



WE NEED... YOUR HELP

"International support is vital and valued"
explains St Petersburg anti-fascist activist Bruno Garmson

IT IS NOT EASY being an anti-fascist in Russia at the moment. We are under constant attack from racists and fascists and we receive little or no protection from the authorities. Several of our activists have been murdered in recent years and even when the attackers are caught they often walk free with suspended sentences.

The rapid decline of Russia's fledgling democracy, marked by gross violations of human rights during the government's Chechen campaigns, the granting by parliament of unprecedented powers to the secret service, the abolition of elected executives (governors, mayors etc), the introduction of censorship and political show-trials and murders have changed the political atmosphere. This has enabled nazis and their extreme-rightist allies to stage campaigns as well as using nationalism as an alibi to commit murders, many of which go unpunished.

Outside Russia, this is not always easy to grasp.

In the heroic stories about the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 against the Nazis that flicker almost nightly on Russian television screens, it is nowadays hard to find any other motives described than "defending the motherland".

Unfortunately, there are few eyewitnesses left who can describe the genuine anti-fascist enthusiasm they felt for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War or spell out the common conviction, held during the Second World War, that the Nazis intended to enslave and exterminate Russian citizens as subhumans and

explain how, therefore, the anti-fascist struggle was above all a battle of humanity against fascist barbarism.

Today's Russian nazis use official nationalist myths about the war both as proof of Russia's superiority and as an example of how the Stalin regime misled the whole Russian people, sacrificing millions of soldiers and civilians against Hitler's anti-Bolshevik crusade to "liberate" the Russians. Ignorance about Soviet history, lack of a proper analysis of the theory and practice of fascism and the reduction of the term "anti-fascism" to mean simply a nationalistic fight against the enemies of Russia make it difficult to oppose such obvious lies.

Real anti-fascism, challenging nationalism and facing down nazism, is a risky course of action. Such "dissident" behaviour is viewed as "suspicious opposition" to the policies of President Vladimir Putin and the state. Any person displaying such behaviour is regarded as an "extremist", like the nazis. Openly opposing fascism means being targeted by the violent gangs of nazis who patrol the streets of Russia's cities looking for victims to attack in broad daylight.

Young anti-fascists have started to fight back. The courageous stance of young Russian anti-fascists against the growing street violence by nazi gangs is often the subject of court proceedings, which have proved inconsistent. The outcome of trials of nazi killers tends to depend on what charges are brought by the public prosecutors: almost always hooliganism (violently disrupting public order) or being involved in hooliganism.

There is no real pressure from the Kremlin or Duma (parliament) on public prosecutors to use hate crime charges and there is a widespread practice of negotiation between judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers to achieve cooperation in trials. Finally and crucially, there is a lack of pressure from anti-fascists who, because there is no deeply rooted democratic culture, rarely get involved with investigations or court proceedings.

Here in St Petersburg, anti-fascists have actively helped the public prosecutors as expert witnesses since the early 1990s and have run some successful campaigns. The nazis reacted by murdering Nikolai Girenko in 2004, then the most visible anti-fascist specialist supporting the public prosecutors in cases against fascists.

Now a younger generation of anti-fascists is emerging to oppose the nazis in the courts and on the streets. Their battles are essential – the alternative is capitulation – but expensive. It costs a great deal of money to participate in court proceedings even when the lawyers act *pro bono*. In the case against the murderers of Timur Kacharava, anti-fascist funding enabled his family and friends to help put away his killers.

In Russia, there are no big trade unions, labour movements or long-standing anti-racist structures with democratic anti-fascist traditions that we can turn to for help. As a result, we depend on ourselves and the anti-fascist movement internationally.

Support from our brothers, sisters, comrades and friends abroad is ever more vital and valued. ◀

Russia: the killing goes on

By Graeme Atkinson



One of the most gruesome (non-war) news stories of recent years hit the international media in mid-August. Two masked and camouflaged members of a previously unknown organisation calling itself the National Socialist Party of Russia (NSPR) had bound and gagged two men, one from Dagestan and the other from Tajikistan, in a forest and forced them to their knees beneath a large Nazi flag. Then they beheaded one and shot the other in the head.

The killers posted film of their grisly deed on the internet via other Russian fascist websites. So brutal was the imagery, which was accompanied by a heavy metal soundtrack, that at first it was thought a fake. Subsequent investigation by experts concluded that the footage was definitely genuine.

On 16 August, the Russian Interior Ministry announced the arrest of the alleged source of the video clip and said he would be charged with inciting racial enmity. Viktor Milkov, a 23-year-old student who has been posting nazi material on the web for two years, is said to be a member of the NSPR.

Whether the NSPR was invented for the occasion is not known but the ability of this self-styled "military vanguard" to circulate the film to a plethora of fascist groups indicates some degree of prior contact. A note with the film called for the resignation of President Vladimir Putin and the establishment of a government headed by Dmitri Rumyantsev, leader of the National Socialist Society. It also demanded the release of Maxim Martsinkevich, head of another nazi group called Format 18, who is being held on charges of inciting ethnic hatred and violence.

The video's appearance coincided with the terror bombing and derailment of the Moscow to St Petersburg *Neva Express* train, which injured 27 people on 14 August. Nationalist extremists are among the chief suspects and the police have questioned members of the Novgorod branch of the fascist Movement Against Illegal Immigration.

Whether there is a direct link between the execution video and the train bombing is impossible to say but what is clear is that the cold-blooded



killing is the latest in a series of murderous assaults by nazis against Russian nationals and immigrants. The main targets are people from the southern and central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, Roma, Jews, gays, lesbians, foreign students from Asia, Africa and Latin America, and increasingly human rights activists and anti-fascist campaigners. There is also a growing tendency for the perpetrators to glorify their crimes through mobile phone videos and on the internet.

Maureen Byrnes, executive director of Human Rights First, said, "Racist violence has long been a serious problem in the Russian Federation, but if the horrific acts in these videos are authentic, they mark a disturbing new escalation".

The accelerating racist and fascist violence in Russia today is a cause for concern internationally. While the Russian authorities do not compile hate crime statistics, let alone issue them, the Moscow-based SOVA Centre, Russia's leading independent monitoring body, follows and analyses the trends. The centre documents at least 31 racist murders in 2005 and hate-motivated attacks on 415 individuals. In 2006, it logged 541 cases of violent hate-based assault, including 54 murders.

The rise has continued since then. During the first seven months of this year SOVA recorded 310 violent racist attacks on individuals in which 37 people died. In Moscow alone, 24 people have been murdered and 93 injured, and in St Petersburg, five murdered and 63 injured.

Other cities have not escaped the violence. In Nizhny Novgorod, at least 34 people have been injured in recent months at the hands of the skinhead gangs that have consolidated themselves there. And foreign students have been murdered in Voronezh, a main stronghold of Russia's estimated 70,000 skinheads.

Although it is difficult to assess the exact scale of racist and fascist violence as most attacks go unreported, the SOVA Centre has spotted another worrying phenomenon. Violence against young anti-fascists, alternative youth subcultures and progressive campaigns increased so drastically in spring and summer this year that it can only be the result of a conscious decision by Russia's fascists to wage war on those most likely to resist.

In the early morning of 21 July, for example, a mob of nazi skinheads launched a vicious unprovoked attack on an anti-nuclear protest camp in Angarsk, Siberia. The nazis violently attacked activists in their sleeping bags and tents with iron rods, knives and air guns. One of the campers, 21-year-old

Ilya Borodaenko, suffered a head wound and later died in hospital. At least nine others, one of whom had both legs broken, were seriously injured. This attack followed one a few days earlier by a squad of 20 nazis on a group of youngsters providing food for the homeless in Novosibirsk, resulting in serious injuries to a 13-year-old boy who happened to be walking by. The "Food not Bombs" activities organised by anti-fascists and anarchists are often a focal point for nazi violence.

In Moscow and St Petersburg, it is increasingly dangerous for young people to display anti-fascist emblems because such symbols immediately put them in the sights of the enemy.

Most fascist violence goes unopposed and unreported. The response of the Russian authorities has been weak and largely ineffective because criminal justice officials and prosecutors only pursue a minority of cases. Even when they act, they only lay charges of hooliganism instead of prosecuting under Article 282 of the Criminal Code, which covers hate crimes. The anti-fascist movement, meanwhile, is courageous but heavily outnumbered.

Rachel Denber, deputy director of the Europe and Central Asia division of Human Rights Watch, says that labelling violent hate crimes as "hooliganism" conceals their existence and makes them hard to track. It also leads to soft sentencing in the courts.

At the beginning of August, Alexander Barkashov, founder of the outlawed nazi Russian National Unity, was handed a two-year suspended sentence for leading a ferocious attack on a police officer in 2005. Barkashov and three of his fellow nazis had battered their victim with shovels after they found him filming Barkashov's house. Although a Moscow region prosecutor demanded a four-year custodial sentence, Barkashov walked free from the court. Barkashov, who makes no effort to hide his flagrant nazism and was clearly motivated by deep-seated hatred, was mainly charged with "hooliganism", of which he was acquitted.

The justice system's lack of consistency was revealed again in August when a St Petersburg court sentenced Andrei Shabalin to 12 years in prison for stabbing the anti-fascist activist Timur Kacharava to death and attempting to murder Maxim Zgibai in a mob attack in 2005. Shabalin and six other men were found guilty of "hooliganism" and inciting racial hatred. Three were given two-year jail sentences and the remainder received suspended terms. The leniency of the sentences given to Shabalin's homicidal accomplices left Kacharava's mother and friends bewildered.

Russia's fascists

Skinheads: The major force behind hate crimes in Russia. Numbers are estimated at 70,000.

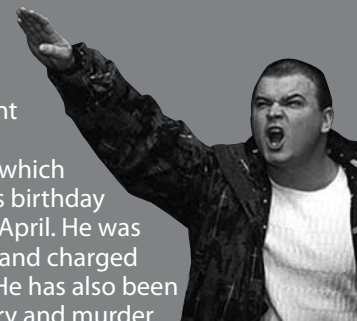
DPNI: The Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI), denigrates minorities through its website and publications. Founded in July 2002, its 5,000 members are led by Aleksandr Belov (pictured) a former member of the ultra-nationalist Pamyat. It was active in the September 2006 anti-Caucasian rioting in Kondopoga and set up an armed militia in June 2007.



Slavic Union: A split-off from the banned nazi Russian National Unity, the Slavic Union is led by Dmitri Demushkin. It boasts of having 5,000 members in the Moscow area alone.

Format 18:

Maxim "Hatchet" Martsinkevich (pictured), a violent thug, leads this bonehead group which celebrated Hitler's birthday in Moscow on 21 April. He was arrested last year and charged with incitement. He has also been accused of robbery and murder.



National Socialist Society (NSO):

Led by Dmitri Rumyantsev, the NSO incites violence and hatred. It claims Russian racial superiority and was formerly linked with the DPNI. The National Socialist Party claims to be the NSO's armed wing.

People's Will: Created in December 2001 and led by the veteran Russian nationalist Sergei Baburin (pictured), it united in March 2007 with 13 small nationalist, Orthodox Christian and conservative organisations and was renamed People's Union.



Putin and his government are well aware of the extent of hate crime in Russia. Putin has spoken out publicly about it on numerous occasions and called for "extremism to be stamped out".

As yet there is little evidence of any state crackdown against extreme right-wing violence even if there has been the occasional refusal to grant fascist organisations official registration and some minor moves against publication and distribution of hate propaganda. The underlying problems of deep racism, antisemitism and other hate prejudices are not being addressed. It is this failure that is fuelling the unrestrained violence of the fascists. ◀

Antifa-Net International Appeal

SOLIDARITY WITH ANTI-FASCISTS IN RUSSIA

Murdered
by nazis:
Professor
Nikolai
Girenko



ANTI-FASCISTS ARE UNDER attack in Russia. Intimidation, terror and murder by a new generation of neo-nazis are daily occurrences. The wave of violence reached a peak this summer when film of the cold-blooded fascist assassination of two people was posted on the internet.

That this is occurring in a country that lost many millions of people to Hitler's Nazis in the Second World War is even more shocking.

The facts speak for themselves.

- 122 people have been murdered by racists and fascists in the past two and a half years.
- There are an estimated 70,000 skinheads in Russia today.
- Anti-fascists are being systematically attacked and even murdered.
- The perpetrators are often charged only with "hooliganism".

President Putin has promised to stamp out rightwing extremism but has done little. Anti-fascists are not only few in number but are politically isolated in the face of an enemy that whips up hatred and brutality against immigrants and national, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. Merely "looking anti-fascist" means being targeted by the nazis who patrol parts of most Russian cities looking for victims. In St Petersburg and Moscow, nazis gather intelligence to track down anti-fascists, and attack and, in some cases murder them.

Earlier anti-fascist campaigns against the public use of fascist symbols and the sale of racist propaganda achieved some success but the nazis reacted by murdering Professor Nikolai Girenko, one of the most highprofile anti-fascist specialists who had supported these campaigns, at his St Petersburg home.

The authorities talk proudly of the war against Hitler but do so now from a nationalist standpoint. The nazis claim to be defending "Russian identity" and "the interests of the Russian nation" and the toleration of violent nazi gangs stems from the fact that Russian nationalism is touted, even officially, as a remedy for the continuing feelings of defeat resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Anti-fascists in Russia now desperately need financial and material assistance but cannot generate this themselves. With funds, they can produce leaflets, organise campaigns and pay for lawyers. They can also build up a more organised, modern, computer-linked infrastructure to create proper networks of resistance.

This can only come about through the international solidarity of progressive people, and all anti-fascists and anti-racists outside Russia.



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Antifa-Net – The International Antifascist Network for Research and Action was founded in January 2004. It has member groups in Germany, The Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Denmark, France, Sweden, Poland, Russia and the USA. Searchlight is its British representative.