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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date August 5, 1988
to Area Directors
from Rabbi James Rudin
subject "The Last Temptation of Christ"

This memo is intended to help clarify the AJC response to the growing controversy surrounding the Universal film, "The Last Temptation of Christ" that is directed by Martin Scorsese. "Temptation" is currently scheduled to be released next Friday, August 12th.

It is a "two track" issue. First, there is the question of the film's artistic and/or spiritual message, and its possible impact upon the Christian community. The movie has been widely criticized by many Christian leaders, especially Protestant fundamentalists (most of whom have not seen the film, just as I have not).

However, following a New York City screening last month, Episcopal Bishop Paul Moore and several other Christian leaders found positive value in "Temptation", and Scorsese, a Roman Catholic who once studied for the priesthood, sees his film as an act of "worship". Other Christians find the movie offensive, blasphemous, and insulting to traditional Christian belief. It is, and should remain, an internal Christian debate.

But still on the "first track", the AJC should not join in attempts to censor the film, prevent release, or participate in any form of "prior restraint." Such actions run counter to long standing AJC policy positions. "Temptation" must succeed or fail on its own merits similar to any other film, novel, play or TV show.

While we keenly understand the deep pain and anger of various Christian leaders and Church bodies, it is important to bear in mind that the U.S. Supreme Court has held that "there is no basis upon which 'blasphemy' can be forbidden in speech or other forms of expression."

It is, of course, the "second track", the injection of anti-Semitism into the controversy, that is most disturbing, Christian leaders like the Rev. R.L. Hymers, jr. of Los Angeles has charged that "Universal Studios is Jewish controlled," and Rev. Donald Wildmon, the Director of the American Family Association wrote in USA Today, "Only when it becomes unprofitable will Hollywood stop crucifying our Lord."

In Sarasota, Florida, a group called "The Local Wisdom" believes the Jewish community must exert its influence on Universal, which is "owned by Jews" to block the film's release. Similar anti-Semitic reactions have been reported in Cleveland, Indianapolis and Dayton.

Ira Silverman's July 21st statement makes clear that the AJC must continue to condemn the gratuitous exploitation of anti-Semitism. We strongly urge you to enlist the Christian leadership in your community to publicly condemn the presence and use of anti-Semitism in this controversy. The condemnation of anti-Semitism by Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Mahony should be cited as a positive example for others to follow.

We have enclosed only a small portion of the articles and comments that the controversy has produced. The Los Angeles AJC office has been most helpful in monitoring the fast moving "Temptation" events. This is an issue that will probably escalate in intensity.

Please direct any question to the Interreligious Affairs Departments, and we are eager to learn what positive actions and programs are being undertaken in your community.

Many thanks and warm regards.

Jim Rudin

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

AJR:smm
Enclosures



JULY 16, 1988

Conservative Christians Protesting Film Depicting Jesus' 'Temptation'

By Gustav Niebuhr
Religion Writer

A Hollywood movie that depicts Jesus Christ having sexual intercourse is provoking a wave of outraged protests from conservative Christian groups throughout the nation.

"It's probably the most blatant blasphemy yet for Hollywood," said the Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority. "You know, they have Christ having sex with Mary Magdalene."

The movie, "The Last Temptation of Christ," is due to be released by Universal Studios Sept. 23. Directed by Martin Scorsese, the movie is a fictionalized account of Christ's life, based on the novel by the Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis, who is perhaps best remembered for his novel "Zorba the Greek."

Mainline religious leaders who have viewed the movie say it did not strike them as blasphemous, noting that the scene in question is a dream sequence portraying pleasures that Jesus ultimately rejects.

Falwell said he has not seen the film. But he charged that, if released, "The Last Temptation" would "create a wave of anti-Semitism in this country," because many Christians would regard the movie an insult to their faith and would blame Universal's "Jewish leaders" for it. Falwell added that he personally does not blame Jews for the movie.

Universal is a subsidiary of MCA Inc., whose chairman is Lew Wasserman, a Hollywood veteran with 50 years experience in moviemaking.

Asked for comment on Falwell's statement, Rabbi James Rudin, interreligious affairs director at the American Jewish Committee in New York, said: "I think it's totally extraneous. I know Universal Studios is a publicly owned corporation. It's not a 'Jewish' company... Those kind of statements can only foment anti-Semitism."

Rumors about the movie began to spread among conservative Atlanta churches this week. Pastors have begun encouraging their congregations to phone or write Universal to

demand the movie be permanently shelved.

None of the pastors interviewed had seen the movie. Their reaction was based on word-of-mouth reports and on several lines of dialogue culled from a version of the movie's script, now circulating among Atlanta churches. The scene portrays a dream sequence, a vision Christ has while dying on the cross, in which he makes love to Mary Magdalene; they are interrupted by an angel, whom Jesus then invites to stay and watch.

The script circulating among conservative Christians in Atlanta has Jesus telling Mary Magdalene, "God sleeps between your legs." That line was cited by Stanley as being particularly odious.

"This is just blasphemous against holy God," declared the Rev. Charles Stanley, pastor of the 11,000-member First Baptist Church of Atlanta. "I'm encouraging people to call and write and to express their strong displeasure. I think the Christians need to stand up."

To make it easier for people to protest, Rehoboth Baptist Church in Tucker purchased a large display ad in Saturday's editions of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, featuring a clip-out petition against the film. "If you will sign the petition and return it to us through the mail, we will personally see to it that it is delivered to Mr. Tom Pollock, president of Universal Studios," writes the Rev. Richard Lee, the church's pastor, in the ad.

Universal has readied a response to the criticism, blaming "fundamentalist leaders," who "declined an invitation to see the film and consequently much of what they are saying is inaccurate and exaggerated."

Accusing the movie's opponents of promoting censorship, Universal added, "The filmmaker deeply believes that this film is a religious af-

firmation of faith."

Reaction to the movie has been more muted among a handful of mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic representatives who accepted an invitation by Universal to attend a private screening of the film earlier this week in New York.

"To begin with, the movie is based on fiction, it's a novel, it's not based on the New Testament, and they made that very clear in the credits at the beginning of the movies," said the Rev. Eugene Schneider, deputy director of the office of communications for the United Church of Christ, who attended the screening.

On the other hand, Schneider said, the lovemaking scene, although cloaked in shadows, might be offensive to some Christians. "That is the thing that's going to drive the conservative people up the wall," he said. "But it's a dream sequence and it certainly didn't shake my faith."

The script circulating among conservative Christians in Atlanta has Jesus telling Mary Magdalene, "God sleeps between your legs." That line was cited by Stanley as being particularly odious.

Schneider said he did not recall it in the version of the movie he saw, but he acknowledged that the script may have been changed or the movie cut.

Another person who saw the movie at its New York screening, the Rev. David Pomeroy, said that conservative Christians may be taking the controversial dream sequence out of context.

"For me, the central point to be made... is that the temptation referred to in the title is that Christ is offered the option of coming down from the cross and not completing the pain of the sacrifice," said Pomeroy, director of media resources at the National Council of Churches.

"At the very end of the film, he rejects that temptation, he repudiates it. He in fact recognizes that he needs to accept this sacrificial act on behalf of all humanity."

The author of more than 30 books of fiction, poetry and philosophy, Kazantzakis died in 1957.

STATEMENT OF RABBI A. JAMES RUDIN
NATIONAL INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

JULY 28, 1988

I am personally outraged and angered by the recent demonstrations and statements that gratuitously link "the Jews" or "Jewish leaders" to the film, "The Last Temptation of Christ." This blatant use of anti-Semitism is especially reprehensible since it undermines many of the hard won gains that have been achieved in building positive relations between Christians and Jews.

As part of this anti-Semitic campaign, one group in California has demanded that "The Christian community must stand up for Christ! They didn't have the opportunity when he was attacked by Jews two-thousand years ago, but they have the chance to defend him now in 1988."

Such actions on the part of a small group of Christian leaders foment anti-Semitism.

This is not a time to remain silent and these ugly calls to religious bigotry must be publicly opposed by men and women of good will throughout America.



NEWS FROM THE Committee



The American Jewish
Committee

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The American Jewish Committee protects the rights and freedoms of Jews the world over; combats bigotry and anti-Semitism and promotes human rights for all; works for the security of Israel and deepened understanding between Americans and Israelis; defends democratic values and seeks their realization in American public policy; and enhances the creative vitality of the Jewish people. Founded in 1906, it is the pioneer human-relations agency in the U.S.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, July 22.... The following statement was issued today by Ira Silverman, Executive Vice President of the American Jewish Committee:

"The American Jewish Committee deplores the recent demonstrations and statements gratuitously linking Jews to the film, 'The Last Temptation of Christ,' and suggesting that the release of the film would stir up anti-Semitism. The implications of these actions -- which include demonstrations directed at the film's producer, and remarks by the Rev. Jerry Falwell, the Rev. Robert L. Hymers, and others -- are dangerous and offensive, and completely extraneous to the film.

"Universal Pictures, which produced the film, is a publicly owned company and to indicate 'Jewish' involvement in the film is nonsense. The actors, directors, writers, and others who contributed to the film are of many faiths, and the film is a product of their work, not of any religious group.

"If any groups feel the film is offensive, that is their right -- although we understand that many of those who have attacked the film have not seen it. But it is not their right to make unwarranted and prejudicial attacks on any religious group -- whether the Jews, or, as some have phrased it, 'non-Christians.'

"Actions like these can wound the good relations between Christians and Jews that have been built in this country, and we are gratified that many highly respected Christian leaders have joined in condemning them."

AJRZ, CP

88-960-125

Film on Christ Brings Out Pickets, And Archbishop Predicts Censure

By ALJEAN HARMETZ

Special to The New York Times

HOLLYWOOD, July 20 — Fundamentalist Christians opposing "The Last Temptation of Christ" today picketed the home of the chairman of the company that made the film, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles said the church would probably label the film "morally offensive."

The picketing was at the Beverly Hills home of Lew Wasserman, the head of MCA, which owns Universal Pictures, the maker of the film.

In a statement issued today, Archbishop Roger M. Mahoney criticized what he termed the "anti-Semitic implications" in the attacks being made on the film by Protestant fundamentalists. The movie depicts Jesus as beset by human temptations and struggling against His fate as the Son of God. Although Martin Scorsese, the director of "The Last Temptation of Christ," is Roman Catholic, the top executives of Universal Pictures are Jewish. The film is based on a novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, who was Greek Orthodox, and the screenplay was written by Paul Schrader, who grew up in the Dutch Reform Church.

Archbishop Mahoney praised Mr. Wasserman, saying he was confident that Mr. Wasserman "would not allow any film to be released through his studios which would be offensive to a large segment of the American filmgoing public." The Archbishop and Mr. Wasserman became friends last year when Mr. Wasserman helped plan the visit of Pope John Paul II to Los Angeles.

One Picket Portrays Jesus

The Archbishop said he had not seen the movie but it had been viewed by two officials of the United States Catholic Conference's department of communications. The Archbishop's statement said, "The initial indication from the U.S.C.C. is that the film will be given an O classification, meaning that it is morally offensive for everyone and should be avoided." The Archbishop, speaking about the protests by Protestants, said: "I strongly oppose the anti-Semitic implications that a few voices have raised in this matter, and I am hopeful that our excellent Jewish-Christian relationship will help diminish any suggestion that this film was produced to be anti-Christian."

This summer, "Bull Durham" and



Steven Ostrom portraying a movie producer, and Ivan Klein portraying Christ during a demonstration outside Mr. Wasserman's home in Beverly Hills, Calif. The protesters are opposed to MCA's planned release of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ."

"Red Heat" were given O ratings by the conference.

Mr. Wasserman's house was picketed this morning by a dozen members of the fundamentalist Baptist Tabernacle of Los Angeles, which is led by the Rev. R. L. Hymers Jr.

One of the pickets portrayed Jesus kneeling at the foot of a wooden cross, while another, dressed in a business suit, is supposed to represent a movie producer, carried a lash.

The statement also said the release of the movie "will throw gasoline on the fires of racial bigotry." Over the weekend a larger group from the church picketed Universal studios.

In a letter sent to Mr. Wasserman last Friday, the Rev. Bill Bright, president of the Campus Crusade for Christ, offered to buy the movie to destroy it. Universal has turned down his offer in a full-page advertisement Thursday in the New York Times (page A15), The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post and The Atlanta Constitution.

The advertisement says in part: "Though those in power may justify the burning of books at the time, the witness of history teaches the importance of standing up for freedom of conscience, even when the view being expressed may be unpopular ... Many religious leaders of different denominations who attended our July 12 screenings in New York, which you declined to attend, were not offended by the film."

The Rev. Charles Bergstrom, a Lutheran who attended the screening, said the film was "much more accu-

rate than some Christian films I've seen." Mr. Bergstrom, who said he is an "evangelical born-again Christian," said, "There is an explicit scene where Christ's marriage to Mary Magdalene is consummated, but that is obviously a dream scene and Christ makes the decision to die on the Cross."

Statement by Falwell

The Rev. Donald Wildmon, a Baptist from Tupelo, Miss., who has threatened a boycott of theaters showing the movie, sent out a half-million fliers last week that called Universal "a company whose decision-making body is dominated by non-Christians." The Rev. Jerry Falwell, the founder of the Moral Majority, also criticized the film, which he has not seen, in an interview in The Atlanta Constitution. He said it would "create a wave of anti-Semitism."

Rabbi James Rudin, the director of Christian-Jewish relations at the American Jewish Committee, said of Mr. Falwell today: "This is the kind of irresponsible, outrageous activity that foments anti-Semitism. Reverend Falwell never mentioned that Martin Scorsese is a Roman Catholic who studied for the priesthood. They have the right to criticize the film, particularly if they've seen it. But they don't have the right to inflame anti-Semitism."

"The Last Temptation of Christ" stars Willem Dafoe as Jesus, Harvey Keitel as Judas and Barbara Hershey as Mary Magdalene. The movie is set for release in September.

Church Likely to Condemn 'Temptation,' Mahony Says

By JOHN DART, Times Religion Writer

Los Angeles Archbishop Roger M. Mahony entered the controversy over planned release of the motion picture "The Last Temptation of Christ" by saying Tuesday that the "initial indication" is that the Roman Catholic Church will declare the film "morally offensive."

Mahony said he has not seen the movie and that he will not advise local Catholics on it until the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communications issues a full review. Two members of the department saw a nearly finished version of the film last week in New York and Mahony said early suggestions are that the department will give the movie an "O" classification. That would classify the film as "morally offensive to everyone and should be avoided," according to

the archdiocese.

"That would hardly be a compliment to the makers of this film, which purports to portray a segment in the life of Jesus Christ, the son of God," Mahony said.

In the same statement, Mahony pointedly praised Lew Wasserman, chairman of MCA Inc., parent company of Universal Pictures, which is scheduled to release the film this fall. He also objected strongly to what he termed "anti-Semitic implications" in protests by fundamentalist Christians against the film and slurs against Wasserman.

Many evangelical ministers and TV evangelists have objected to scenes in the film with sexual content and an alleged portrayal of Jesus as a "wimp." The movie is based on a 1955 novel by Nobel Prize-winning Greek author Nikos

Kazantzakis.

Mahony, who said he has been in personal contact with Wasserman for several weeks about the proposed release of the movie, stated, "I am confident that he would not allow any film to be released through his studios which would be offensive to a large segment of the American film-going public."

Their personal relationship, the archbishop said, "will be an important dimension of his decision-making in this matter."

Mahony called the executive a "man of the highest integrity." He expressed hope that Wasserman's role in hosting an event for Pope John Paul II during the pontiff's visit last September "would diminish any suggestion that this film was produced to be anti-Christian."

Mahony apparently referred to a

demonstration Saturday at Universal led by the Rev. R. L. Hymers Jr., a Los Angeles fundamentalist who once conducted prayers for the death of a liberal U.S. Supreme Court justice. Hymers was quoted as saying, "These Jewish producers with a lot of money are taking a swipe at our religion." A plane pulling a banner, "Wasserman Fans Jew-Hatred W/Temptation," flew over the demonstration site Saturday.

Hymers has said in a press release that the same plane will fly over Wasserman's Beverly Hills home today during another protest in which a demonstrator dressed as a movie producer will be seen lashing "the Christ figure."

Wasserman is Jewish, as is Sidney Sheinberg, president of MCA, and Tom Pollock, president of

Universal Pictures.

Neil Sandberg, an American Jewish Committee executive in Los Angeles, said Tuesday that remarks such as those of Hymers are outrageous and misplaced. "The man who made the movie (Catholic-raised Scorsese) is not Jewish and the decision of Universal to release the movie would be considered a corporate judgment," Sandberg said in an interview.

Hymers is suggesting that release of the film could create an anti-Semitic backlash. The Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, has been quoted as making a similar remark. Sandberg said such speculation itself foments anti-Semitism. He said the American Jewish Committee recently criticized Falwell's reported remarks.

Related story in Calendar.



Roger M. Mahony

JULY, 1988 LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

HOLLYWOOD JEWS DEFAME JESUS CHRIST

The next time the Jewish Anti-Defamation League wants to do a study on the reasons for the rise of Anti-Semitism in America, let them start by interviewing Lew Wasserman at MCA/UNIVERSAL.

Lew Wasserman, Sidney Sheinberg and Thomas Pollock, three Jews at MCA/UNIVERSAL, will spend over \$10 million dollars to produce and distribute an Anti-Christian film, THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST, which slanders and defames Jesus Christ.

These Jews control MCA/UNIVERSAL, they have made this decision, and are responsible for this Jewish provocative attack on Christians. In the past they have shelved many undesirable films, but now are determined to promote and distribute this deranged characterization of Christ. In defending their choice, they appeal to "the fundamental freedoms of religion and expression promised to all Americans under our Constitution", in a paid advertisement published on July 21, 1988 in the NEW YORK TIMES, LOS ANGELES TIMES, the WASHINGTON POST, the ATLANTA CONSTITUTION, the HOLLYWOOD REPORTER, and the DAILY VARIETY.

Would they appeal to the same principles if this film was about Abraham, The Schizophrenic of the Desert, who upon hearing voices in the midst of a psychotic experience, attempts to murder his son Isaac?

How would they like to see Abraham, the father of the Jewish Tribes, depicted as an insane fanatic, whose madness is guaranteed to be transmitted to all future Jews by defining Jews as only those who have a Jewish Mother through which Abraham's insanity has been genetically transferred? Would they then proudly stand "up for freedom of conscience when the view being expressed may be unpopular"?

Would MCA/UNIVERSAL spend \$10 million to produce and distribute such a film about Abraham, and then justify it by appealing to "the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religious expression"?

How would the Jewish Anti-Defamation League respond to this outrageous defamation of Abraham, the founder of their religion, if he were characterized as a psychotic would-be child murderer?

Are Anti-Christian Defamations considered to be morally acceptable by the Jewish Community, while only Anti-Semitic Defamations are held to be morally reprehensible?

What does Kitty Dukakis, the Jewish wife of Democratic Candidate Michael Dukakis, think of this effort to slander and defame Christ, by characterizing him as a deranged misfit who lusts after Mary Magdalene? Will Kitty and Michael Dukakis speak out against this Anti-Christian slander?

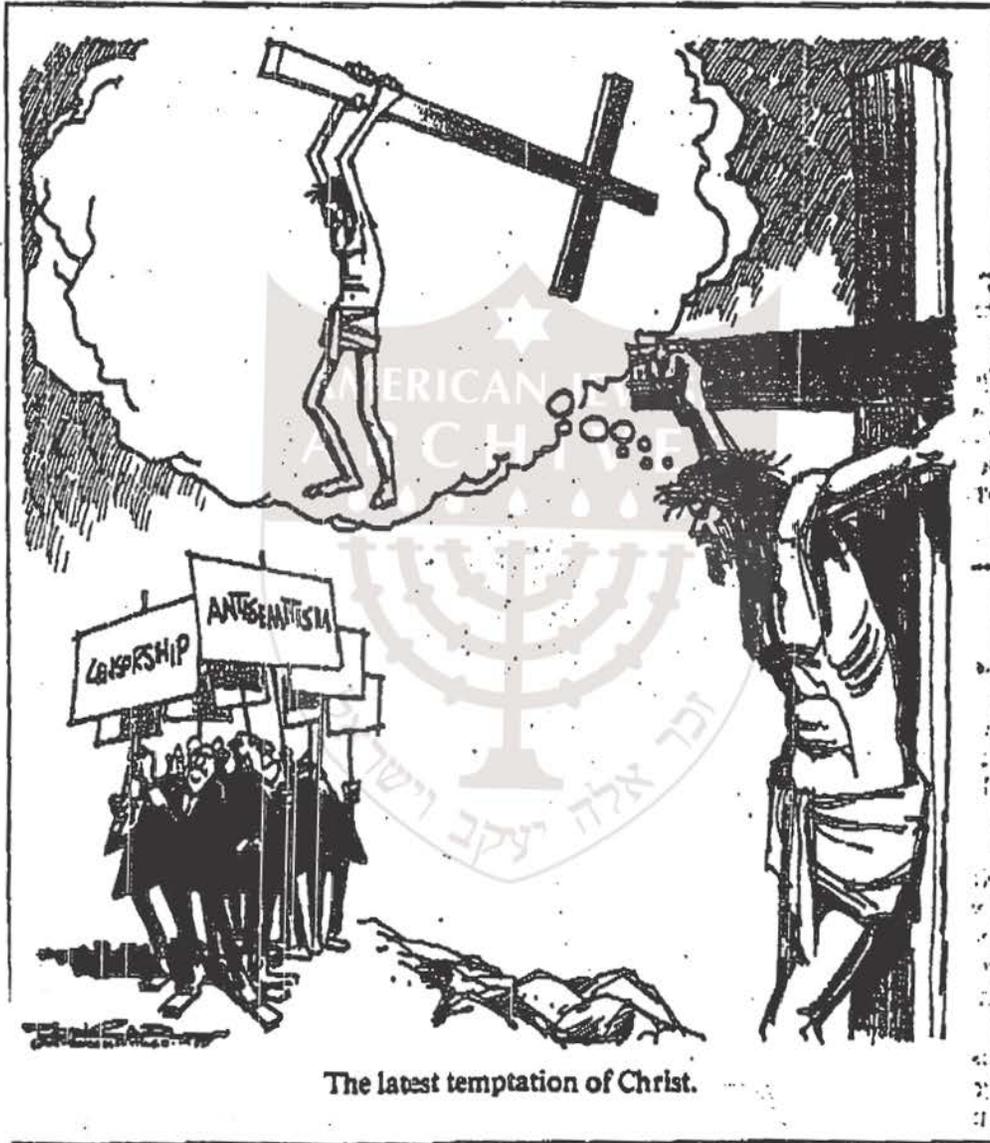
What do the Black Christians think of this Jewish effort to defame Christ? Will Blacks really want to vote for Michael Dukakis knowing that his wife supports the slanders of the Jews at MCA/UNIVERSAL?

In response to this Jewish Provocation, Christians should boycott MCA/UNIVERSAL FILMS, CINEPLEX ODEON THEATERS, and THE UNIVERSAL STUDIO TOURS, both in Los Angeles and Orlando, Florida.

Christians should also initiate a CRUSADE FOR CHRIST to purchase the stock of MCA/UNIVERSAL and then remove the Jews from this organization, since they seek to use MCA/UNIVERSAL's billion dollar resources to defame Jesus Christ. They could then recoup their stock costs by selling off the MCA Entertainment Assets to a company like DISNEY and the Real Estate Assets to some Japanese Investment Corporation.

The Christian Community must stand up for Christ! They didn't have the opportunity when he was attacked by Jews two-thousand years ago, but they have the chance to defend now him in 1988.

CHRISTIAN ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE



The latest temptation of Christ.

VIEWPOINT B

HERITAGE

Editorials

Threat is serious

Let no one underestimate the danger to American Jews inherent in the furor surrounding the film, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (see front page story).

I say that as one who has always loathed our professional patriots and fundraisers, who foresee the coming of the next Holocaust in every piece of graffiti scrawled by an idiot youth.

This time the threat is serious, perhaps as serious as any the community has faced since the blatant anti-Semitism in this country of the '30s and '40s. For the

first time since World War II, a large, influential, media-wise group of Protestant evangelicals and fundamentalists are stirring the always-glowing embers of Jew hatred evoked by the cry of "Christ killer."

Now a new pitch has been added to the millennia-old appeal to the rabble. As Rabbi James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee told HERITAGE, the old demon of the Jew as Christ killer has been combined with the new myth of the Jew as bestriding all American media. "The myths of the First Century and of the 20th Century have now been combined into a new demonology," Rudin warned.

The flames fanned by a few fundamentalists can easily explode into a blaze, feeding on the dry rot of religious anti-Semitism.

The Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress and National Conference of Christians and Jews already have recognized the seriousness of the situation.

We must now demand of them and all our leaders that they work rationally and intensively, within the community and with our true Christian friends (and there are many), to meet the threat.

At the same time, we must implore those in our community who might be inclined to exploit our legitimate fears to whip up hysteria or up their fundraising goals to desist. This is not the time for games. This is the time for cool heads and firm determination.

— Tom Tugend

The Test of 'The Last Temptation'

Universal Pictures is right in resisting moves to suppress its forthcoming motion picture, "The Last Temptation of Christ." As the studio said, bowing to pressure of this sort "would threaten the fundamental freedoms of religion and expression promised to all Americans under our Constitution."

There is no doubt that the film is controversial. Some religious representatives who have seen it in private showings have expressed grave reservations. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has under consideration a proposal to classify the film as "morally offensive to everyone and should be avoided." Such opprobrium is not unusual, especially when religious matters are the issue, and critics have every right to express their views and to urge those who share their views to stay away.

Some religious leaders have not been content with expressing their opposition to this film. However, Bill Bright, founder and president of the Campus Crusade for Christ, has offered the film's producers payment of all their costs to kill it.

Others have threatened economic coercion intended to suppress the film. Such actions breach the constitutional guarantees of free expression.

To make matters worse, some of the Christian religious figures, who say that they are offended

L.A. TIMES

by the film, have introduced anti-Semitism into the controversy. One minister has been quoted as saying that "Jewish producers with a lot of money are taking a swipe at our religion." While demonstrators gathered at the Universal studios, a plane flew overhead with a banner asserting that Lew Wasserman, head of MCA, Universal's parent corporation, had incited "Jew hatred" by producing the film. That is grossly unacceptable behavior. It is they, not Wasserman, who have incited religious prejudice. There is not a shred of evidence that the film represents an attack by members of one religion on members of another. The film is based on a book by Nikos Kazantzakis and was directed by Martin Scorsese, who was raised in the Catholic tradition. To introduce the religious affiliation of some of the executives of MCA and Universal into the dispute is malicious, reprehensible and noxious.

In the American tradition the public, by what it reads and views, decides what ideas prevail. That extraordinary freedom can shelter abuses and excesses. But the sum of the experience leaves no doubt about the wisdom of those who drafted these guarantees and their confidence in the value of an open competition of ideas. There is no good reason to fear that test.

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he Stage

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A passion play in Beverly Hills

Fundamentalists target Jews in protest over film on Jesus

By Tom Tugend

The scene was pure street theater, and although the backdrop was Beverly Hills, the undertones were those of a medieval passion play.

On a corner of Sunset Boulevard, lined with tall palm trees, an actor named Ivan Klein, robed and coiffured like Jesus Christ, had collapsed under the weight of a full-sized cross. Another actor, swinging a lash and made up to resemble one of Hollywood's most powerful Jewish tycoons, contemptuously placed a foot on the back of the prostrate cross bearer while blood dripping from his hand smeared the robes of "Jesus."

The tycoon character wore a sign around his neck which read "Wasserman Fans Anti-Semitism," while a dozen other participants held placards with the message, "Wasserman Endangers Israel." Overhead, a light plane was pulling a banner proclaiming "Wasserman Fans Jew Hatred w/ 'Temptation'."

Across the street, a handful of Jewish militants was heckling the demonstrators, and half a dozen television cameras were recording the event for the evening news.

The little drama was played out a few yards from the stately home of the intended target, Lew Wasserman, chairman of MCA, Inc., the parent company of Universal Pictures.

Universal Pictures has announced that it plans to release this fall the movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, based on the 1955 novel of the same name by the late Greek writer, Nikos Kazantzakis (who also wrote *Zorba the Greek*).

The announcement has been greeted by a storm of protests by Protestant evangelicals and fundamentalists, who claim that the film blasphemes Jesus by portraying him as a troubled and vacillating "wimp." Worse, they say, a dream sequence shows Jesus making love to Mary Magdalene and having children by sisters Mary and Martha.

None of the fundamentalist critics has actually seen the film, having boycotted a preview screening for Christian clergymen, but what they have read in an early script for "Temptation" has been enough to fuel their fury.

"In what has to be the moral equivalent of the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor, the biggest film studio in America, Universal Studios, launched a surprise attack not only on believers in Jesus Christ but on our lord," evangelical Larry Poland wrote in a widely distributed "fact sheet."

"These Jewish producers with a lot of money are taking a swipe at our religion," charged the Rev. Robert L. Hymers, who led the demonstration in front of Wasserman's home. (Another protest, organized by a Christian radio station, drew 800 pickets to Universal Studios.)

Hymers, a Baptist clergyman, was last in the news two years ago, when he conducted prayers calling for the death of a liberal U.S. Supreme Court justice.

America's best-known fundamentalist,

'These Jewish producers with a lot of money are taking a swipe at our religion.'

— Rev. Robert L. Hymers

the Rev. Jerry Falwell, described "Temptation" as "probably the most blatant blasphemy yet for Hollywood." He predicted that, if released, the movie would create a wave of anti-Semitism because many Christians would blame Universal's "Jewish leaders" for it. Falwell added piously that he, personally, does not blame the Jews for the movie.



Actor, in suit, portrays Universal Pictures chairman Lew Wasserman, with hands dripping with "blood," as fundamentalist Christians protest film, *Last Temptation of Christ*, at Wasserman's Beverly Hills home. Pastor R. L. Hymers Jr. is at right. RNS photo

What gives these attacks a sharp anti-Semitic slant, rarely exposed to the public since World War II, is that the full focus of the fulminations has been on the Jewish "moneymen" of Universal, the company which financed the movie in part, but whose main role is to distribute and promote the finished product.

Noticeable by their absence are similar denunciations of Martin Scorsese, the film's director, who—legally—still owns "Temptation" and has invested a 15-year effort to bring it to the screen. Scorsese, a Roman Catholic, once studied for the priesthood, and has said that the picture will be "an affirmation of faith" for the Christian community.

The screenplay was written by Paul Schrader, who grew up in the Dutch Reform Church, and the novel's author was a member of the Greek Orthodox church.

Universal Pictures, whose president, Tom Pollock, is Jewish, seemed initially to have been stunned by the fury and direction of the attack, with spokesmen dealing out "no comments" to even the most innocuous questions.

The studio rallied late last week with full page advertisements in major newspapers in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and Atlanta (where delegates to the Democratic national convention could

read it).

The ad took the form of an open letter to Bill Bright of the Campus Crusade for Christ, who had earlier offered \$10 mil-

'These freedoms protect all of us. They are precious. They are not for sale.'

— Universal Pictures

lion to Wasserman if he would destroy all prints of the film. The text emphasized that the film is based on a novel and not the Gospels, and, citing both the U.S. Constitution and Thomas Jefferson, it concluded:

"In the United States, no one sect or coalition has the power to set boundaries around each person's freedom to explore religious and philosophical questions, whether through speech, book or film. These freedoms protect all of us. They are precious. They are not for sale."

By no means have all fundamentalist preachers joined in the hue and cry, and half a dozen liberal and mainstream churchmen who saw the nearly completed

Continued on Viewpoint B

More: A passion play in Beverly Hills

Continued from Page 1

film in a studio preview in New York said they were generally impressed.

One of the viewers was the Rev. Charles Bergstrom, a Lutheran who described himself as an "evangelical, born again Christian."

Bergstrom praised "Temptation" as "much more accurate than some Christian films I have seen" and added that "there is an explicit scene where Christ's marriage to Mary Magdalene is consummated, but that is obviously a dream scene and Christ makes the decision to die on the cross."

Another clergyman, the Rev. David Pomeroy of the National Council of Churches, warned that conservative Christians may be taking the controversial dream sequence out of context.

"For me, the central point . . . is that

'I strongly oppose the anti-Semitic implications that a few voices have raised . . .'

— Archbishop Roger Mahony

the temptation referred to in the title is that Christ is offered the option of coming down from the cross and not completing the pain of the sacrifice," Pomeroy said.

"At the very end of the film, he projects that temptation, he repudiates it. He in fact recognizes that he needs to accept this sacrificial act on behalf of all humanity."

A Roman Catholic leader has taken a dual position, warmly defending Wasserman while indicating that the church will probably label the film "morally offensive to everyone and should be avoided."

Archbishop Roger M. Mahony of Los

Angeles decried the extremist attacks, stating, "I strongly oppose the anti-Semitic implications that a few voices have raised in the matter, and I am hopeful that our excellent Jewish-Christian relationship will help diminish any suggestion that this film was produced to be anti-Christian."

Mahony went out of his way to praise Wasserman personally, referring to the latter's role in helping to host Pope John Paul II during the pontiff's visit to Los Angeles last year.

Jewish defense organizations, after the initial shock, have put the controversy high up on their priority list. One of the first to react was Irv Rubin, leader of the Jewish Defense League, who came out to confront Hymers during the demonstration outside Wasserman's home.

"You're the anti-Semite, Hymers," Rubin shouted. "This was an easy target — 'Let's go get the Jew in Beverly Hills.'"

Barry Krugel of the even more extremist Jewish Defense Organization also protested the protesters. "He (Hymers) can attack Wasserman, can attack the movie, that's his right. Why drag in the fact that he's Jewish? He's a businessman," Krugel said, reflecting, perhaps for the first time, the feelings of the mainstream Jewish community.

David Lehrer, West Coast director of the Anti-Defamation League, scorned claims by Hymers and Falwell that they feared an anti-Semitic backlash by enraged Christians if the film were released.

"They have successfully managed to invoke all the standard imagery of anti-Semitism in their purported attempt to counter anti-Semitism," Lehrer said.

In the same vein, Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director, said that "Rev. Falwell's irresponsible comments run the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy and threatening the nation's religious pluralism."

The "Temptation" furor has brought "two demons out of the woodwork," Rabbi James Rudin, national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, told HERITAGE in a phone interview from New York.

There is the old demon of the Jew as

'The myths of the First Century and the 20th Century have been combined into a new demonology'

— Rabbi James Rudin

Christ killer and the new myth of the Jew in control of all the media — television, radio, press and movies. "The myths of the First Century and of the 20th Century have now been combined into a new demonology," he said.

An ad placed by an evangelical ministry in the Hollywood trade press reinforces the point by proclaiming in bold face: "Our lord was crucified once on a cross. He doesn't deserve to be crucified a second time on celluloid."

Rudin also found some irony in the thought that Falwell and other fundamentalists, who in the past have been warmly embraced as stout supporters of Israel, should at the same time embark on a course posing serious dangers to American Jewry.

"Apparently they (fundamentalists) are able to hold two thoughts at the same time, saying, in effect, 'Israel, So! Jews, No!'" Rudin said.

As an initial countermeasure, Rudin said, he is urging AJC chapters throughout the country to build alliances with mainstream Christian groups and jointly alert their communities to the dangers inherent in the fundamentalist attack.

Continued on Viewpoint D

More: Passion play . . .

Continued from Viewpoint B

A statement by the American Jewish Congress noted that Falwell and Hymers "know very well that Universal Studios is a publicly held corporation, that its executives who happen to be Jewish are not 'Jewish leaders' but businessmen."

(At press time, there were some indications that the shrillest protesters may be experiencing a backlash of their own. Two evangelical leaders, who had been among the initiators of the campaign, said they were withdrawing because of the anti-Semitic attacks that have been introduced by Hymers and others.)

The ultimate fate of "Temptation" may be decided not at demonstrations or in board rooms, but by the exhibitors who choose what movies will play in their theaters.

By profession, exhibitors are a nervous lot, given to sniffing the wind of public opinion, and from their perspectives, the outlook for the film is grim.

Representative of the group is a spokesman for the United Artist Theaters chain, which controls 2,000 screens: "It's not worth it for any theater chain to play a film like "Temptation" that will offend our religious customers. We're open all year, and we don't need to upset any community over one offensive film."

Similar reluctance was shown by the head film buyer for a Midwest chain, who agreed that Universal has not put any pressure on exhibitors.

"Universal knows no chain wants to battle organized religious groups. Who wants to fight all of Christianity over one film?" the buyer asked rhetorically.

"Besides, I'm told the movie makes Jesus out to be a playboy," the buyer added. "That portrait will excite people in Los Angeles and New York, but in Salt Lake City or Boise, Idaho, religious fanatics could burn the theater down that plays the film."

Practically overlooked in all the excitement are the main actors in "Temptation." Willem Dafoe portrays Jesus, Harvey

Keitel is Judas and Barbra Hershey has the role of Mary Magdalene.

In the meanwhile, and to keep the pot boiling, Dutch director Paul Verhoeven is working on plans for another Jesus film. The prominent director, known for such violent action films a *Robocop* and *Soldier of Orange*, says his project, tentatively titled *Christ, the Man*, will draw on recent research by biblical scholars and will also be controversial.

"My story will be situated against a panorama of tension between ideas within the Jewish community during the Roman occupation," he said.

The film may not be shot until 1990 or 1991, and Jewish defense organizations may need the breathing space. *Christ, the Man* is being backed by Brooksfilm, which is headed by the well known Jewish comic and filmmaker Mel Brooks.

AUG 29 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date August 16, 1988
to Ron Kronish
from M. Bernard Resnikoff

subject

This is a report of a consultation with a highly-placed professional concerning the status of interreligious affairs in Great Britain. It is marked "Confidential" at his request because of his own professional involvement in some of the affairs described below.

The status of Jewish-Christian relations in Great Britain is uneven and, in certain places, shows signs of great stress.

Largely, but not exclusively, this harks back to the affairs of this country and, in particular, with the ways in which the British media report the events here. The anti-Israel bias in the press is blatant and the run-off spills over into new outbreaks of anti-semitism.

My informant played an unofficial role in the Lambeth Conference and manifestations of the above were visible there too.

In an oblique kind of way, all of this feeds on the new education law which, while fiercely fought by secular anti-establishment and other forces, was passed, and which provides for "proper Christian education" in the public school system. To the surprise of my informant, the Chief Rabbi saw nothing wrong with this law and did nothing to object to it.

With respect to interreligious activities, the major organization in England now re-named "The Council of Christians and Jews" now boasts a staff of three. James Richardson, newly appointed as director, is an Anglican priest from Leeds who is affable but doesn't want to rock the boat and will do as little as possible. The Deputy Director is now, and has been for some time, Paul Mendel, who enjoys longevity on the staff. Now there is also a Catholic on the staff, Father Rodger Clark, a dominican monk, who shows great promise. Indeed, Father Clark is bringing a group of pilgrims on a fact-finding mission to Israel, due to arrive on March 5, 1989 and I was asked whether AJC's Israel Office would be ready to be helpful and I said I would recommend it.

My companion was not impressed with the performance of the Jewish lay members of the Council Board. Most of them, including titled ones, use their Board membership for self-aggrandizement and behave as if their paramount priority is to ingratiate themselves with the Christian power elite.

CONFIDENTIAL

My informant stressed that this mournful report is not due to any personal disappointment or sour grapes; rather, this is his studied and thoughtful analysis.

✓ cc: Marc Tanenbaum

MBA



The Latest Phenomenon of Anti-Semitism under G.G.* -

"Pamyat" (Memory)

By: Avraham Ben-Yaakov, Ph.D.

Opening Remarks:

The Soviet Union, today, finds itself in the midst of a process which has gained impetus since the 27th Party Congress at the end of 1986. Gorbachev set himself ambitious objectives in almost all walks of life. The chief thrust of his efforts is directed at the economic sphere as he nurtures the hope that by the year 2000, the growth of Soviet production will have greatly outstripped all previous levels. This is the essence of the much touted "Perestroika" (Reconstruction). Without altering the socialist base of the economy, Gorbachev is striving to match the achievements of capitalist countries, a paradoxical task that has spurred him on to make various concessions reminiscent of Lenin's N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) in the Twenties: approving small businesses, encouraging "personal" (not, the unmentionable, "private") initiative, enhancing economic motivation to increase production and so forth.

Concomitant with the economic "Perestroika," Gorbachev has injected also another term into the life of the Soviet Union - "Glasnost" (derived from the Russian word for "voice," it connotes "voiceability" or rather, free expression). Following many long years of silence and silencing, (1964-1985: the Brezhnev-Andropov-Chernenko period), Gorbachev - albeit cautiously - has opened the valves to release some of the pressure that started to build up among the intelligentsia under Khrushchev. The "thaw" of the late Fifties and early Sixties erupted with a violence, spawning the creativity of the dissidents, the movement

* Gorbachev's Glasnost

for the preservation of the Helsinki Agreements, the Zionist revival - and other phenomena which were utterly impossible in Stalin's age of pure totalitarianism. Brezhnev and his two successors invested arduous efforts in eliminating the consequences of Khrushchev's permissiveness: the trial of Siniavsky and Daniel in 1966, as well as the mass detentions and arrests of all types of dissidents in the Seventies, were aimed at shutting the valves that Khrushchev had dared to open too wide. Gorbachev - more intelligent, shrewd and flexible than his predecessors - has drawn the necessary conclusions from their rule and is trying not to repeat their mistakes. His steps are slow and measured and he speaks of "democratization" rather than of "democracy", as he pursues a gradual course towards so-called "enlightened authoritarianism".¹

One significant step towards democratization in the spirit of Glasnost was marked at the start of June, 1987, by the appearance of a publication by the same name. Though the first issue of "Glasnost" numbered only 60 typewritten copies, it may be assumed that the Samizdat² experience gained over the past 30 years will be used to advantage and thousands of copies will follow. While the appearance of the dissident-legal "Glasnost" can hardly be said to have been greeted with enthusiasm on the part of the authorities, the progression of Glasnost was apparently such that Gorbachev was compelled to swallow it as a force of

1. As Solzhenitsyn suggested in his famous "Letter to the Soviet Leaders" in 1973. Solzhenitsyn's influence on Gorbachev undoubtedly merits a separate article.

2. "Samizdat" - (literally, "self-edition"); illegal writing, publishing and circulation of ideological, political or literary material.

circumstance. Its editorial staff includes Andrey Sakharov and Yosef Begun, and its editor is the journalist, Sergey Gregoryantz, who in 1983 was sentenced under Clause 70 of the Criminal Code as a "particularly dangerous political criminal" for daring to publish in Samizdat the dissident bulletin, "V", and to pass on to the Parisian magazine, "Continent",³ a notice of the death of writer Varlam Shalamov, a veteran of the Gulag. The remaining members of the editorial staff are also dissidents, most of whom have served sentences in labor camps.

The appearance of "Glasnost" has enhanced Gorbachev's credibility and, thus, too, his prestige: not only because it has provided people like Sakharov and Begun with a podium from which to air their views, but because they themselves chose as the title of their magazine, the magic word which Gorbachev has undoubtedly copyrighted. The implication is that senior dissidents - the opponents of yesterday - have been harnessed to the efforts invested by the Secretary-General in instituting his new policy:

It is the state leaders themselves who have proclaimed a policy of complete change and announced that there is no other way.⁴

On the emergence of the new organization, Pamyat, which has taken advantage of the Glasnost era to step up its activities, "Glasnost"'s editors had this to say:

We are pleased to note that during the planning and typeset-

3. "Continent" - the magazine of the Russian dissidents, edited by Vladimir Maximov. (It first appeared in 1974 in Paris.)

4. "Glasnost", No. 1 - Russkaya Mysl-Paris, 10.7.1987, p.6.

ting of this issue of our bulletin, in which we had meant to publish a shorthand report on one of the meetings of the Pamyat club, the newspapers "Komsomolskaya Pravda," "Izvestia," and "Ogonyok" provided such detailed coverage that we found any additional explanation superfluous, even though an appraisal of the club's activities could well be substantially different.⁵

On the one hand, the democratic dissidents refrain from treating the subject of Pamyat and express satisfaction at the reaction of the official press; on the other hand, while they stress that their appraisal "could well be substantially different", they don't give so much as a hint as to what this is. Why did they not publish their "different" appraisal? This is only one of many baffling questions. Before turning to these, however, we must examine the phenomenon of Pamyat.

What is Pamyat?

According to its founders, Pamyat is a "patriotic, historical and literary society"; according to journalist E. Lesoto, it is a "so-called informal union". Lesoto's article appeared in "Komsomolskaya Pravda" on the 22.5.1987, (hereafter (K.P./22.5), under the title "V Bespamyatstve" (In the Unconsciousness)⁶ and will be dealt with further later on.

If indeed Pamyat was born out of an independent social initiative "from below", without being granted formal status by the authorities, then it is truly the first "informal" union or public association to emerge in

5. Ibid., p. 7.

6. A play on words, as "Pamyat" means both memory and consciousness.

the Soviet Union since the Revolution of 1917, and deserves to take its place as such in Soviet history. It is only a pity that this tribute is to be bestowed on an extreme-nationalist organization with a clear anti-Semitic ideology. In all fairness, it should be noted that "Glasnost" No. 1 is also worthy of a place in Soviet history - as the first free publication since 1917.

The definition, "patriotic, historical and literary" hides more than it reveals. There is nothing wrong with loving one's homeland, preserving one's historical heritage or upholding cultural and literary values. But let us examine what lurks behind this agreeable label: who are Pamyat's key figures, what are its ideological sources, its avowed objectives and its concrete activities?

The line between positive nationalism and negative nationalism⁷ is exceedingly fine. It is all too easy to cross over from patriotism into chauvinism, particularly when nationalistic objectives are cloaked in national slogans.

Who's Who in "Pamyat" - their supporters and fans:

Ilia Glazunov (b. 1930) - the well-known artist who established his reputation in the Seventies. "A fervent nationalist who does not conceal his sympathy for Russian Orthodoxy", the Sovietologist, John B. Dunlop, wrote of him.⁸ His exhibition in 1978 drew some 600,000

7. This is the main subject of my Ph.D. thesis, submitted to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: "Two Currents of the Russian Nationalist Ideology from the 19th Century to the Contemporary Dissidents", 1986.

8. John B. Dunlop, The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism, Princeton U.P., 1983, p. 59.

visitors, an awesome success which was interpreted as the public's identification with his "fervent" views. Journalist Craig Whitney calls him a chauvinist and anti-Semite who dreams of restoring the Tzarist - or, at least, the Stalin - era.⁹ According to Whitney, Glazunov is favored by Raisa Gorbachev. He is considered to be the spiritual father of the founders of Pamyat, who prefer to call themselves "Leaders", a clear indication of one of the wellsprings of their inspiration.

Victor Vinogradov - a famous architect and chairman of the Moscow branch of "Voopik" (The Pan-Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments). Founded in 1966, Voopik is an official body, enjoying formal status under the patronage of the authorities. In the twenty-odd years of its existence, it has grown impressively. By January, 1977, it numbered more than 12 million members (9.3% of the population of the Russian Republic (RSFSR)). During Brezhnev's reign, Voopik was a bastion of state "National-Bolshevism" where numerous anti-Semites found a comfortable retreat. But now, under Glasnost, it seems Voopik no longer sufficed for Vinograd who sought a broader and more independent arena for his activities and ideas.

Other figures worth mentioning are the photographer-journalist, Dmytry Vasylev; the artist, Andrey Gorsky - deputy-chairman of the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments of the Union of Painters; and K. Andreev - chairman of the board of Pamyat and an active member of the Communist Party. What these people have in common is that they are all, in one way or another, connected with the Central House of Painters in Moscow.

In addition to Glazunov's disciples, we find the well-known writer, Vic-

9. Craig Whitney, Letter to Gorbachev, "Time and We", N.Y., 1987, No. 93, p. 107.

tor Astafiev, whose views are closely related to those of the Pamyat group. Astafiev rose to fame recently following the publication of his novella, "The Sad Detective Story", which is liberally sprinkled with blatant anti-Semitic expressions such as "Evreichata (Jew-boys). An exchange of letters between him and the Jewish historian, Nathan Yacovlevich Eidelman, is at present making the rounds in Moscow through Samizdat channels. Eidelman has accused Astafiev of anti-Semitism, citing the latter's correspondence with him. Among other things, Astafiev has again raised the "classic" accusation that "in 1918, the Zionist Yurovsky murdered Tzar Nicolai and his family." In his letter to Eidelman, he writes: "Every National Resurrection, and especially the Russian Resurrection, has its antagonists and foes."¹⁰ It is not difficult to guess which antagonists and foes the writer has in mind.

These are but a few names from a long list of people scattered throughout Russia. One might add also Alexander Chvaliuk, the senior construction engineer from the Novosibirsk branch of Pamyat, or A. Kovalev, definitely the "leader" of Leningrad's branch.¹¹ (Leningrad's branch is called "Homeland" - "Otechestvo"; in Sverdlovsk, the society calls itself "Salvation" - "Spasenie".)

From the socio-economic point of view, Pamyat comprises a varied membership, from simple folk to well known intellectuals, most of whom live in large urban centers. They represent all ages and include both party members and "non-party" communists as one of the Leaders, Dmitry Vasilev, is fond of referring to himself.

10. The exchange of letters between Astafiev and Eidelman deserves an article in its own right.

11. "Sovetskaya Kul'tura", 18.6.87, p. 3.

Ideological Roots in the Recent Past

The broad range of dissident views aired in the Sixties gave voice also to extreme nationalist ideas - the place of the Soviet state with respect to other states, and the attitude of the Russian nation towards other nations. Primarily, however, these ideas related to the status of Orthodoxy in Russia. The convergence between the Russian nation and Pravoslavism was seen as a virtual "conditio sine qua non" of Russian reality. Thus was born the term "National-Pravoslavism", which crystallized as an ideology among the nationalist dissidents in the course of the Seventies. As the limited scope of this article does not permit a full treatment of the subject, suffice it to mention Genady Shimanov¹² who became the chief ideologist of dissident Russian chauvinism. In all his writings, which were published and circulated in Samizdat, the "Jewish Question" preoccupied Shimanov. His attitude towards the Jews is clearly conveyed by two quotations:

Since the Jews do not manage to rot and turn into waste, or even into a single nation, and no nation has succeeded in assimilating them or casting them out or neutralizing their destructive influence - it is a constant struggle, agonizing to both sides.

Or:

The Jews do not care that their tentacles penetrate foreign organisms (the Jews call this the "Jewish contribution" to a foreign culture), sucking their blood and suffocating them.

Shimanov has written six books and dozens of articles, all pervaded by the same spirit. At the same time, other anti-Semitic literature was published in Samizdat. The Seventies were distinguished by an ideologi-

12. Op. cit., The Faces..., pp. 210-211.

cal pluralism among the dissidents that also gave expression to anti-Semitic ideas which had gathered dust in the attics of the Black Hundreds and the classic anti-Semitic ideology of the 19th century.

Prof. Bogddan Botzurkiv of Carlton University's Religious Studies Department, in Ottawa, has noted the possibility that the KGB has become the "godfather" of the Pravoslavic dissidents who preach a unique form of Pravoslavic nationalism spiced with anti-Semitism, in the hope of attracting chauvinist elements from religious circles.¹³ Although this thesis has not been verified since the KGB archives have not yet been made public (not only for the Seventies, but also for 1917), it is no secret that anti-Semitic-nationalist dissidents - like Shimanov and others who disseminated their writings in the underground - were neither arrested, nor tried, nor sent to the Gulag, as were their colleagues from the democratic, Zionist and religious branches of the dissident movement.

The Current Official Attitude Towards Anti-Semitism and Zionism

On February 8, 1987, "Pravda" published Gorbachev's response to questions posed to him by "L'Humanite", the official organ of the French Communist Party; within a week, the state publishing house for political literature released hundreds of thousands of pamphlets containing that response. Since not all Gorbachev's speeches earn so speedy and extensive a circulation, it may be supposed that the present leadership attaches great importance to the subject. Experience has shown that official statements cannot always be taken at face value. Not only do the remarks of leaders not always correspond to their deeds, but often the

13. B. Botzurkiv, Religion and Nationality in the USSR, in (the Russian-language) "Forum", Munich, 1985, No. 13, p. 68.

opposite is true: they come to cover up the true state of affairs. This, in fact, was the chief method resorted to in the reign of disinformation. In the new era of Glasnost, however, one would assume that the words of the leader do correspond to the actual policy under consideration - at least to some extent.

In answer to the question: "There is talk of the Jews being persecuted in the Soviet Union...What can you tell us about this?", Gorbachev replied:

The question of Soviet Jewry has become part of a psychological war against the Soviet Union. Here, anti-Semitic propaganda is forbidden by law and constitutes a criminal offense. What happens in the United States or France can't happen here - the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, the activities of neo-Nazi organizations that preach hatred of the Jews in the press and on the radio. The Jews, here, enjoy freedom and equal rights in common with any other nationality...here you'll find Yiddish books, periodicals and newspapers being published, active synagogues...

Thus far, there is little new in Gorbachev's statement: But the facts speak otherwise: there is only one Yiddish-language newspaper, "Birobidjaner Shtern", of limited circulation; one Yiddish-language periodical, "Sovietish Heimland"; and there have been cases of Jewish cemeteries being vandalized. On April 17, 1987, in lots 6-8 at the Preobrajensk cemetery in Leningrad, over 70 gravestones were broken and desecrated, not far from the fence near the Obukhovo station's railway tracks. On April 20 (Hitler's birthday), another 60 graves were destroyed at the cemetery named after the "Victims of January 9". It is not known whether the vandals were caught or punished, but the incident was reported in the "Leningradskaya Pravda" on the 22.4.1987.

And while it is true that neo-Nazi organizations are forbidden to function, on Hitler's birthday and following a tradition of several years' standing, a group of youths wearing swastika armbands appeared in Leningrad's "Revolution" Square, near the Gorky metro station. In the city of Sverdlovsk on the same day, a torchlight procession took place with the marchers brandishing pictures of Hitler. On April 25, at 5:00 p.m., a group of youths rode up on motorbikes to Leningrad's synagogue calling out the standard slogan: "Beat the kikes and save Russia!"

Gorbachev's statement, therefore, bears little relation to reality. But let us take a look at the following remarks:

I believe that in a civilized society, there is no room at all for anti-Semitism...and Zionism, just as there is no room for any manifestation of nationalism, chauvinism or racism. For several years now - for reasons that are well known - the Palestinian people have lived in forced exile from their country.¹⁴

The first conclusion is that Gorbachev is opposed to anti-Semitism and Zionism. The second, that he obfuscates the differences between the two or, more accurately, equates the one with the other, taking pains to stress the fate of the Palestinian people.

On the one hand, Gorbachev's statement enabled the Soviet press to publish articles condemning Pamyat's anti-Semitic ideology. For the first time in almost 60 years, the official press has explicitly criticized and denounced anti-Semitism in the USSR. On the other hand, the

14.

Brezhnev said the same thing at the 26th Party Congress in March 1981 ("Pravda", 24.3.1981).

deliberate confusion between anti-Semitism and Zionism can be interpreted by Pamyat members as lending legitimization to their attacks on Judaism. Once more we have before us "the use of anti-Zionism as a cover under which it is possible to introduce the crudest forms of governmental anti-Semitism",¹⁵ as Prof. Jonathan Frankel wrote three years ago.

Alongside the articles censuring Pamyat's anti-Semitism, the Soviet press, as ever, continues to publish articles against Zionism. The average reader is hard put to navigate his way through the maze of Glasnost. Not only is he told that he must condemn the Pamyat people who express themselves thus at their meetings: "One must fight bureaucracy - the monster of International Zionist Freemasonry and Imperialism" (K.P./22/5); but at the same time he reads in "Pravda Ukraina" (6.87) that "the sirens of Zionism continue to rally fools and idiots to wherever fundamental human rights are unquestionably being violated".

The reader, particularly the muzhik, is totally confused...the Zionists, after all, are Jews, so the Pamyat lads must be right - to save Russia, one must thrash the Yids. The ignorant peasant has his work cut out for him, trying to distinguish between "good" and "bad" Jews.

Pamyat's Ideology: Anti-Semitism

"Ideology is the sum total of assumptions, ideas and views, nourished by emotions, instincts and desires, that crystallize into an emotio-rational synthesis aimed at turning into an operative idealism."¹⁶

15. Jonathan Frankel, "The Soviet Regime and Anti-Zionism", Research Paper No. 55, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984, p. 58.

16. From my Ph.D. thesis, op. cit.

Pamyat's ideology has not yet crystallized, but it is clear that the Leaders intend to create an "operative idealism". As Prof. Ze'ev Sternhell has pointed out, "the nature of political ideology is always clearer in its aspirations than in its application."¹⁷ Let us therefore take a look at the ideological aspirations of Pamyat.

It is obviously beyond the scope of this article to analyze all the aspects of modern Russian nationalist ideology that have found expression in the utterances of Pamyat's Leaders. We shall thus chiefly consider anti-Semitic remarks that embody all the hallmarks of blatant discrimination, chauvinism and even racism.

Pamyat members vent their anger also on the "Americanization" of Soviet society, serving up their ideological assumptions, of course, with a smattering of quotations from Lenin, as though they were his true heirs. As E. Lesoto writes (K.P./22.5),

The immoral confusion between clericalism, mysticism and Leninism is characteristic of the statements made by Pamyat people.

They need Lenin only as an "insurance policy". No call is issued to realize Marxist-Leninist ideology, or to advance communism. A typical example of how Leninism is incorporated into their ideology is found in the following statement: "We are for Leninism and against Satan" (K.P./22.5), one of their spokesmen said at a Pamyat meeting in Moscow, explaining that Satan is embodied in the form of Zionists and Freemasons. In the guise of patriotism and safeguarding tradition, an attempt is made to preserve Pravoslavism as a consistent component of Russian national identity. Nor is this the pure Pravoslavism of the

17. Ze'ev Sternhell, Ni Droite ni Gauche, "Seuil", Paris, 1983, P. 15.

Church's holy men and the true Slavophile-humanists of the early 19th century, but a primitive version which "has pinned the blame for all the ills of the Russian people on Satan and the Jew" (K.P./22.5).

Here, the writer arrives at the crux of the matter: "To them, Pravoslavism is the homeland, the sort of patriotism that within seconds turns into nationalism" (K.P./22.5). And the central axis of this primitive nationalism is anti-Semitism:

"...try holding the burning match of anti-Semitism near this nationalism and you'll see before your eyes...Pamyat!" (K.P./22.5).

Pamyat's nationalist aspirations have been exposed: its "operative idealism" is anti-Semitism - which is the chief component of all extreme nationalism as the writer has logically concluded. One must not forget, however, that Mrs. E. Losoto is a communist, writing for the publication of the Komsomol's central committee, and she too must toe the line laid down by Comrade Gorbachev:

"If we are to be completely frank, then Pamyat should gladden the Zionists, and undoubtedly plays into their hands: they have cause to shout out loud about the existence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union" (K.P./2.5).¹⁸

Following is a list of "the embodiments of Satan" as outlined in the addresses at Pamyat meetings:

18. Mrs. Lesoto's authentic account of the nature of Pamyat, and her deep understanding of Pamyat's anti-Semitism, may in future help her understand also the nature of Zionism which was born, among other things, out of the need to take shelter from phenomena such as Pamyat.

1. Lazar Moisseevich Kaganovich - guilty of destroying Pravoslaviv churches, (no mention is made of the fact that this same loyal Stalinist destroyed also dozens of synagogues).
2. Yaroslavsky (whose Jewish name, Gubelman, is stressed) - the chairman of the organization of fighting atheists in the Twenties, (no mention is made of the fact that he also fought bitterly against the Jewish religion).
3. Guinzburg - Moscow's architect of the Thirties, the ideologist of Constructivism who expected Moscow's natural destruction.
4. The physician Josephovich (unknown) and the Party activist Moisseevich (unknown) are mentioned as "enemies who carry Party membership cards".
5. The Freemason-Zionist (indeed fascist) symbolism (corresponding completely with Comrade Gorbachev's view: Zionism equals Racism).
6. The enemies of Pravoslavism, Zionists and Freemasons, who cast their nets wide to destroy Pravoslavism, the churches and the monuments.
7. The seven-branched candelabrum and the six-pointed star, as codes for other symbols.
8. Clandestine, hostile forces as spelled out in "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion":

It says in the Protocols, that in all the capitals of the world, there are underground passages. From these, will be blown up all the

capital cities, along with all their institutions and state documents. "When I read the Protocols, I was horrified," says P. Vasilev. "I gazed in terror at the map of Moscow's subway. All the stations are situated beneath state and party institutions. ("Izvestia", 2.7.1987)

And what is the operative ideal? Vasilev continues:

We must ferret out the enemy's nests of conspiracy, and close our fighting ranks. ("Izvestia", 2.7.1987)

Once the antagonists and foes are pinpointed, the steps to be taken against them are stated in the most unequivocal terms: "To fight!" Does this call not in itself constitute sufficient grounds to accuse the spokesman of anti-Semitic agitation, in accordance with the very law cited by Comrade Gorbachev: "Here, anti-Semitic propaganda is forbidden by law and constitutes a criminal offense"? To date, however, nobody has been arrested; Pamyat continues to flourish, unrestrained, throughout the Soviet Union.

Additional Ideological Aspects of Pamyat

- * Aggressive nationalism against Afghanistan which coincides with chauvinist expressions towards other national minorities of the Islamic faith in the USSR.

- * Anti-Americanism and hatred for Western culture which coincide with anti-Semitism. According to Pamyat: "Capitalism is a Zionist invention".

- * Ideas that often leave the realm of ideological assumptions and pass over into delirious ramblings. For example:

All dissidents are Freemasons [but this is not enough]...Brezhnev was also one...

The Baptists in the U.S. are instruments of Satan because they love rock music.

Saint Vladimir, who converted Russia to Christianity 1000 years ago, was by way of being an agent of Zion since Christianity is steeped in Judaism.

- * A kinship with early Slavic paganism: their admiration is reminiscent of the Hitlerian exaltation of the Aryan race.
- * An attitude towards historical events which blends reasoned hatred with certifiable lunacy:

The February Revolution was in fact a Jewish-Freemason revolution brought about by the Freemason, Trotsky; that's why the October Revolution, led by Lenin, saved Russia.

With respect to Stalin, opinion is more divided: some see him as a puppet controlled by the Zionists, Kaganovich and friends; others admire him as a great statesman who made a mistake in the Thirties by depositing Russian culture in the hands of the Freemasons.

One might well ask - who will be taken in by this delirious bag of goods? Apparently there are enough customers in Russia today, even for slogans such as these.

Questions without Answers

Pamyat is a curious phenomenon, to say the least. It is all too easy to dismiss it as the progression of Russian nationalism which crystallized in the Seventies. It was, however, a phenomenon within the framework of dissident activities. While today, it is just as easily explained - along with Sakharov's and Begun's "Glasnost" publication - as open, legal dissidence.

Though Sovietologists often forget the Jewish saying that "prophecy was given to fools" and indulge in "futurolology", I will content myself with raising a few questions.

What is the attitude of the Party and State Establishment towards Pamyat? If we assume that the official press still represents the positions of the party and the regime, we must conclude that they condemn Pamyat in no uncertain terms. Six articles and reports have been published on Pamyat:

1. "Komsomolskaya Pravda" (22.5.1987), "In the Unconsciousness".
2. "Komsomolskaya Pravda" (24.6.1987), "What was forgotten by Pamyat" (i.e., by memory).
3. "Sovetskaya Kultura" (18.6.1987), A. Cherkizov, "About Real Values and Imaginary Enemies".
4. "Ogonyok", No. 22, June 1987, A. Gulovkov, A. Pavlov, "What's all the Noise About?"
5. "Izvestia", 2.7.1987, G. Alimov, R. Lynev, "Where is Pamyat heading?"
6. "Moscow News," No. 20, June 1987, A. Kislev, A. Mostovshchikov, "Let's Talk on Equal Grounds".

As far as the factual material is concerned, all the articles reported the contents of the addresses at the various meetings. The main points

have been presented above and it would serve no purpose to summarize each one individually. The writers unanimously condemn the phenomenon, stress the anti-Semitic spirit pervading it, and note that nationalism and anti-Semitism run counter to Leninism, despite the attempts of Pamyat spokesmen to hide behind the latter. In one way or another, not a single writer forgets to attack Zionism, whether directly or through broad hints (all in keeping with Comrade Gorbachev's statement). And yet - only six articles in response to so despicable a phenomenon? Nothing happens by chance in the Soviet Union, including this measured dose of reaction. One cannot escape the impression that "someone" wishes to denounce Pamyat, but...only up to a certain point. Were the regime really interested in eradicating the phenomenon, it could do so openly, legally, and easily, this time without even distorting the relevant clause in the law in order to win a conviction (in accordance with a time-honored Soviet tradition).

How does an unofficial association, an "informal union" to quote "Komsomolskaya Pravda", gain access to the Party committee's convention premises in Moscow's Lenin Quarter? This is no shabby auditorium on an unknown street in a remote town, but a Conference Hall in the most important district of the Soviet capital. The newspaper does not elaborate the motives behind the generosity shown by the local Party leaders but contents itself with an astonishing and ambiguous statement: "For various reasons, the regional committee was compelled (!) to place the hall at Pamyat's disposal". This is the entire explanation. What were the "various" reasons? Why "compelled"? No answer. If "compelled", then someone more important than the regional Party leaders was the "compeller". Who is that mysterious person empowered to issue directives to the regional committee? Someone in the capital's municipal committee, perhaps? In the Party's central committee, perhaps? One can only guess.

Whatever the case, the members of the Lenin regional committee merited an honorable mention from Party member K. Andreev, the chairman of

Pamyat. "Placing the Party hall at Pamyat's disposal for the purpose of the meeting, earns the regional committee the honor and appreciation it so justly deserves", he said in his opening address.

Another curious development was the readiness of Boris Yeltsin, the secretary of the capital's municipal committee and a member of the Politburo, to grant the members of Pamyat an audience. Is it possible that the Moscow "boss" did not know whom he was receiving? According to "Moscow News" (No. 2, 1987), the two-hour discussion was friendly and ended with the promise of another meeting.

Boris Yeltsin leafed through the pile of notes in front of him, sent from the audience:

"There are still quite a few questions here and we've already been talking two whole hours. Shall we go on?"

The answers came from the audience: "It's enough! The rest you can read at home. Thank you for meeting with us!"

"Glasnost"'s editorial staff, it is worth noting, (Sakharov, Begun, Gregoryantz) had no audience with Yeltsin. So that to the extent that pluralism does exist, it is exceedingly limited and certainly not balanced.

Pamyat's audacity exceeds all reasonable bounds, even in the era of Glasnost. D. Vasiliev had his ire aroused by the attacks on Pamyat in the Soviet-communist press and, indeed, by the propaganda department of the Party's municipal committee in Moscow:

The agitation and propaganda department of the CPSU municipal committee pins political labels on us. If this does not stop, we shall avail ourselves of the provisions in the criminal code and resort to legal measures on the grounds of slander...The cosmopolitan stream [a favorite term for the

Jews since the Stalinist years] has inundated our mass media...

From where does Vasiliev derive the courage to threaten the Party's municipal committee with litigation? Again, from someone above the municipal committee, i.e., in the central committee?

The attitude towards Pamyat and its members is certainly ambivalent: on the one hand, we find a censorious outcry against them, sharp and sincere; and on the other, we find that they retain their positions, and are in no way hurt by the criticism in the press. Paradoxically enough, they rather seem to thrive on it, enjoying free publicity. They emerge as daring heroes, ready to throw down the gauntlet at the regime; Russian patriots, pious guardians of the past, whose attitude towards the Jews strikes a responsive chord in that part of the public (the backward and the ignorant) who have always viewed the Jews as the source of all evil, from the Crucifixion and up until the October revolution.

Who Really Stands Behind Pamyat?

Without a doubt, latent anti-Semitism lodges in many a Russian heart. Since no statistics are available on the proportion of Pamyat's supporters who are thus afflicted, we shall take the optimistic view and assume that they are a minority. However, this minority cuts across all classes, from the peasant masses, through the National-Pravoslavnic intellectuals, to Party members; from the rank and file to the very top - the central committee.

A cautious historical analogy may prove instructive. Under the Tzar, the marauding Black Hundreds, who were part of The Union of the Russian People, enjoyed the tacit support of the authorities. The chairman of The Holy Synod, Pobedonostsev, who was a confidant of Alexander III and

the tutor of his son, Nicolai II, expressed himself thus at the time: one third of the Jews of Russia will assimilate; one third will be annihilated, and one third will be banished. While Pamyat has not yet organized pogroms, Pobedonostsev's slogan is implicit in the words of its Leaders.

Pamyat's operations require financial backing. Where do the funds come from for meetings, travel expenses, and so forth? Who helps them logistically to acquire the use of halls? And the biggest question of all - what is the personal position of Comrade Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev who has yet to speak out on Pamyat? His word, no doubt, will be decisive and final. But perhaps he sees the whole matter as a Pandora's Box, and prefers to defer the decision for the moment. Nationalism, in the USSR, is on the rise, not only among Russians, but also among Moslems. In 1980, the French Sovietologist, Helene Carrere d'Encausse, predicted that the awakening of Islam was bound to clash with Pravoslavism. This forecast may now be coming true. The events at Alma-Ata last year would seem to bear it out.

Is Gorbachev absolutely certain of his hold on the reins of state? Does he perhaps fear someone in the Politburo? The questions abound, but any attempt to provide firm answers would not be serious. We are witnessing an ongoing process and lack the historical perspective for objectivity warranted by a scientific study. Events continue to unfold, Pamyat will no doubt seek to intensify its operations and if steps are not taken to stop it, this may prove a dangerous development, primarily for the Jews! The problem of anti-Semitism and chauvinistic nationalism will not be solved by a few isolated articles. A massive, educational, media campaign - of the sort the Soviets are well capable of organizing - could perhaps help. However, so far there has been no sign of such an undertaking.

Conclusions

- A) Pamyat was created as a social organization, initiated independently and spontaneously "from below", as a result of the nationalistic and anti-Semitic feelings and views of the Leaders.
- B) Pamyat draws its inspiration from the traditional nationalist and anti-Semitic ideology of the end of the 19th century, and has thus become but a further stage in the National-Pravoslavnic-dissident ideology of the Sixties and Seventies.
- C) Pamyat is taking advantage of the Glasnost era to broadcast its views and broaden its activities. But the differences between the two phenomena - the "Glasnost" bulletin and Pamyat - are quantitative as well as qualitative. This point cannot be overstated. The number of people listening to Pamyat Leaders is infinitely greater than the number of readers of "Glasnost". Pamyat's acceleration has been far faster, its growth more dynamic. These first two manifestations of free expression, spawned by G.G. (Gorbachev's Glasnost), did not set off from the same starting line. Pamyat is well ahead on the decisive course towards pluralism and democratization. According to the Soviet press, hundreds of people have attended each of the dozens of meetings held by Pamyat. Thousands and perhaps tens of thousands have been exposed to its message. On the 27.6.1987, about a month after E. Lesoto's article (K.P./22.5) appeared, "Komsomolskaya Pravda" published 15, out of 300 (!) readers' letters condemning Pamyat, its spokesmen and its practices. The proportions are clear.
- D) The regime's attitude to Pamyat is rather tolerant. Apart from the isolated articles discussed above, no steps have been taken to put a stop to its operations.

In keeping with a well established Sovietological tradition, I will conclude on a note of speculation. Is this paralysis the result of a struggle between Gorbachev and his opponents in the Politburo? Or is it really a smokescreen? Is Gorbachev, backed by a united and homogeneous Politburo, himself running the G.G. game (Gorbachev's Glasnost), in order to show the world that Tolerance or Ideological Pluralism LTD. - in the spirit of the Third "Basket" of the Helsinki Agreements - already exists in the Soviet Union. If so, he is emulating, in the Soviet Empire, the surest principle of the Roman Empire: "Divide et Impera!"

