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ON PAGE A1

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The Secret Under the Little Cemetery

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SOUTH RIVER, N.J., May 22—No more than 15 miles from the busy New Jersey Turnpike outside New York City is a private, fenced-in cemetery unlike any other in the United States.

In it are buried at least two suspected Nazi war criminals and as many as a dozen former members of a Waffen SS division that fought under Hitler and were smuggled into the United States in the 1950s to help in the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union. Buried under a

black tombstone seven feet high is Radoslaw Ostrowski, a native of Byelorussia, the westernmost region of the Soviet Union.

Ostrowski was also the president of the White Ruthenian state set up by Adolf Hitler when the German Wehrmacht invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

Ostrowski occupied the puppet leadership position until 1944, when the Red Army reoccupied Byelorussia.

During that time as many as 750,000 citizens of Byelorussia were massacred by their Nazi masters and the puppet civilian auxiliary police force under the control of the SS.

Thirty feet from Ostrowski's tomb is a grave marked only by a white wooden Byzantine cross. There is no name on that cross, but the grave is said to contain the remains of Emmanuel Jasiuk, once the mayor of the Byelorussian city of Kledsk. More than 5,000 Jews were slaughtered in Kledsk in a single day in 1942. Eyewitnesses to the massacre have told Justice Department investigators that Mayor Jasiuk ordered the slaughter.

Less than six city blocks from this cemetery is the cemetery's mother church, the 10-year-old Byelorussian Orthodox Church of St. Euphrosynia.

In a Slavic immigrant city, where the onion-shaped domes of Russian churches are common, St. Euphrosynia's is uncommon. The church has only 300 parishioners from 100 families, all immigrants to the United States since the Displaced Persons Act was passed by Congress in

"No old immigrants are members of St. Euphrosynia's," said John J. Loftus, a former Justice Department prosecutor. "Old immigrants are not allowed to join St. Euphrosynia's Church."

Loftus has charged that as many as 300 Byelorussian Nazis were smuggled into the United States by the State Department to work as spies and propagandists against the Soviet Union. To hear him tell it, St. Euphrosynia's is the shrine where many of these Byelorussians came to worship after they entered the United States.

It is clearly a curious church. On top of a hill behind the church is a monument to Byelorussia's war dead. Inscribed on the monument in Russian and English are these words: "Glory to those who fought for freedom and independence of Byelorussia."

"The trouble with that inscription is that they fought for the Nazis in the 30th Waffen-Grenadier Division of the SS," Loftus said. "This monument is literally a monument to dead members of the SS. It is even topped off by a circle of iron around the Russian cross, which was the symbol adopted by the 30th Waffen SS."

The tombstone that marks Ostrowski's grave in the White Ruthenian cemetery six blocks from the church marks the grave of a man who founded the 30th Waffen SS. This fact is noted in a document that rests in the National Archives. It is a document describing the debriefing of a White Ruthenian politician, Stanislas Hrynkwjeticsch, by U.S. Third Army intelligence officers in May, 1945.

Hrynkwjeticsch names Ostrowski as the puppet ruler of the White Ruthenian state that served Hitler in the Soviet city of Minsk from 1941 to 1944.

"Ostrowski came into Byelorussia with the SS Einsatzgruppen, the mobile killing units of the SS," Loftus said. "He had his own Gestapo staff car, and was so efficient at his work that inside of a week he had organized a Nazi collaborationist network in every town in the county where Minsk was located."

There is no doubt that the 30th SS Waffen Division

was manned mostly by Byelorussians. Its roster and movement are documented on microfilm in the National Archives.

The document identifies 447 of its 600 men as White Ruthenians, with names that sound remarkably like some of those on the tombstones in the cemetery near St. Euphrosynia's: Chmara. Grabowski. Radiejewski. Tarasowski. Paschkow. Baranowski. Misluchowski.

How former SS troops managed to emigrate to the United States is still something of a mystery, and is under investigation by the Justice Department and Congress. Loftus said that a Byelorussian priest named Nikolai Lavitsky helped them to emigrate. Like Ostrowski, Lavitsky died six years ago. He is buried in St. Euphrosynia's cemetery. His tombstone is next to Ostrowski's.

"Many Byelorussian birth certificates that I saw as a prosecutor for the Justice Department had false places of birth and false dates of birth to suggest they were too young to have fought with the SS," Loftus said. "These birth certificates were sworn to by Father Lavitsky, who was serving as a cleric in DP [displaced person] camps in Germany."

How many Nazis are buried in St. Euphrosynia's? There are 96 graves, three of them unmarked. Nobody was in the church the other day when a reporter stopped by to ask a few questions. The only other living person in the cemetery was the 88-year-old caretaker, who did not want to tell his name. Nevertheless, the question was asked.

"People say Nazis buried here," the caretaker said in heavily broken English. "No Nazis here. My wife here. Is my wife a Nazi? Those are veterans' crosses on these graves. That's a veterans' cross on the monument behind the church. There are no swastikas on these crosses. There are no Nazis here."