



RUSSOPHOBIA IN THE KREMLIN'S STRATEGY

A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

In response to Western criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine, the term 'Russophobia' has been reinstated in Russian political language. This term has a long history, and has deep roots in nineteenth-century imperial discourse. From the beginning, this discourse has been politically ambiguous: on the one hand, it described the zone of the Russian Empire's domination, while on the other it encompassed the vision of a distinct 'Russian world' constructed in opposition to the consumerist, 'decaying' West.

The postulate of a struggle against Russophobia, which is being invoked increasingly often in the Russian media space, today represents the declaration of another stage of Russia's communications war with the Kremlin's opponents, both foreign and domestic. Today's strategists in the Kremlin equate Russophobia with anti-Semitism; they give it a universal dimension, and treat it as one argument in a neo-imperial discourse of identity. The Russophobe, who is a kind of classic 'enemy' of Russia, well suits the image of the ideological enemy; this approach makes it possible to devise categorical, extremely emotional and stimulating opinions.

THESES

- The historically deep-rooted term ‘Russophobia’, which was first disseminated in the mid-nineteenth century, was intended to support the Russian imperial and civilisational discourse of the time. Even then, the Russian Empire was presented as being in opposition to a ‘degenerate’ Europe and as the heir to the traditional values of a ‘decaying world’. From the start it was a politically ambiguous discourse: on one hand, it encompassed the zone of the Russian Empire’s domination of Central and Southern Europe (Pan-Slavism), while on the other it promoted a vision of a different world (‘the Empire of the East’), representing the Orthodox-imperial tradition of Byzantium and the legacy of Genghis Khan, i.e. a different hierarchy of values. This discourse was unable to neutralise the West’s criticism of the tsarist regime’s policy of expansion, which led Russia to adopt an attitude of haughty isolationism.
- Throughout history, the fight against Russophobia has been used to implement various policy objectives both within and beyond the Russian state: to discipline the rebellious peoples of the Russian Empire; to combat ‘global Zionism’; to consolidate society; and also as an argument against the enlargement of NATO and the EU, etc. However, the strategic objective was always clear above and beyond these tactical goals: Russophobia invariably symbolised the rivalry of two cultural and civilisational models, as well as the conflict between two systems of values, those of the East and those of the West. The fight against Russophobia justified this schematic division of the world; and, by stigmatising those individuals and states which were deemed ‘ideologically alien’, it mobilised Russian society in the face of these alleged threats.
- The Russian authorities of today attach great importance to the development of political technologies and those which are derivative of them: namely, information technologies. These

serve to legitimise and realise the state's domestic and foreign policy objectives. In recent years, their importance has grown and their nature has changed, from defensive to offensive. Moderating these messages – which portray an image of Russia and the world around it which is desirable from the authorities' point of view – is regarded as an effective and perspective way of shaping collective consciousness.

- That which is called 'state propaganda' is actually a form of planned and long-term special operation, which employs techniques of manipulating information and elements of 'manually controlling' the general public. Set in a deterministic context of rivalry with the Western world, such propaganda requires the constant recreation or updating of the previous image of the 'enemy'. The 'Russophobe' well suits the image of the ideological enemy; this approach makes it possible to devise categorical, extremely emotional and stimulating opinions.
- This new strategy of the fight against Russophobia brings dangerous trends with it. First of all, it treats Russophobia as a form of intolerance towards ethnic Russians, the Russian-speaking ethnic group and the Russian state which is equivalent to anti-Semitism, and treats the struggle against this phenomenon as an instrument which can be universally applied. The concept of 'domestic Russophobia' has expanded to cover Ukraine and Belarus, equating the Belarusian and Ukrainian national questions with a 'civilisational' question (Ukrainians and Belarusians are not considered separate nations, but are actually part of the 'Russian world'). As developed on a strictly domestic Russian basis, this approach is directed against supporters of the democratisation and liberalisation of Russia. This means that the state considers critics of the regime as enemies, and works to publicly stigmatise and isolate them. On the other hand, attacking Russophobes serves as a way of immunising Russian society against doubts about the Kremlin's policy.

- Building up an image of Russophobic countries is also instrumental in shaping a neo-imperial political identity among the citizens of the Russian Federation, mobilising them in the face of real or alleged threats, and also serves as a form of restoring psychological comfort to them in the face of the failure of the Kremlin's actions (as in Ukraine, for example). The mythologised stereotype of Russophobic countries also remains a crowning argument and a simple explanation for the ongoing tensions in relations between Russia and the West.
- The fight against Russophobia, which today is growing into a universal phenomenon, is a manifestation of the negative programme of Russian policy throughout history. Until today, a positive programme (attractive, ideologically inspiring) has never been formulated by Russia. As a result, it has turned towards its imperial past and the traditional arguments of force.
- Informational activities based on the Russophobic stereotype are a breeding ground for Russian chauvinism, which in a multi-ethnic country can have opposite consequences to those intended. Externally – when seen as a way of communication between Russia and individual countries, forcing them to adjust their critical stance towards the Kremlin's policy, and based on attributing hostile intentions, negative traits and values to their opponents – such actions represent a negation of dialogue by their very nature. They foreshadow an increase in the level of aggressiveness in Russian political rhetoric, the further self-isolation of Russia and – as in the days of the tsarist regime and the Soviet Union – the demonstration of an attitude of haughty isolationism.

I. OUTLINE OF THE CONCEPT'S HISTORY

The term 'Russophobia' was introduced into political discourse by Fyodor Tyutchev¹, a poet, diplomat, and secret councillor in the Third Department of the Tsar's Office², to provide intellectual and conceptual support to the government. In his texts 'Russia and Germany', 'Russia and the revolution' and 'Russia and the West', written in the 1840s, Tyutchev outlined potential foreign policy programmes for the Russian Empire, including a partnership with "the still-healthy Germanic element", which was supposed to be a remedy to stop "the rot spreading from France"; as well as the concept of Pan-Slavism, i.e. Slavic harmony under the patronage of Russia. In his geocultural terms, the Russian Empire (the "Great East"), marginalised by the Western world, was to be its saviour, a stronghold of Christian values. Tyutchev's concept of Russophobia falls into two contexts: the domestic (where it is ascribed to 'Occidentalists', who criticise the tsarist regime for its

¹ Fyodor Tyutchev (1803-1873) was a Russian diplomat and poet, and the author of the famous slogan «Умом Россию не понять» ('Russia cannot be understood with the mind alone'). In 1822, after studying at Moscow State University, he went to Munich as an *attaché* to the Russian legation. He spent over twenty years in the diplomatic service (Munich, Turin, Genoa). In his journalism he described the political relations between Russia and Europe, the political and social situation in Europe during the Springtime of Nations, and was a proponent of Pan-Slavism. In the mid-1840s he initiated the creation of Russian counter-propaganda in the West; <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/1999/40/reitbl.html>. After his return to Russia he worked on the committee for censorship in the Third Branch of the Tsar's Office, and was in charge of this committee as of 1858.

² The Third Department of the His Majesty's Office (the tsarist secret police) was active in the period from 1826 to 1880. It had a wide range of competences: it supervised ministries, censored publications, monitored sectarian activities within the Orthodox Church, gathered information about people under police observation, supervised detention centres and prisons, as well as areas of resettlement of suspects and 'dangerous' individuals. The Third Department was aided by the Corps of Gendarmes. After 1830 it coordinated and supervised the foreign agency, which was mainly intended to supervise the Great Polish Emigration. In 1848, the Special Committee for Press Supervision was formed within the Third Department, the so-called *komitet buturlinovskiy* (named after its first head Dmitry Buturlin). Ten years later, Fyodor Tyutchev became its leader; he ran it until 1873.

repression, lawlessness and lack of freedom of expression; and to a Europe which opposes Russia, complaining about the fact that “none of the violations of the law, of the ethical or even civilisational principles which Europe commits, can stop the rush towards it”, as well as in the foreign context (mostly in the context of the Poles’ rejection of the idea of Slavic brotherhood). The antithesis of the ‘Russophobe’ was, on the one hand, the Orthodox patriot, strengthening the empire; and on the other, the Russophile (Slavophile). The concept was then cemented by the development of Slavophilism and Pan Slavism³ in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Tyutchev made a clear link between Russophobia and the ‘Polish question’ and the struggle of the Polish people against the empire. Justifying the policy of the tsarist regime, he brought this issue to signify a conflict between Slavs. He accused the post-partition, ‘Russophobic’ Poland of treason, rape and cruelty towards Russians, and in his poem ‘The Slavs’ (1867) he referred to the Polish people as “the Judas of the Slavs”. He was not alone in his views: each insurrection on the Vistula (1794, 1830, 1863) gave tsarist propaganda the opportunity to manifest its hostility and recall ‘the Polish betrayal’, ‘Polish ingratitude’ and ‘Polish atrocities’. Moreover, starting from Nikolai Karamzin, the nationalist interpretation of history supporting tsarist propaganda imposed the stereotype of Russia as a ‘victim’ of Poland: Poland was an enemy, and the liquidation of the Polish state was a consequence of historical justice⁴.

The word ‘Russophobia’ only entered the lexical resources of the Russian language under Stalin. It first appeared in

³ A trend in Russian social thought, developed in the 1840s-1870s. Slavophiles criticised the Europeanisation of Russia and preached the unity of the Slavs. In the era of Nicholas I interest in the Slavs under Turkish and Austrian rule intensified; this brought a pan-Slavic agenda to the tsarist regime’s foreign policy.

⁴ For more on this topic see Andrzej Nowak, Putin. Źródła imperialnej agresji [Putin. Sources of imperial aggression], Warsaw 2014.

Dmitry Ushakov's dictionary (1935-1941); then in the dictionary of Sergei Ozhegov (1949), and the so-called Academic Dictionary (1950-1965). Stalinist propaganda, which brought the creation of enemies to a state of perfection, directed the citizens' aggression against those enemies. 'Anti-Russophobic' nationalism and Great Russian chauvinism also came to function as tried and tested safety valves. In Soviet times, this question was a constant concern of academic analysis and political journalism. For example, Professor Igor Shafarevich's comprehensive treaty *Russophobia*, published in Russia in the late 1980s (i.e. during the perestroika period), dealt with Russophobic dissidents at home and abroad (Alexander Yanov, Grigory Pomierants, Alexander Galich et al.), as well as critics of the USSR ('Russophobes') in the West (Richard Pipes, Friedrich Hayek). He considered Russophobia to be a destructive force that was inhibiting the independent development of Russia. In this way, by creating a theoretical basis for the fight against both the West and the Russian intelligentsia demanding liberalisation, he directed the aggression of his fellow citizens against 'Zionists'. This was because he attributed the spread of Russophobia to the Jews, who were detached from the national culture, played a huge role in the global mass media, and could hide from any criticism behind the cloak of anti-Semitism. This thesis was eventually repeated in his books: 'The puzzle of three millennia. Jewish history from the perspective of contemporary Russia' (Moscow 2002), 'The Russian people in a battle of civilisations' (Moscow 2011), and others.

We find echoes of this nineteenth-century ideology in contemporary thought, as it constructs the 'Russian idea' and the 'Russian world'. Russian geopolitical scientists and the advocates of Eurasianism and Russian conservatism close to them, who today constitute the intellectual backbone of Russian policy, are seeking the keys to the revival of Russia's imperial power in the historical tradition. Before the enlargement of the EU and NATO, they had called for the Baltic countries (the *Pribaltika*) to be separated from Russia, as their Russophobia would interfere with the process of

Eurasian integration. Any tensions and conflicts in which Russia participates on the international stage (Kosovo, Georgia, Ukraine, Syria) would eventually come down to a clash of values between East and West. This would lead to abuses of interpretation: Russia, as they see it, is the defender of traditional values and international law; while its opponent, the West, is destroying the traditional order, breaking this law, and rejecting all things Russian.

‘Domestic’ Russophobia is always present in the considerations of Russian ultra-nationalists⁵. Since 2012 it has been the constant concern of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI), which provides expert support to the Presidential Administration⁶. In the context of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the RISI also supports the thesis of alleged Russophobia by Poland (for example the RISI expert Oleg Niemiensky, like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, has suggested that Poland aims to revise state boundaries and annex Western Ukraine to its territory). The fight against this phenomenon is justified by moves in real politics, such as the introduction to the repertoire of national holidays of the Day of National Unity, celebrated on 4 November, to honour the expulsion of the Polish army from the Kremlin in 1612, and Russian military interventions outside Russia itself in the alleged defence of Russian-speaking populations (Crimea, South Ossetia, Abkhazia).

⁵ See for example A. Savelyev, *Rusofobiya v Rossii. Analiticheskiy doklad 2006-2009 g.*

The author was a deputy in the fourth State Duma and leader of the Great Russia Party.

⁶ In 2012 the RISI group of experts launched a campaign monitoring Russophobia in Russian textbooks (<http://kuraev.ru/smf/index.php?topic=599940.0>); in 2013 it organised two conferences on Russophobia, and in 2014 the series entitled *Analytical inspections* by the RISI included the report entitled ‘Russophobia’ by Oleg Niemiensky et al.

II. RUSSOPHOBIA IN THE INFORMATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

The government of the Russian Federation attaches great importance to the development of political technologies and the information technologies that derive from them. They serve to legitimise and realise the state's domestic and foreign policy objectives. In recent years, the significance of these technologies has grown, and they have changed their nature from defensive to offensive. Moderating these messages – which portray an image of Russia and the world around it which is desirable from the authorities' point of view – is regarded as an effective and perspective way of shaping collective consciousness. What is called state propaganda is actually a kind of planned, long-term special operation, using techniques of manipulating information and elements of social control, placed in a context of deterministic rivalry with the Western world.

Russia's information campaigns are turning into battles waged with the language of aggression, excluding any possibility of dialogue or compromise. The arguments they present, which justify Russia's right to shape the international order, are intended to strengthen the belief within Russia itself that there can be no alternative to the measures the authorities are taking. The repertoire of actions taken is not sophisticated, and is reminiscent of the methods used during the Cold War. According to Russian propaganda theorists, the key to success lies in the use of a few basic principles: large-scale and long-term operations; the repetition of simplified information which pushes the recipient into an 'us and them' response; arousing the recipients' emotions; and alleging a certain 'obviousness', referring to the Russian cultural code, an inseparable part of which involves clinging to the idea of empire⁷.

⁷ An example of a comprehensive approach to the issue of the impact of information and technologies to construct the image of the enemy is the publications by the Informational Self Defence Academy, operating under the aegis of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Military Sciences of the Russian Federation. See for example, T.V. Evgenieva, V.V. Titov, *Obraz*

Thanks to their durability and repeatability, these Russian informational campaigns have had the stigmatising effect. The constant presence of this technique is confirmed by the introduction into the Russian language of consistent political slogans, labels and clichés, which in essence constitute a model description of reality⁸. Their role is to shape the public's attitudes towards current political events. Examples of this include: the conviction that the 'Russian world' beyond Russia's borders has specific rights; that the rights of this Russian-speaking population are at stake; that there has been a 'Russian spring', i.e. a patriotic awakening of the nation; that 'Banderites' (identified with fascists) are threatening the Russians and their neighbours; that the so-called 'colour revolutions' are the result of a conspiracy by the West against Russia, whereas Russian conservatism is a response to Western liberalism. According to the logic of 'us and them', this technique requires the construction of an image of the enemy (both external and internal). For example, these 'enemies' include Poland – as 'the US's Trojan horse in the EU', but also as supporters of Westernism in Russia – a fifth column, or extremists, which includes any and all critics of the authorities⁹. The arsenal of slogans and stereotypes used is constantly being supplemented and updated, as are the methods of disseminating them¹⁰.

In response to Western criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine, the Russian information arsenal has once again brought the

'vraga' kak instrument formirovaniya politicheskoy identichnosti v seti Internet: opyt sovremennoy Rossii', *Informacionnye voyny*, 2014, No. 4, pp. 22-27; <http://www.iwars.su/#!/statii/clyp>

⁸ A clear example is the propaganda slogan of 'sovereign democracy', marking a departure from the idea of liberal democracy which Yeltsin's Russia had proclaimed.

⁹ Jolanta Darczewska, The anatomy of Russian information warfare, *OSW Point of View*, 2014; http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/the_anatomy_of_russian_information_warfare.pdf

¹⁰ Jadwiga Rogoża, Witold Rodkiewicz, Potemkin conservatism. An ideological tool of the Kremlin, *OSW Point of View*, 2014; <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2015-02-03/potemkin-conservatism-ideological-tool-kremlin>

concept of Russophobia on board. The geography of Russophobia has been extended to the outside world; the term has become a key word explaining the political and psychological motives for the rejection of everything Russian. In the domestic context, a ‘Russophobe’ now means a Russian citizen who is unfavourably disposed to the government’s policy or who expresses sympathy for countries in conflict with Russia. In political practice, this stereotype stigmatises individuals who are ‘anti-state and ideologically alien’, which serves to ‘alienate’ them from the body politic. This internal aim is also served by publicising alleged expressions of Russophobia as a problem affecting the societies of NATO and EU member states; the Russian public is being mobilised in the face of this alleged threat. At the same time, however, the suggestion that adherence to Russophobia is contrary to democratic values (which *de facto* means an attack on an alien system of values) has a different external goal: to win allies or supporters of the Kremlin’s policy among Western political and intellectual elites.

III. RUSSOPHOBIA IN OFFICIAL POLITICAL LANGUAGE

The conflict in Ukraine has led to a harsher tone in Russian political language, the radicalism of which has risen in direct proportion to the scale of Kiev's resistance. Ukraine was initially presented as a state which posed a threat to the outside world, mainly as a result of the dissemination of neo-fascism and radical (sic) nationalism. Today in official propaganda, however, Ukraine is primarily a Russophobic state. Ukraine is being associated with fascist & Nazi ideologies and alleged anti-Russian phobias in order to discredit and demonise the Ukrainian 'revolution of dignity'. An important element of this information strategy is expanding the notion of 'domestic Russophobia' to Ukraine, i.e. by insisting that Ukraine is and will remain a part of the 'Russian world'¹¹.

In the context of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, the concept of Russophobia has entered the language of official policy. President Vladimir Putin has warned that the forces of anti-Semitism and Russophobia are gathering strength in the world. He emphasises that the West's stoking Russophobic sentiment in Ukraine could lead to disaster¹². Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, deeming Russophobia to be a feature of the foreign policy of certain countries, has added at the same time that it "can be cured" through dialogue¹³. Sergei Ivanov, the head of the Presidential

¹¹ Leonid Reshetnikov, *Rusofoby proderzhatsya na Ukrainie eshche maksimum 20 let*; <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26444.7/3314664/>. Interestingly the interviewer, a director of RISI and a former head of a Russian intelligence analytic group, discredits and demonises the Ukrainian and Western Russophobes, while giving them a metaphysical dimension ("the Antichrist who celebrates black masses"). He regrets that the "ungrateful" Ukrainians are dismantling monuments to Lenin, "to whom, after all, they owe the awakening of Ukrainian national consciousness."

¹² Putin: *podderzhka rusofobii privedet Ukrainu k katastrofie*; <http://mir24.tv/news/politics/11612771>

¹³ Lavrov: "rusofobiya v otnoshenii Moskvy možno izlechit"; <http://ria.ru/world/20151013/1301271122.html>

Administration, has justified the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of the Donbas as having prevented ‘Russophobes’ from carrying out ethnic cleansing¹⁴. Sergei Naryshkin, the chairman of the State Duma, sees Russophobic sentiments in European countries. At the same time he has stated that Russia has allies even in places where Russophobia and anti-Russian propaganda dominate. He has mentioned soft power as a method of combating Russophobia, in particular the promotion of Russian culture, which will neutralise the anti-Russian message¹⁵. The Russophobia argument began to appear as part of the Russian government’s official position in response to criticism of Russia by the international community. The adoption by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in June 2015 of a resolution naming Russia as an ‘aggressor state’ and declaring Crimea to be occupied territory was assessed as the result of the work of a “small but clamorous group of Russophobes”¹⁶. Attempts to relativise the official narrative depicting the Red Army as the principal liberator of Europe and destroyer of fascism are also deemed to be Russophobic.

Official statements by Russian politicians are focused on ‘external Russophobia’. On the one hand, they present this as a serious threat to the information security of the Russian Federation, and as an ideological instrument in the fight against Russia. On the other, in their fight for allies in the West, they treat Russophobia as a specific criterion for assessing the policy of a given country towards Russia and the ‘Russian world’. This was clearly expressed by Konstantin Kosachov, the chairman of the Federation Council’s foreign affairs committee; in November 2014, during the 8th Congress of the Kremlin’s Russkiy Mir Foundation, he said that a full-scale war was being waged against the concept of the

¹⁴ Interview with Sergey Ivanov in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*; <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26294/3172985/0>

¹⁵ Sergei Naryshkin’s statement at the World Congress of Russian Press; <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26392/3269711/>

¹⁶ Statement by Konstantin Kosachov, the head of the Federation Council’s foreign affairs committee; <http://vz.ru/news/2015/6/26/752984.html>

'Russian world'. Its goal was "an attempt to perpetuate the world's belief in the guilt of Russia, to embed elements of Russophobia in the social consciousness, and to present Russia as the source of all evil in the world."¹⁷

¹⁷ Russkiy mir - eto russkiy otvet na globalizatsiyu; <http://www.vrns.ru/society/3389/#.Vh-NT-HSD1g>

IV. RUSSOPHOBIA UNDER SPECIAL SCRUTINY

In practice, organised activity by analysts and experts plays a specific role in Russian informational operations¹⁸. They develop the theoretical basis for such operations, and they also participate in their implementation.

A specifically Russian characteristic is the preparation in advance of a body of literature which will justify the actions to be taken. During the implementation of new ideological and informational projects, a catalogue of arguments which have been drawn up in advance is popularised in the media (usually through a limited pool of experts – opinion-formers in the traditional media, or through an information network, created in a short time, which can propagate online the thesis which the Kremlin desires).

This mechanism is also used in instrumentalising the term ‘Russophobia’ in propaganda. As mentioned above, since 2012 the study of this issue in research centres and think tanks has increased. The regional approach is characteristic. Specialised personnel conduct research into varieties of national Russophobia: Ukrainian, Belarusian, Baltic, Polish, and also German and American. This detailed approach to the problem is intended to demonstrate that Russophobia is a global problem which Russia is forced to counteract. One signal showing that the anti-Russophobic campaign will be intensified in the near future is the conference entitled ‘Russophobia and the information war against Russia’, held on 25-26 September 2015 in Moscow. It was organised by the CIS-EMO International Monitoring Organisation¹⁹, supported

¹⁸ For example, a leading think-tank such as the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) reports directly to the Presidential Administration; its researchers involved in projects related to the influence of information work at prestigious state universities; and the so-called NGOs are actually funded by grants from the state.

¹⁹ CIS-EMO is an ostensibly nongovernmental organisation, established in 2003, dedicated to monitoring elections for compliance with democratic rights outside Russia and organising election observation missions. In 2014

by the government, and the 'Public Diplomacy' Foundation for the Development of Civil Society Institutions personally associated with it (they share the same experts). The conference was given wide media coverage, and the participants' statements are still being promoted and distributed online²⁰.

An analysis of the speeches made by the participants in the meeting (during the first day, thirty lectures devoted to Russophobia were delivered) confirms the degree of its social engineering. We should expect the theses put forward here to be used in the Russian media's current information policy. They will also form the basis for the organisation of international projects (seminars, sponsored publications). The aim is to disseminate several specific ideas, describing Russophobia in the following terms:

- as an external threat to national security, by helping to shape an atmosphere of ethnic intolerance, comparable to anti-Semitism, and of aggression against Russia as a state, the Russian ethnic group (*russskikh*) and the Russian cultural heritage;
- as a form of cultivating enmity and hatred towards Russia, used to destabilise the situation in the 'post-Soviet space', and as a weapon in the information war conducted by the West against Russia, which could undermine the global system of security;

it joined in the informational campaign discrediting the policies of Ukraine. The head of CIS-EMO is Aleksandr Biedritsky, a researcher specialising in the problems of 'American informational domination' among other matters. Information can be found on CIS-EMO's website, at <http://www.cis-emo.net/en>

²⁰ Statements by the participants can be found on the CIS-EMO website. See also the statement by the head of the organisation, Aleksei Kochetkov: "The degree of Russophobia in the West is now greater than during the Cold War"; <http://www.cis-emo.net/ru/news/kochetkov-uroven-rusofobii-na-zapade-seychas-vyshe-chem-vo-vremya-holodnoy-voyny>. The conference was also attended by representatives of France, Poland, Serbia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Estonia.

- as a domestic problem for Russia, defined as that part of the society (especially young people) which succumbs to liberal ideology and sympathises with the policies of Western countries.

The materials from this conference confirm that ‘Russophobia’ is becoming an increasingly wide-ranging concept, stigmatising not only the societies of other countries, but also the citizens of Russia itself. This extended interpretation of the concept allows its use as a double-headed informational weapon. It also allows a continuation of the fight with the enemy, both external and internal; the latter used to be referred to as the ‘fifth’ (so-called foreign agents) and ‘sixth columns’ (so-called liberals).

The conference’s participants drew up some general recommendations as to how to combat Russophobia. The list of the measures proposed does not go beyond methods already known for responding to threats in the informational sphere (legal, organisational, counter-propaganda). They included the following forms of activity:

- increasing repression against Russia’s own population, through the amendment of the laws on fighting extremist activity and the Criminal Code, and criminalising manifestations of Russophobia as incitement to ethnic feuds;
- the establishment of organisations monitoring Russophobic activity and preventing it in the informational and legal spheres, for example by initiating legal challenges for defamation;
- the creation of a network of centres to counter anti-Russian rhetoric in Europe, based on organisations which are either Russian or promoting Russia; intensifying the influence of information through the creation of foreign-language portals;
- increased work with human rights organisations and European institutions dealing with the protection of individual

rights and intellectual elites, in order to disseminate the opinion that Russophobia is a specific variant of racism (*sic*).

The approach to the issue of Russophobia presented at the Moscow conference confirms the trends noted earlier. The representatives of the Russian intellectual elite, operating on political instructions, continue to use the rhetoric of 'war', and the actions they propose to employ resemble the planning for a special operation.

The opening of this 'anti-Russophobic front' is evidence of the Kremlin's commitment to the thesis that the West is waging an undeclared war against Russia. It also represents the opening of another front in the communications 'war' against critics of the Kremlin's policy.

V. (ANTI)DIALOGUE WITH POLAND AS PART OF THE RUSSIAN IDENTITY DISCOURSE

‘Polish Russophobia’ is a special case for several reasons: for Russia, our country is both a historical problem, as part of the former Russian Empire and an ‘eternal’ enemy of the Empire, and also a civilisational problem: Poland’s civilisational choices in both distant and more recent history have collided with Russia’s geo-cultural and geopolitical plans.

For this reason, at least, Poland is an integral part of the imperial discourse of identity. As Aleksei Pushkov, the head of the foreign affairs committee of the State Duma, has said, Poland is “consistently number one on the list of Russophobic countries”²¹. ‘Russophobic’ Poland is also a subject which is well-rehearsed and well-documented in the propaganda literature, and serves as propaganda in popular science literature.

Most recently this idea has been clearly over-represented on Russian television, serving to convince its own people and Russians abroad of the superiority of the ‘Russian world’, and its uniqueness and moral superiority over the Western world. A model example of this is ‘analytical’ programme ‘Post-script with Aleksei Pushkov’, hosted by the above-mentioned politician. This programme is broadcast on Tsentr TV on Saturday evenings, in a prime-time viewing slot. In just one of a series of programmes, Russian-speaking viewers learned that Poland (“the hyena of Europe”) was founded on the ruins of the Russian Empire in 1918, and it immediately manifested imperial ambitions for domination in Eastern Europe. The programme focuses on the historical fate of territory located in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, which Poland ‘colonised’ after the war of 1920.

²¹ See for example Pushkov’s ‘Poland - the hyena of Europe’, a programme broadcast on 31 January 2015; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=656h-q6eoDQ>

During the twenty years of this ‘occupation’, hundreds of uprisings by Ukrainians and Belarusians were allegedly suppressed, bloody pacifications were conducted, and insurgents imprisoned in concentration camps in Bereza Kartuska and Biała Podlaska. In 1934 Poland allegedly entered into an alliance with Hitler in order to divide up Czechoslovakia, and during the war it participated in the Holocaust, as was confirmed by American and Canadian historians revealing the crimes in Jedwabne. The programme’s guests, researchers Bogdan Bezpalko and Oleg Nazarov²² and the editor-in-chief of *Nash Sovremennik* Stanislav Kuniayev, also blamed Poland for the outbreak of World War II (“Seeing as the Poles blame Stalin, they should know that the responsibility should be shared by Beck”)²³.

‘Post-script with Aleksei Pushkov’ is one of many Russian television programmes dedicated to the struggle for the historical consciousness and political identity of Russians and the ‘Russian world’ – although this one is particularly shocking in terms of its heavy use of historical pseudo-facts and its abuses of interpretation. This struggle is constructed in opposition to the West, which has supposedly undertaken centuries of conquest and expansion eastwards. The stereotypes it employs are updated to meet current political needs: in this case, to prove that ‘the advocate and promoter of democracy in Ukraine’ is not morally predestined for this role. The main message of the programme’s author was

²² These are ‘experts on call’, who support Kremlin propaganda in the media. It is worth noting that Polish issues, including controversial issues in Polish-Russian relations, are the topic of many Russian historians: Natalia Lebedeva, Inessa Yazhborovska, Mikhail Narinsky, Aleksandr Guryanov, Nikita Petrov et al. Some of them represented Russia in the Group for Difficult Matters project, which resulted in the joint preparation of *White stains, black stains. Difficult issues in Polish-Russian relations*, edited by Adam Daniel Rotfeld and Anatoly V. Torkunov, Warsaw 2010. However, their presence in popular-scientific discourse in Russia is imperceptible. This media space is dominated by historians who expand the scale of lies and the manipulation of historical facts (such as Natalia Narochnitska, Oleg Nazarov, Oleg Nemiensky and Stanislav Kuniayev).

²³ Józef Beck, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland (1932-1939).

to justify his appeal to the authority of those Western historians and politicians, as well as Russian experts, who all confirm the stereotypes drawn from Stalinist propaganda.

Most of the stereotypes of Poland currently being deployed derive from the imperial propaganda arsenal (both Tsarist and Stalinist). They have been catalogued again in numerous recent books²⁴. These include a book by the above-mentioned Kuniayev entitled *The aristocracy and us*²⁵, first published in 2002. In his study, the 'Judas of the Slavs' undergoes a smooth metamorphosis into the 'white Pole' (referring to the anti-Bolshevik 'White' movement). The concepts of the 'West's (or the Allies') watchdog' and the 'militant Russophobe' also remain constant throughout history. The only 'original' innovation which can be identified is the image of Poland as "the *spetsnaz* of Europe", as we read in the book, "a Europe of bloody colonisation and inquisition".

In Stalinist parlance, notions such as 'the white Pole' indicated an 'ideologically alien element', and they perform a similar function today. The 'conservative' Kuniayev consistently disarms "liberal myths", one of which he even claims to be "the participation of Russia in the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland". He also remains faithful to the tradition: the Jewish members of the NKVD ordered the massacre in Katyń. Also according to tradition, Russia remains a 'victim' of Poland in its own perception. Kuniayev

²⁴ See for example Dmitri Zhukov, *Pol'sha - tsepnj pies Zapada* (Moscow 2009), or *Sekretj pol'skoj politiki 1935-1945. Rassekrechennye dokumenty Sluzhby Vneshney Razvedki Rossijskoj Federacii* (Moscow 2010).

²⁵ Stanislav Kuniayev, *Shliakhta i my*. A version of this book was published in May 2002 in *Nash Sovremennik*. The book has been reprinted several times, in 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010 and 2012. In 2006 it was published under the title *Russkij polonez* [The Russian polonaise]; the author has expanded the latest edition with new chapters devoted to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Katyn massacre, the Warsaw Uprising and the crash of the Polish plane near Smolensk in 2010, among others. The book is constantly available in bookstores, and is advertised as "a harsh but convincing refutation of the professional counterfeiter's of history, both Polish and Russian"; <http://www.labirint.ru/books/365246/>

definitely sharpens this stereotype, writing about the four Polish expeditions into 'Russian' lands (in 1612, alongside Napoleon in 1812, 1920 and 1941). In his opinion, the 'Crusade' of 1941 is confirmed by the vast number of Polish fascists fighting on Hitler's side (of which 60,280 were sent into Russian captivity).

Kuniayev, as one of many representatives of the so-called conservative / patriotic trend in Russian analytics and literature, is ready for action. As the editor of *Nash Sovremennik* (since 1989), he has become famous as a eulogist and ardent defender of Joseph Stalin. As a 'social activist' he is a frequent guest on Russian television. He also combats his ideological opponents in the pages of his magazine. In his critical reviews, he has for example repeatedly attacked *Novaya Polsha*, a monthly published in Russian and edited by Jerzy Pomianowski, accusing it in a public denunciation in 2010 of "Russophobia, anti-Russian activities and the dissemination of overtly extremist content"²⁶.

*Novaya Polsha*²⁷ is a periodical addressed to the Russian intelligentsia, discussing the Polish experience of the country's democratic transformation, and focused on cultural events. When invited to participate in dialogue, Pomianowski avoids didacticism or fierce polemics.

Meanwhile, the informational strategy implemented by Pushkov and Kuniayev is fundamentally a denial of dialogue: its aim is in fact to stigmatise the enemy, i.e. to assign it negative qualities and values, and thus to alienate it, which is intended to foster a sense of imperial pride in belonging to the 'Russian world'. It is worth noting that Pushkov and Kuniayev today represent the main Russian trend in this kind of discourse of identity. This kind of

²⁶ See *Novaya Pol'sha oshiblas s protivnikom*; <http://www.svoboda.org/article/1981051.html>

²⁷ <http://www.novpol.ru/>

‘dialogue’ with Poland is only one of many such being conducted in parallel: in 2013, the Year of Kalinouski²⁸, a similar approach was taken with Belarus, and was intensified in 2015²⁹.

²⁸ Kastuś Kalinoŭski (Konstanty Kalinowski), the leader of the January Uprising (1863-4) on the territories lying in present-day Belarus.

²⁹ Bogdan Bezpalko, a Russian expert on Belarusian matters, and deputy director of the Ukrainian and Belarusian Center of Lomonosov University, has expressed his regrets, for example, that “Belarus could go Westwards without any Maidans” because “moderate Belarusian nationalism is gradually excluding the Belarusians from the Russian world.” Bezpalko has blamed Russian strategists for the current state of the Belarusian people’s national consciousness: “Russia bet on working with the elites. But instead it should have been working with the masses, to create organisations and social movements.” See: Bez vsiakikh ‘majdanov’ Belorussiya mozhnet uyti na Zapad; <http://www.regnum.ru/news/poli/1991411.html>

VI. RUSSOPHOBIA AS THE KREMLIN'S PROBLEM

The current strategy of the fight against Russophobia is primarily aimed at domestic consumption: attacking 'Russophobes' is a way of protecting Russian society itself from having any doubts about the Kremlin's policy. In this context, building up an image of Russophobic countries is a tool for shaping the neo-imperial political identity of Russia's citizens, of mobilising them in the face of real or alleged threats, and of restoring psychological comfort to them in the face of the failure of the Kremlin's actions (as in Ukraine). In reality, Russia today has no reason to be afraid of the West or treat Poland as its *'spetsnaz'*. The aggression, humiliation or regret over the ingratitude of the Poles or Ukrainians, who see no place for themselves in the 'Russian world', are ideologically motivated, as the Poles and Ukrainians have called the very idea of the empire as a national and civilisational guarantor of Russia's greatness into question. Russophobia, as part of this neo-imperial discourse of identity, is an irrational argument, because it assumes that the Ukrainians and Belarusians should give up their national identity in favour of belonging to the 'Russian world'. In this light, the mythologised stereotype of Russophobic countries remains a simple explanation for the ongoing tensions in relations between Russia and the West, and the crowning argument in conspiracy theories about a treacherous world. It is a manifestation of the negative programme of Russian policy throughout history. A positive programme (attractive, ideologically inspiring) has never been formulated as of this moment. As a result, Russia is turning towards its imperial past and the traditional argument of force.

The information campaigns using the stereotype of Russophobia are leading to a consolidation of political nationalism. At the same time, they constitute a medium for Russian chauvinism, which in a multi-ethnic country can have opposite consequences to those intended. It is easy to predict the outcome if Russia continues communicating with the world in this way, on the basis of the opposite of dialogue – especially as the current Russian

discourse, expanding the geography of Russophobia, has turned the Russophobe into a universal enemy. In the short term, it promises to increase the level of aggression in Russian political language, the further self-isolation of Russia, and a continued attitude of haughty isolationism – as in the days of the tsarist regime and the Soviet era.

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