policies have contributed to the destruction of the black family. Blacks must tackle the question of constructive self-definition. Globalism has diminished national and state sovereignty. America was and is more than an ideology. Moreover, beyond ideology and conspiratorial fantasy, the Oklahoma City tragedy may raise some questions long-forgotten by a secularized society spiritually hamstrung by consumerism and self-indulgence: Just what is it about human nature that begets cruelty and murder?

The Russian national-revolutionaries are right: we don’t need conspiracies to explain what is happening to us. Whether the Oklahoma bombing suspect (and self-styled antigovernment activist) who has been the willing recipient of generous farm subsidies; black racists who assail their people’s dependency on the state but who nevertheless support “affirmative action” programs; Russians who patronize casinos and porno films and complain about the Westernization of their country; Americans who gripe about our economic decline while watching their Japanese TVs; or lunatics who decide to exterminate innocents or blow up their own people to make a political point—whether such people know it or not, the enemy is, and always has been, us.

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The Long Hello

by J.O. Tate

"Literature is news that stays news."

—Ezra Pound

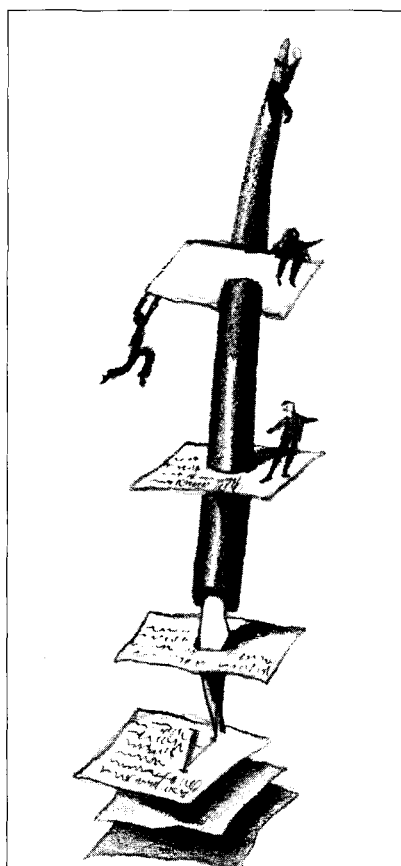
**Raymond Chandler: Stories
and Early Novels**
Edited by Frank MacShane
New York: The Library of America;
1199 pp., \$35.00

**Raymond Chandler: Later Novels
and Other Writings**
Edited by Frank MacShane
New York: The Library of America;
1076 pp., \$35.00

Seeing Raymond Chandler published in series with Edgar Allan Poe and Mark Twain and Flannery O'Connor might give us pause. But not for long, for Raymond Chandler himself told us what to say on this occasion, writing the lines for that delectable secretary, Miss Vermilyea, in Chapter 11 of *Playback* (1958), as she encounters the detective/narrator Philip Marlowe for the second time: "Well, well. Mr. Hard Guy in person. To what may we attribute this honor?" Since, as Marlowe puts it, Miss Vermilyea was quite a doll, I think we could and should specify to what we may attribute this honor.

Strictly speaking, the honor was earned in the only direct way that counts: Chandler has never been out of print and is widely read today in many languages. He is continually referred to as a standard reference, imitated ad infinitum, and is a constant presence in the mass media. All the Chandler movies are rebroadcast on cable—the ones that he wrote, the ones others did, and all the recreations and extrapolations. To say "film noir" is to conjure Chandler—"neo-noir" ditto. Without Chandler,

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the journalists would be without their catchphrases, "the mean streets," "the big sleep," "the long goodbye." Without Chandler, S.J. Perelman and Woody Allen would have had that much less to parody. Without Chandler, *Chinatown* and *Blade Runner* would have been unimaginable, Larry Gelbart could not have written *City of Angels*, and Ross Macdonald and John D. MacDonald and Robert B. Parker and Lawrence Sanders and Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton and Walter Moseley and many another would not have given up their day jobs.

Though Raymond Chandler himself saw to it that he exploited his power in the movies and on radio and television, he knew very well that his appeal rested

on a literary achievement. Since his time, critics such as Philip Durham, Jerry Speir, and William Marling have written solid works about that achievement. Chandler's letters have been published in two different editions, two of his screenplays have appeared, and his life has been the subject of a formal biography. In addition, Chandler has been the object of considerable academic attention in the form of dissertations, theses, articles, and studies. J.K. Van Dover's *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler* (1995) nicely summarizes the decades of increasing recognition. But surely the ultimate accolade has been the publication of the present elegant volumes.

Quite an honor it is. To behold and to hold these two volumes is to embrace old friends, but also to recognize that Philip Marlowe and his .38 revolver are hanging out with some highfalutin company. The hard-boiled dick is taking tea in the parlor with Emily Dickinson, and holding forth with Hawthorne and Melville and James. The news is that those treasured old paperbacks, their pulp paper disintegrating and their lurid covers fading, have been definitively republished in acid-free paper and sewn bindings to last for generations. Marlowe and his crowd—Eddie Mars and Moose Malloy, Velma Valento and Terry Lennox, Weepy Moyer and Dolores Gonzales, not to mention Miss Vermilyea—are now up there with Hester Prynne, Captain Ahab, and Christopher Newman in the Library of America, a series modeled on the French *Pléiade*. As the eponymous scarlet letter orbits with the Brasher doubloon, there is a fulfilling sense that Marlowe's creator, Raymond Chandler, had always aimed at the stars.

When Chandler began, he aimed