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Ihor RUSHCHENKO
**THE IDEOLOGY
OF RASHISM**

Monograph

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

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This is the third book by the author dedicated to the Russian war against Ukraine, preceded by "Russo-Ukrainian Hybrid War: A Sociologist's Perspective" (2015) and "War of Civilizations: Anatomy of the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict" (2020). "The Ideology of Rashism" explores the spiritual component of Russian imperialism. The author examines rashism as a cultural code of Russian civilization that has remained unchanged for five centuries and poses a threat to international order. The book can be valuable for the academic community, humanities students, politicians, and activists-anyone seeking a deeper understanding of Putinism and the reasons behind Russian aggression in Ukraine.

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INTRODUCTION

It was between 4 am and 5 am on February 24, 2022, when duty officers of Ukraine's air defense forces saw an ominous picture on their display monitors: hundreds of points were simultaneously approaching the territory of Ukraine from where it borders on Belarus and the Russian Federation, i.e., from the North, East, and South. Neither the Ukrainian military, nor army officers anywhere else in the world may had ever witnessed such a cluster of strike aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles in action before. At about 4 am, the first explosions could be heard across the country, causing tens of millions of Ukrainians startle from their sleep at the same time. That was the turning point, when history as a whole and the paths of ordinary people were divided into "before" and "after". Thus, a new European war began, encompassing the whole continent — a tremendous, brutal, and merciless war unleashed by Russia aiming at destroying Ukraine as a sovereign state and wiping out the Ukrainian people as an original ethnic group. A whole number of questions are now bothering Ukrainians at home and abroad alike. What could have served as preconditions for the full-blown invasion? What twisted logic brought the idea of starting a full-scale war in the twenty-first century Europe in the minds of Russians, both common people and the elite, its military and political leadership? What was the force that drove the Russians' thoughts, pushing them on the path of blood and destruction?

It is not for the first time that these questions have arisen. They were discussed among politicians, scholars, and the general public as far back as 2014, with the beginning of the open phase of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine and the Crimea annexation. I raised similar questions in my monograph titled *The Russian-Ukrainian Hybrid War: A Sociologist's View* published in 2015. At the time, I was not the only one to believe that Putin's deranged, deviant

personality was to be blamed for starting the war, and that his actions against Ukraine were, as a matter of fact, the embodiment of his personal war and the wish to revenge, the realization of transgressive tendencies, and as such, the reverberation of his sick consciousness. In the aforementioned monograph, it was argued that the eastern ruler demonstrated a criminal personality type, which was in itself a deviation for the leader of a country with nuclear weapons. Moreover, I consider him a born political criminal in the spirit of the old-school definition suggested by Cesare Lombroso and referring to a special cluster of people, although I am well aware that the Italian criminologist's hypothesis about the existence of *Homo delinquens* remains unproven [1, p. 75-91].

Experts from various countries, and analysts from the intelligence agencies among them, have tried to penetrate the Russian autocrat's logics and consciousness. Various authoritative opinions were expressed as for some mental disorders or psychopathy from which the president of the largest country in the world might suffer. However ridiculous it may seem, but it is a typical problem of non-democratic societies, as in fact, a dictator can well elude any control of politicians, journalists, or the public, and thus, be left free to slowly degrade as a personality or simply go mad in the so-called "free-fall mode" over the decades of his rule. Moreover, the paranoid consciousness of the national leader in an unfree country may become a reason for its external expansion.

Suspicious of the Russian leader's mental disorder emerged quite a long time ago. In 2015, a report in *The USA Today* made public the following fact: In 2008, a group of American psychologists commissioned by the Pentagon compiled a classified report on the Kremlin dictator's mental state. In particular, the author of the above-mentioned publication referred to Brenda Connors, an expert in movement pattern analysis at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, who participated in the examination by correspondence. The experts had allegedly diagnosed Mr Putin with Asperger's syndrome and suggested that the Russian leader had had a traumatic childhood negatively affecting his psychological profile [2]. However, officials from the military and intelligence services have always been cautious about making conclusions in public, referring to lack of possibility to examine the "patient".

In 2022, American psychiatrist James Fallon gave his view on Mr Putin's mental health. He believed the Kremlin dictator to be a psychopath showing certain signs of sadism and narcissistic personality disorder [3]. Apparently, Mr Putin's psychological state has been regressing in parallel with the progression of his somatic diseases; he is suspected to be afflicted with cancer and Parkinson's disease. Some experts argue that taking strong medication provides additional mental work load and thus, can trigger schizophrenia. French President Macron was amazed at how Putin had changed when the two leaders met at a 7-meter table in early February 2022, the latter even becoming an Internet meme. Now, according to the Newsweek, experts in remote diagnostics are trying to identify Russian President's illnesses by studying television broadcasts of his meetings with associates. Confidential reports are being drawn up and filed with intelligence agencies [4]. However, the question remains, whether Mr Putin's illness is a decisive factor in changing the political course of the Russian Federation and initiating its imperial military expansion?

During the years of the Russian-Ukrainian war, my personal views on the reasons of the Russian aggression have changed in a certain way. No one will ever absolve Putin of responsibility for his bloody adventures in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine. However, another actor should also stand trial, and tin actor is the people of Russia. At the very beginning of the large-scale invasion, some Ukrainians hoped a storm would break out in the Russian public opinion, and Russians would rise up against the military action. But nothing of the kind happened. In late February 2022, the opposition within the Russian Federation had been finally crashed, with Alexei Navalny and his associates either in prison or in forced exile. The dictator received a *carte blanche*; he could easily predict that the majority of the population would heartily welcome the beginning of the war, and that his personal rating would skyrocket again, as it did in the spring of 2014, when the Crimea was annexed. In the first weeks of the attack on Ukraine, and only isolated cases of non-conformity were registered, when citizens disagreeing with the war held single-person protests (gathering together for protest events in Russia is prohibited by law); however, such protesters faced aggression from Mr Putin's supporters.

Russians generally supported the attack on Ukraine. This is eloquently evidenced by the polls conducted by VCIOM (abbr.: Russian Public Opinion Research Center), which is considered to be the most authoritative sociological service in Russia (see Table 1).

Table 1

Distribution of answers to the question “Do you support or oppose the decision to conduct a special military operation?” (in %)

	12 April	24 April	12 May	26 May	12 July	25 July
I rather support	72	72	74	72	73	72
I would rather not support	19	20	17	18	19	17
Hard to say	9	9	8	10	8	11

[5]

The data provided in the table shows consistent results: $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents support Mr Putin’s policy. So, what difference it makes whether the Russian leader has any psychiatric diagnoses or not, if the population supports him, follows him, loves him, supports his aggressive actions and does not seem to seek any political changes? We would like to quote the words of Stanislav Aseyev, a Ukrainian journalist who spent 962 days in captivity in Donetsk and afterwards wrote a book giving it the eloquent title of *Vizoliatsii*, or *In Isolation*; this book was later translated into English and published in the US as *The Torture on Paradise street* [6]. In his interview to the *Ekho Kavkaza* radio station Stanislav Aseyev said the following: «*Putin is nothing more than a manifestation of the spirit of the Russian people, something they have all been living with since the days of the Soviet Russia, and they just cannot get rid of it*» [7]. One can only argue with S. Aseyev as for the historical framework of the given phenomenon; in my opinion, the Kremlin leader’s ideas are built upon a solid foundation created by the Russian public consciousness, whose roots go even further into the historical space of Russia. This monograph is aimed, among other things, at proving this hypothesis.

Europeans find it rather difficult to accept the idea of the collective guilt born by the Russian people, as Europeans are generally used to interpreting guilt in legal terms and within the framework of legal procedures, where responsibility lies on individuals but not nations as a whole. In August 2022, a correspondence discussion took place between German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. The former speaking at a press conference

and responding to a question about the advisability of imposing a blanket visa ban against Russians wishing to visit the EU, said that the responsibility for the war outbreak in Ukraine lies on Russia's leadership rather than on ordinary citizens, and referred to the combat action in Ukraine as "Putin's war". The Ukrainian official immediately tweeted the following: «*This is Russia's, not just Putin's war. Not Putin, but actual Russian soldiers come from Russia to kill, torture and destroy. Russians overwhelmingly support the war; cheer missile strikes on Ukrainian cities and murder of Ukrainians*» [8]. Indeed, peoples cannot be legally responsible for anything, but in order to carry out scientific analysis of the situation in Russia, it is important to understand the state of public consciousness and the reasons for masses to heartily welcome the war.

Whereas it is difficult to definitely diagnose V. Putin, a name for the disease of the Russian public opinion is quite easy to give, it being RASHISM. Besides, President Putin himself, and even the phenomenon known as *putinism* is nothing more but an expression of *rashism* in its most aggressive form posing a colossal threat to the neighbours and beyond. Consequently, the question I am trying to answer in this book is the following: Why did the Russians so easily give up the ideology of freedom and democracy that used to be popular in the 1990s, and so willingly let the ominous rashism absorb their thoughts, moods, and worldview? Racism as a term is more or less new, but the corresponding phenomenon, in my opinion, can be traced throughout many centuries, in fact, as far back as the emergence of Moscow and the state of Muscovy. And so, I am going to try to trace the genesis of racism as far back as possible, to pierce the darkness of centuries, so to say. But first, let us review the definitions and concepts offered by contemporary scholars.

The first person to identify a new dangerous trend in the ideology of the so-called "new Russia" i.e. the state emerging after the collapse of the USSR might have been Dzhokhar Dudayev, the then-president of the Republic of Ichkeria (or Chechnya) and the legendary leader of the Chechen people's struggle for independence. In an interview in 1995, he called *russism* a hateful ideology, a serious chronic disease worse than fascism, nazism, and racism taken together [9]. It should be reminded that D. Dudayev was killed in 1996 due to Boris Yeltsin's personal order. The president of Ichkeria

used a slightly different lexical form, *russism*, but it is fully consistent with the *rashism* variant in terms of content. And *rashism* as a neologism has existed since 1990 [10]. The *rashism* term began its separate life at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the frequency of its use is cyclical. A certain pattern can be observed: the topic of rashism in public discourse is significantly amplified at times when Russia starts moving from the “peaceful” imperial policy to another colonial war. Several cycles can be observed in the 21st century alone, e.g.: August 2008 (Russia’s attack at Georgia); 2014-2015 (the annexation of the Crimea and the start of hostilities in the Donbas); and finally, February 2022 (full-scale war against Ukraine). During all these periods both politicians and the general public brought up the topic of rashism with renewed intensity.

With the start of the full-scale war, Ukrainians began to refer to the Russian occupiers as *rashists*, and also to use such definitions as *Russian fascists* and *orcs* (the literary image of repulsive and dirty creatures with low intelligence, who can only fight and do evil, can be found, among other sources, in the fantasy books by J.R.R. Tolkien). In fact, this is a good example of information warfare often used in wartime, which aims at dehumanizing the enemy both by the state propaganda and mass media. On the other hand, less than five days after the war had started, the Russian occupiers rejected the image of “liberators” and began to resort to brutal tactics of terror, destruction of residential areas, executions and tortures of both civilians and prisoners of war. The Russians’ disregard for the laws and customs of war, their rejection of international law, even their appearance and their generally low cultural level urged Ukrainians to justify and support the fantasy terms used by Ukrainian propaganda. Sala Baker, the New Zealand actor and stuntman playing Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings*, addressed Ukrainians with words of support as if on behalf of the orc diaspora of the world, using trolling techniques and some film footage. He asked Ukrainians not to call their opponents by this name, because «*Orcs wouldn’t shoot women and children, steal washing machines and defecate on carpets. We are warriors, and not a crowd of scumbags*» [11].

The *rashism* term is based on the homophony of several words, namely: 1) the English word for Russia, which is used in Russian as a derogatory reference to Russia as such; 2) a derivative of the

word *fascism*, and 3) a neologism that sounds like *racism*. Overall, the new word has proven to be a successful and, one might say, effective tool in the information warfare. In Russia itself, it is either preferred to be ignored (in the official media) or considered as an example of the so-called “Russophobia” and conspiracy against Russia. Still, another viewpoint exists, rather an extravagant one. Ivan Okhlobystin, a popular Russian actor and a radical nationalist and great supporter of Putin himself and his war alike, tries to provide the word with a positive meaning, writing this text in social media: «*Rashism is good. Rashism is the ability to consider oneself involved in something deeply right, spiritual, something that originates from the understanding that Russia is now the last bastion holding back the black wave of faceless individualism, cynical consumerism, animal lust and indifferent cruelty*» [12].

In May 2022, Ukrainian parliamentarians called for spreading this term; in particular, the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Humanitarian and Information Policy supported the initiative of Ukrainian scholars, journalists, political scientists, and civil society to popularize and recognize the *rashism* term at the national and international levels [13]. On April 23, 2022, Ukrainian President V. Zelensky spoke at the press conference held underground at a subway station, commenting on the new term in the sense that the concept would enter the history textbooks and would be studied in various countries around the world [14].

The *rashism* term is also revealed in the analytical reflections by various Western intellectuals concerning the events in Ukraine. For example, Stefano Caprio, an Italian expert on Russia and Putinism, believes that *rashism* is a new world ideology emerging after almost a hundred-year pause (meaning the appearance of fascism and Nazism in the so-called *La Belle Époque*), and presenting an apology for conquest in the post-global world, when the war is justified as a tool used to prevent real or imaginary dangers: «*It is a new form of fascism and racism wrapped together; not eugenic but “spiritual” and theocratic*» [15].

Timothy Snyder, an American historian, considers Putin’s regime to be fascist and emphasizes the fact that fascism has never been defeated ideologically, and has every opportunity to revive under certain historical circumstances. The American historian also used the concept of *schizofascism* in his column for the NYT, which

describes the right appropriated by Russia to determine who is a fascist in the modern world. It is this technique that is widely used in the information war against Ukraine. *«Calling others fascists while being a fascist is the essential Putinist practice. Jason Stanley, an American philosopher, calls it “undermining propaganda”. I have called it “schizofascism». The Ukrainians have the most elegant formulation. They call it “ruscism»»* [16]. To preserve the truth, it should be mentioned that the term “schizofascism” or, in its full form, “schizophrenic fascism” was coined by Michael Epstein, an Emory University professor, in relation to Russia [17].

In March 2022, the Urban Dictionary published an article with the following definition: *«Rushism is a form of fascism, with disdain for liberal democracy and the western parliamentary system.... It embraces a cult of violence against everyone not identified Russian»* [18]. After Russia’s attack against Ukraine, Wikipedia published a number of articles in different languages depicting the essence of the phenomenon but spelling it *ruscism*. In the relevant category, Wikipedia gives a lengthy definition of the phenomenon, obviously integrating statements suggested by different authors: *«**Ruscism**, also known as **Rashism**, [a] **Russism**, [b] or **Russian fascism**, [c] is a term used by a number of scholars, politicians and publicists to describe the political ideology and social practices of the Russian state in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and especially during the rule of Vladimir Putin. “Ruscism” and “Russism” are portmanteaus combining the words ‘Russian’ and ‘fascism’; “Rashism” is a rough transcription of the Russian and Ukrainian equivalent (also a portmanteau). It is also used to refer to the ideology of Russian military expansionism, and has been used as a label to describe an undemocratic system and nationality cult mixed with ultranationalism and a cult of personality. That transformation was described as based on the ideas of the “special civilizational mission” of the Russians, such as Moscow as the third Rome and expansionism, which manifests itself in anti-Westernism and supports regaining former lands by conquest»* [19]. Thus, we can state the emergence of a new terminological tradition: the widespread use of the term “rashism” to refer to both the ideology of the so-called Putinism and the aggressive policy pursued by the Russian Federation towards its neighbors and the world as a whole.

The topic of rashism has been picked up by numerous Ukrainian researchers. For example, a historian Larysa Yakubova, considers modern rashism (or Putinism) to be the third form of Russian fascism. But while the previous ones were marginal ideological trends (based on concepts elaborated by Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954) and Alexander Dugin (born 1962)), modern rashism is both the state theory and practice [20]. Volodymyr Ohryzko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in 2007-2009, analyzes a number of specific features of rashism and provides a detailed definition of the term: «*the embodiment of racist, xenophobic, chauvinistic, populist ideology, which, despite its obvious anti-democratic nature, is supported by the majority of the Russian population and is implemented in Russia's aggressive and criminal foreign policy*» [21].

How is war possible in the twenty-first century, when so much has been said about preserving peace? How is it possible in an era when aggressive war is defined as a crime, and a powerful international institution (the UN) has been established with the main task to preserve peace and eliminate conflicts leading to war? It is necessary to mention the fact that Russia has assumed the powers of a permanent member of the UN Security Council, thus making a commitment to fulfill the goals of the UN Charter. And it is this very country that is committing a large-scale international crime of aggression, despite international condemnation and attempts made by Western politicians to dissuade Putin from taking aggressive actions. In our opinion, this would not have been possible if the minds of Russians had not been filled with a new (?) ideology, which is defined by the term “rashism”. There are important reasons to make the rashism ideology an object of scientific research, given the hidden sides of the phenomenon and epistemological difficulties, when rashism allegedly has no canonical theory and no single center that produces and disseminates relevant ideas in Russia itself, and the direct bearers of the ideology renounce its name. However, several questions remain unclear and controversial. On what basis and in what period of time did the ideology of rashism emerge? Who is the author of the new worldview? What elements and postulates does modern Russian ideology consist of? To which classification cluster can racism be attributed? Why was it possible that the new ideology has quickly filled the minds of broad layers of the Russian

society? What danger does rashism present to the peoples of Europe and the world as a whole? These issues, as well as many other ones, are addressed in the present monograph. I hope that the answers found will not be trivial, and that the methods of finding the truth will lie within the framework of scientific methodology.

From the methodological point of view, we strive to adhere to several basic principles: sociology, functionalism, civilizationism, and historicism. Firstly, we confine to the sociological discourse, using both general scientific and more specific concepts and approaches used in sociology. Secondly, we believe that it is advisable to adhere to the systemic and functional approaches, e.g., in this paper ideology is considered as a subsystem of the social system performing certain important functions for society. Thirdly, we consider it fruitful for the purposes of the research to treat civilizationism as a scientific paradigm for studying social entities that are extended over time and maintain an unchanging socio-cultural code. Fourthly, we consider the object of study to be dynamic, which requires considering it within the framework of the social change concept, and to this end the historical and genetic method is applied, thus making it possible to receive a more or less reliable picture of the rashism ideology development both in time and space. Fifth, a specific criterion of rashism is used, namely, the Russians' attitude to the "Ukrainian Question". This is exactly the same scheme which would be used while analysing ideology of Hitlerism and including the "Jewish Question" as an acid test for the German Nazism.

I would also like to add an important etymological issue – the correct spelling of the key terms. The book has three distinct notions (realities):

- *Rus* as an ancient form of the Ukrainian state and the endonym of Ukrainians (*Rus* and *rusychi*);
- Russia (an imperial state whose population is Russian);
- The ethnonym *Ruskiye*, i.e. the people who are the titular ethnic group in Russia.

The translation of these terms has not yet been standardized, because the old rule of always writing *Russian* obscures the important semantic difference between the notions and is used in imperial vocabulary.

The monograph uses the following rule: the ethnonym and derivative phrases are spelled as *Ruskiy* (singular) or *Ruskiye* (plural), e.g.: *Ruskiy mir*. But where the Kyivan state becomes the topic of discussion the word *Rus* is used and the corresponding derivatives, such as *Rusychi* and *Rus language*. Russia in the sense of a modern state and the Russian people as citizens of this state (the ethnic diversity in Russia being rather large and including Chechens, Chukchis, Buryats and many other ethnic groups) are respectively *Russia* and *Russian(s)*.

Thus, a problem of high topicality is presented, and the research tasks are formulated, together determining the logics and structure of the monograph. The book opens with general issues and then proceeds to more specific ones.

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CHAPTER 1

RASHISM LASTING FOR 500 YEARS

In the first chapter, we will touch upon the theoretical and historical aspects of rashism as a specific ideology. Firstly, we will strive to place rashism within the framework of the theory of ideology; secondly, we will consider its historical origins and forms that already existed before the era of Putinism; thirdly, we will reveal the main features of rashism in the modern world.

1.1. RASHISM AS A LOCAL FORM OF IDEOLOGY

The first secular ideologies appeared in an era when religious concepts no longer met the needs of early modern society. Unifying ideas and colossal ideal models did not lose any significance; moreover, they even gained it, because social changes on the European continent accelerated after the French Revolution, and the future became uncertain, while the foundations of solidarity, which used to be secured by religiosity, are being destroyed. Ideology should have played the role of a system-forming factor in the collective consciousness, but various ideologies arose often having a mutually exclusive character.

The first meaning of the term *ideology* had little resemblance to the modern use of the word. This neologism, literally meaning “the science of ideas”, was proposed by the French intellectual Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836). Together with his soulmates called *ideologues*, he worked on accelerating the arrival of a free educated

society based on legal principles and organized in a rational way. This was a typical attitude of the Enlightenment era, and the *ideologues* saw the way to renewal in streamlining the thinking process. De Tracy's main work is the four-volume *Foundations of Ideology* (French: *Éléments d'Idéologie*) [1]. By ideology, the author understood the "theory of theories" and tried to develop a methodology that would explain the nature of all sciences, regardless of their subject. He interpreted ideology as a theory of consciousness closely related to semiotics and theoretical linguistics, thus addressing the human mind and the general laws of cognition rather than associating ideology with the social structure, classes and social interests. The influential French movement of "ideologues" did not last long, suffering a blow from the authorities and finally coming to nothing under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. Its criticism had a humiliating and vexing character, because the emperor, grounding his position on pragmatism, underlined the needlessness of metaphysical constructions for the tasks society should fulfill. Napoleon issued the following verdict: «*It is to the doctrine of the ideologues – to this diffuse metaphysics, which in a contrived manner seeks to find the primary causes and on this foundation would erect the legislation of peoples, instead of adapting the laws to a knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history – to which one must attribute all the misfortunes which have befallen our beautiful France*» [2, p. 57].

The topic of ideology was supposedly closed for some time, until K. Marx and F. Engels took up the matter in 1845 and, in order to assert their views, began working on their famous manuscript titled *The German Ideology*, which would only see the light of day in 1932, in a country (USSR) which was utterly non-existent at the time of that grand work. The text suggested profound criticism of the latest philosophical systems popular in Germany at the time claiming to be a revolution in philosophy (their authors being Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, and Max Stirner). By defining contemporary German philosophical systems as *ideologies*, K. Marx and F. Engels ridiculed them, if we consider the title of the manuscript in the context of criticising de Tracy's doctrine as detached from real life. K. Marx and F. Engels, despite their young age (at the time completing the work, the former was 28, and the latter was 26 years old), had already decided on the basis of their own doctrine, it being the

postulates of historical materialism and the principle of economic determinism in sociological discourse. Their disagreement with the German philosophers consisted in different answers to the following questions: How exactly is spiritual life formed? Can ideas as such change the world? Can “criticism of criticism” move forward history? The manuscript gave birth to a new understanding of ideology as a reincarnated consciousness reflecting economic processes and class interests.

Ideology, in its new and broad interpretation, was understood as any form of social consciousness constituting the so-called social superstructure, which according to Marx and Engels included law, philosophy, religion, and morality. And the social basis was made up by economic relations, the very place where real revolutions take place, thus inevitably determining the movement of the superstructure. Still, the founders of Marxism did not include positive science in ideology, because positive science has an objective character, not an illusory one. Everything else only reflects economic relations and class interests determined by the position of one class or another in the production system. The authors wrote about the production of consciousness as if it were some kind of material production. And here the class factor is decisive: *«The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it»* [3]. Each epoch, through the illusory consciousness of the ruling classes, imposes certain ideas on society: within a feudal society they are honor, loyalty, etc., and in a capitalist society they are the concepts of freedom and equality. Ideology is not only illusory, but also essentially false consciousness. In 1893 F. Engels put this idea in his private correspondence with Franz Mehring: *«Ideology is a process which of course is carried on with the consciousness of the so-called thinker but with a false consciousness. The real driving forces which move him, he remains unaware of, otherwise it would not be an ideological process»* [4, p. 97].

And how did Marx treat his own doctrine? He considered himself the ideologue of the working class, who, despite his being an intellectual and philosopher, consciously took the class position of workers and helped the proletarians to become aware of their in-

terests. So, are illusiveness and fallaciousness characteristics of Marxism, as well? But since historical truth belongs to the proletariat and the future itself will belong to this class, the theory of Marxism supposedly acquires legitimacy as a true teaching. The final point in this sensitive issue was put by V. Lenin, who defined Marxism as a **scientific ideology** [5]. Still, do such ideologies exist? However, this is how K. Marx's ideas were interpreted in the Soviet Union and other countries where Marxism-Leninism was declared the official state scientific ideology.

The future saw continuous development of the ideological discourse. The world plunged into the age of great ideologies (communism, socialism, nationalism, fascism, and Nazism), which had a profound impact on the history of the 20th century. Meanwhile, the concept of ideology has gained greater clearness. Morality, law, philosophy, and religion are now separated from this concept, although any ideology can refer to some philosophical doctrines, religious beliefs, and any intellectual discourse, in general to strengthen its position. Later, ideology was understood as a separate form of consciousness, namely, theoretical constructions, beliefs, and ideas reflecting the interests, goals, and ideals of a certain human community. Therefore, ideology is a separate form of mass consciousness, emerging, among other things, due to ideologues' activity; besides, to capture the masses, an ideology should be compelling. However, accusations of illusiveness and mendacity hang over ideologies like the sword of Damocles. Each ideology overcomes this natural barrier by using one or another tool that strengthens the followers' confidence in its basic postulates, dogmas and concepts. Propaganda is a simple and effective way of establishing an ideology. The value of ideologies lies in the extent to which they can reflect the interests of certain population groups and become widespread in society rather than in the evidence base or the level of theorization.

Neo-Marxists and theorists of the New Left have always been most attracted to the ideology concept, considering ideology as an instrument of domination and struggle for power; this situation illustrates the fact that ideology is an important political factor. Karl Mannheim speaks of dominating ideologies supported by the ruling classes, and utopias, proposed by revolutionaries and representatives of the oppressed masses. Utopian consciousness tries to change

the real state of affairs, while a dominant ideology, on the contrary, preserves the existing order. Ideology, according to K. Mannheim, is derived from social conditions and changes along with the transformation of society and the position of individual class groups. And the task of the sociology of knowledge, whose founder, among others, was K. Mannheim, is to analyse without regard for party biases all the factors in the actually existing social situation which may influence thought [6, p. 69].

The Frankfurt school theorists generated the idea that ideology is capable of totally penetrating into social relations. Their scientific effort gave rise to the concept of a “one-dimensional person”, the latter being completely immersed in the ideology-charged reality and thus becoming subject to manipulation by propaganda [7].

The end of the World War II saw a wave of criticism directed against ideology as the leading social factor. R. Aron expressed his belief that all the great ideologies of the 20th century (nationalism, liberalism, Marxism) turned out to be untenable and devalued. He even included a chapter titled “The End of the Ideological Age?” in his famous work *The Opium of the Intellectuals* [8]. Criticism of ideologies provided by the new wave of thinkers was based on the intellectual progress of society and that of scientific and educational institutes, resulting in marginalizing concepts based on blind faith rather than facts. D. Bell continued this criticism of ideologies unfolding in modern Western society in his book *The End of Ideology* [9]. However, later D. Bell modified his position, because, firstly, the West is not the only part of the world where the topic of ideology has not exhausted itself; and secondly, the cessation of discussions on ideological issues in advanced countries would mean the conservation of modern capitalism.

The end of the Cold War, thanks to F. Fukuyama’s famous metaphor [10], was perceived by some Western intellectuals as “the end of history”, because the great ideological battles taking place between capitalism and communism turned into museum exhibits. The 1990s were, indeed, a period of de-ideologization, which was especially vividly observed in the newly formed states on the territory of the former USSR and in the so-called former socialist countries, where ideological apparatuses suddenly collapsed and hundreds of thousands of the so-called “ideologists”, “propagandists”, and “agitators”,

who used to be well employed, lost their jobs and means of livelihood. However, the world is larger than the realms of Marxism-Leninism; human history went on, and very soon it became clear that new global threats with an ideological color were emerging.

In 1994 S. Huntington published his warning that one should not be euphoric over the victory over communism, as the oncoming 21st century could turn out to be an arena for intercivilizational battles [11]. The chasms between civilizations have cultural features, as each civilization deals with unique socio-cultural identities, semiotic systems, people's emotional attachment to a certain environment and traditions. Civilizations produce their own macro-ideologies; no one is ever going to give up their own identity, culture, symbols, and values; thus, this sensitive axis makes sharp collisions of a global scale quite possible. The American scientist believed that Arab-Islamic radicalism and nationalism pose the greatest danger to the United States and the Western world, in general. This was partially confirmed on September 11, 2001. The terrorist attack on the United States was carried out by a group of young people, whose consciousness was filled with the ideology of Islam and jihad to such a degree that even the prospect of their own death did not prevent any of them from committing the crime. Later it became clear that the most dangerous competitors of Western civilization are China (the Sinian civilization) and Russia (the Eurasian civilization). At the beginning of the 2000s, rashism became an ideology of hatred filling the Russian citizens' consciousness instead of the long-gone Marxism-Leninism, and pushed them to bloody wars. So, ideologies did not die. And if their importance in free countries enjoying pluralism and freedom of speech has indeed lessened, in unfree countries like Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, etc., ideological sects are transforming and gaining new strength. As S. Huntington has warned us, sooner or later non-European cultural worlds will challenge the world order established after the World War II and based on the patterns of the Western Christian values. The American professor turned out to be right. Rashism in the form of Putinism fits into this theory, because it is a manifesto of a global war against the West.

Ideology is always a backbone (core) idea, a signpost, and an identification tool that is important for a given community. It is an idea or a number of ideas that can organize consciousness regard-

less of whether the ideological basis is true or false. The main thing about it is the fact that people accept it, believe in the idea and trust those who act as ideologues. The authority of ideologues is an important factor in supporting ideology. The authority of ideology can be maintained artificially, as it happens in totalitarian countries where the people have no choice; they are forced, figuratively speaking, to bow their heads before ideology and its creators. In the USSR, not a single statement by Marx, Engels, or Lenin could become an object of criticism, and so, all the works by the so-called classics of Marxism-Leninism were to be cited as close to the text as Christian theologians do when referring to the Bible. Whatever the topic of a new work, its author was supposed to start with a relevant quote extracted from the textual legacy of the “classics of Marxism”. It was in the USSR when the system of ideology reached its pinnacle as for its comprehensive development and consistency.

Marxism is an exemplary, or “normative” ideology in the sense that it contains all the components of a political ideology. First, there is an author or a group of authors who literally construct ideology *ab initio* and turn it into a developed theory claiming to be scientific and having a rather large persuasive power. Second, an ideology clearly corresponds to a social class – in our case it comprises wage workers, whom it transforms into the performers of the global historical process. Third, Marxism enunciates the enemy (bourgeoisie, capital owners, exploiters, etc.), this being a feature of any ideology: it identifies enemies, an external threat in general, and thus consolidates its own social group. Fourth, Marxism captures people’s imagination with the iron logic of the *Capital*, its syllogisms, dialectical logic, historical texture, and modern discourse, proving that thousands of hours spent by Marx himself in the British Museum Library were not in vain. Fifth, the new doctrine acquires universal power, gradually becomes a global phenomenon, is spread across all continents; the works by Marx and other ideologues of “scientific communism” are published in billions of copies, promoted through the party media, and become the subject of oral propaganda for whole armies of campaigners spreading “the good news” among the proletarian masses. Sixth, the ideology begins as a utopia, then turns into the dominant state ideology in a number of countries; it is there that the corresponding ideological apparatuses are created in order to brainwash

people and exercise general ideological control over society. And then the final natural phase of ideology development comes, namely, destruction (solemnly in accordance with the Marxist doctrine), as a new historic period comes, with its change in the social environment, so that the old ideologies of the 19th century are no longer needed.

Ideologies perhaps amount to hundreds, but we can find something common among them and thus can be organized into three groups. The first one is universal, or global, like Marxism. Ideologies in this group are not numerous, being enlightened rationalism, liberalism, communism, socialism (ideology of a social-democratic kind), nationalism, racism, fascism, and national socialism. Liberalism, perhaps, was historically the first secular, or sooner, secularized ideology, which created the utopia of a free market and advantages of the democratic (republican) form of government. Over time, it becomes dominant in the countries of Western civilization and is actively promoted in other regions of the world though going through various additions and corrections. Communism was a certain reaction to the spread of capitalism and reached its peak in the construct created by Marx and Engels. Social-democratic ideology was partly a reaction of dissent to Bolshevism, and partly continued Marxism in its humanistic interpretation. Nationalism becomes almost the most popular ideology in the 20th century, because it inspired fighters for national independence in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East in various forms and under various banners. Fascism and Nazism both represent the trend of moving towards a right-wing totalitarianism. These ideologies affected not only Italy during Mussolini's time and Germany under Hitler's rule, but manifested itself in unexpected places under the guise of local ideologies and other slogans. Finally, racism as a dominant ideology openly and legitimately existed, speaking of the 20th century, but only in Southern Africa and the US South was also an integral part of Nazism; latent racism is still present in various parts of the world – and, it should be mentioned, not only as “white supremacism”, but also as “black” and “yellow” varieties of this ideology backing up racial inequality.

The second group comprises reincarnated universal ideologies that have been transformed taking into account the historic period and national peculiarities of certain countries. European countries as a whole remain indifferent to ideological discourse, but they have

developed a consensus in terms of common values, which can be seen as a modern version of liberal ideology. Common values are reflected in the program documents of the European Union. Actually, those Western countries outside the EU do follow the same values, so that the latter make up the basis for constitutions, legal systems and national education systems.

Practical communism alone gave birth to a wide range of particular ideologies. Marxism in its pure form has never really existed, and does not exist today. In the USSR, the state ideology was called (at the suggestion of Stalin) Marxism-Leninism; China chose the name Maoism; North Korea lives under Juche or Kimersinism; and we can also name Khojaism, Titoism, Guevaraism (the ideology of revolutionary armed struggle in the rural areas of the Third World countries attributed to Fidel Castro's associate Ernesto Cheguevara). So, if we take any other so-called socialist country, we will see a special form of communism ruling there bearing some elements of Marxism. The role of ideology in social life in totalitarian and authoritarian countries is outstanding. In North Korea, for example, all adult citizens are to devote two hours a day to political classes, where ideological indoctrination takes place; in the former USSR, such joy awaited workers for one hour a week. But, of course, the ideological influence was not limited to this. The ideological function was performed by the state mass media (in the absolute absence of a free press), and ideology, beyond any doubt, was embedded in the structure of all leading social institutions.

"Isms" do not live long, as the content of ideologies changes along with the change in the social environment and tasks of the nation. As soon as Mao Zedong died and Deng Xiaoping's reforms began, Maoism in its classical format lost its value; the Chinese began to look for inspiration in Confucianism and drifted towards the ideology of "Greater China". Thus, we can make a conclusion that ideologies are flexible, adaptive and derivative. Still, one should not disregard their mobilizing instrumental power when they are used to raise the masses to accomplish great causes.

The third group of ideologies includes those that are unique and local in essence, because they are firmly tied to one or another real social unit. A viewpoint exists saying that every state has its own ideology which goes back to the myth that helps citizens put

up with the state and its violence. However, truly unique ideologies are scarce. For example, let's take Orbanism with its idea of democracy without liberalism — what is it? Transformed liberalism or, indeed, something purely national Hungarian? A mix of nationalism, conservatism and European tradition giving rise to a new spiritual substance? The same can be said about Trumpism — is it a purely American phenomenon or a wider one? And is now a new type of ideologies being born, the one laced with populism and cynicism? And is this, in general, a new phenomenon, or a transformation, for example, of early fascism, which appealed to the feelings of the masses and did not shy away from lies, populism and search for enemies both from within and from without? We can cite here such an example of local ideologies as Kahanism, i.e. the ideology of radical Jewish nationalism, which cannot in any way be separated from Israel and the historical fate of the Jewish people.

In our opinion, rashism belongs to the third group and has certain unique features, although it is close to fascism in its content. Firstly, the ideology of rashism is a purely national Russkiy phenomenon, as its roots go deep in the distant history when a separate civilization emerged in the expanses of Eurasia. Secondly, it does not have a recognized ideologue and a more or less logically constructed and coherent theory, it is rather a conglomerate of various ideas, theories, feelings and artistic images. Rashism exists as a certain group of ideologemes that, at first glance, are not related to each other, but in fact have an obvious functional connection. Thirdly, rashism is prone to mimicry, it is disguised and hidden under layers of lies characteristic of Russians. According to the Russian constitution, no ideology can be dominant in the country; however, rashism exists and wins, and its ideological apparatuses are hidden in school programs, propaganda broadcasts on TV, the so-called patriotic education and numerous social practices. The ideologemes of rashism literally reflect what is genetically embedded in the soul of Russians, like a gigantic pre-installed computer program.

Rashism is oriented on the emotional sphere rather than manifests a rational theory. And here Vilfredo Pareto's theory of ideology looks the most operational one. He believed that ideology (derivations) is a mental reflection of what implicitly exists in a person's subconscious mind. Ideologies, firstly, give individuals power and

aggressiveness, and secondly, capture the masses precisely because they already exist in the collective consciousness in the form of vague and unarticulated ideas. Sooner or later there appears a person proclaiming the ideas which have long existed in the subconscious mind of the people; and such a person thereby becomes an ideologue and perhaps even a political leader who cynically manipulates the masses. V. Pareto divided ideologies into four groups: 1) statements claiming to be absolute and axiomatic, 2) judgments referring to authority, 3) ideas reflecting the feelings and principles of the majority, 4) verbal proofs and sophisms. All four varieties of ideologies can be easily traced in the rashist discourse, so we are going to use the methodology of the classic Italian sociologist to analyze the research object.

It is latency, uncertainty, and hidden meanings that motivate us to carry out an in-depth study of rashism, which should begin with the history of the subject. The general opinion is that rashism is a product of the Putin era. We have a different point of view. Rashism, in our opinion, is five hundred years old, and maybe even more. It has had different faces, it has changed forms, sometimes it has even disguised itself as other ideologies, but it has always kept its ideological core. And finally, at the beginning of the 21st century, rashism took on the most radical and dangerous form.

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1.2. RASHISM GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT: FROM PHILOTHEUS OF PSKOV TO THE “BLACK HUNDRED”

Our research concept is based on the idea that modern aggressive rashism is nothing more than the tip of an iceberg. In order to understand the ideological motivation of the aggressive actions taken by V. Putin and his associates, it is necessary to take into consideration Russia’s entire history, starting with the period when the state was being formed and thus was in great demand for a state ideology. Also, we presume that all ideological currents ever existing in the history of Russian society included the postulates of rashism in one way or another and developed them, or either were opposed to them.

We will use the comprehension method in order to establish the reasons for such a local ideology to be formed, which was functionally connected with the Moscow society, the latter having unique distinctions if compared with the models of society observed in Medieval Europe. To comprehend the Muscovites’ consciousness, it is important to define the context of the epoch. According to Max Weber’s theory, it is important to correlate the subject of sociological research with the values inherent in society in one or another historical period. So, the abovementioned approach lays the groundworks for the further analysis.

We shall start with the situation in the Moscow principality in the second half of the 15th century, because it was exactly during this period that the demand for a state ideology began to take shape. For almost 250 years in a row, the lands on which the Moscow principality was located had belonged to the part of the great Genghisid empire called *Ulus of Jochi* (it was named after Genghis Khan's son, who received these lands after the great khan died and his closest relatives agreed on dividing his lands), or the Golden Horde, with the capital Saray on the Volga river. The Mongol-Tatars under the command of Batu Khan, Genghis Khan's grandson, invaded these lands in 1237, and it was no sooner than 1470-1480 that some signs of the independence of the Ulus of Moscow appeared. Ivan III, the Moscow ruler at that time, refused to pay tribute to the Great Horde in 1472, and in 1480 r. the so-called standoff on the Ugra River took place, when the armies of Moscow and Horde did not dare to engage in battle; so, Khan Akhmat retreated from Moscow. Such separatism of the provinces is a common thing when the end of the empire comes and each political unit tries to establish itself as an independent state. It was a turning point in history, and Muscovites had to choose their own path in life and a state ideology. Still, Moscow rulers did not obtain full freedom until the reign of Peter I (approximately until 1700), having to pay tribute to the Crimean Khans and being dependent on the Horde in some issues of state building (for example, the right of the Grand Duke to be called Tsar). Thus, from the beginning of its existence, Muscovy was an *ulus* (that is, a people and territory according to the Mongolian tradition of administrative division of the state) and hereby subject to the laws of the Eastern Empire. It was only at the end of the 15th century, during the reign of Ivan III, that the fragment of the Great Horde began looking for its own political path.

The East no longer attracted Muscovites for several reasons, namely: 1) Saray chose Islam as its religion, 2) the old empire began to decline rapidly, and 3) more interesting prospects opened up in the West. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks took Constantinople by assault and put the final point in the history of Byzantium. The Patriarchate of Constantinople survived, but the Christians in the Islamic country felt defenseless and needed help. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a new powerful state was emerging on the western borders of the old empire, and the Muscovites would soon have to fight

against it for the Mongol heritage. The full name of the new state was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus', and Samogitia; the state was almost the largest one in Medieval Europe and occupied lands from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea (850 thousand km²), including most of modern Ukraine, as well as the city of Kyiv, which was considered a sacred city among the Orthodox, because Christianity began to spread from it to the vast expanses of modern Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. The word *Rus* in the name of the state indicates the presence of Ukraine, not Moscow. Rus is the first ancient name of Ukraine and Ukrainians (*Rusychi*), and at first these names only referred to the central region of modern Ukraine and some of its territory in the west.

Ivan III made the following political steps: first, he took Sophia Paleologus (1472), the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, as his second wife, thus creating a (tiny) possibility for his descendants to become heirs to the Byzantine throne; secondly, he began using the coat of arms of Byzantium, the one picturing a double-headed eagle, whose heads looked in different directions, to the east and to the west. A similar coat of arms is the official symbol of modern Russia. He also added the formula "lord of all Rus" to his title, thus making a claim to rule Novgorod, Belorussia, and Ukraine. The Moscow ruler did not have any political power over these lands, but he tried to preempt the regions west of Moscow, to outline his state right to expand in the western direction. What grounds did he use to legitimize his imperial plans? Obviously, he continued to think in a Mongol-centric way. The Moscow Great Princes had a great desire to take over the reins of government of the old empire and move its capital to Moscow, which they later succeeded in doing really moving the khan headquarters from Saray to Moscow. Here we can refer to a well-known saying, re-formulating it a bit as "The empire is dead, long live the empire!" According to the Moscow rulers, all the lands that used to be under the control of the Golden Horde should go to Moscow, including its western territories (Ukraine and Belorussia) as a legacy of the Kyiv state. A religious aspect should also be mentioned: Orthodoxy, which starting with the 11th century was gradually moving from Kyiv to Muscovy, was for a long time called *the Rus faith* by ordinary people (Ukrainian faith, according to modern terminology). This makes sense, because priests and monks went to

Zalyssia (that was the common Ukrainian name for the lands in the east, where the Moscow principality later arose) from the Kyivan state. After the disappearance of Byzantium, Moscow rulers began to see themselves as defenders of Orthodoxy, therefore, they wanted to see all those who professed *the Rus faith* as their subjects.

It is emblematic that 500 or 550 years have passed, and still the logic of the Moscow rulers has not changed a bit. They believe that Ukraine and Belarus are their legitimate possessions; if a person professes Christianity in the form of Orthodoxy, then they should become a citizen of the Russian Federation and belong to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), which in turn is a state institution under the guardianship of Russia's supreme ruler. From the point of view of rashism taken as an ideology, control over Kyiv is an existential issue for Russia. The ideology promotes the Final Solution of the *Ukrainian Question* to Russia's benefit and "at any cost", even if it would be necessary to completely destroy cities and villages, killing their defenders together with civilians. Novgorod and Mariupol – what do they have in common? Both cities were reduced to dust for ideological reasons, though it happened in different epochs. Their only sin was being "western cities" not wishing to bow before Moscow. Novgorod the Great, a medieval republic appearing during the reigns of Ivan III and Ivan IV, was part of the Hanseatic League and had a Slavic Orthodox population; Mariupol was literally crucified before the eyes of the whole world in 2022. Novgorod has never been rebuilt (after 1570) in the way that would revive the appearance the city used to have; the composition of its population has also changed qualitatively. For a long time, it remained a site of fire with not a single human living there; with time and effort life slowly resumed at the place, though the previous population was replaced by people from Muscovy, and it soon turned into an ordinary Moscow province. Something similar happened to Mariupol in 2022. Modern rashists used the same technology: they completely destroyed the urban agglomeration, resettled the surviving part of the population to Russia, turned the city remnants into a Moscow province, and started populating the wasteland with people from Russia. Actually, historically the Muscovites' movement to the West began right from Novgorod, and this false "mission", if speaking in the terms of rashist ideology, is still continuing in the XXI century.

The central issue to be resolved by the Muscovites after gaining political independence, was finding the form of rule. Ideology of course had its say, the Great Princes and their vassals justifying absolutism by creating religious grounds for it. The Church helped them, because from the very beginning of the Mongols invasion it had taken the side of the stronger under the slogan “All power belongs to God.” Priests and monks faithfully served the Horde rulers; later they likewise served the Horde successors. Ivan III, his son Vasili III, his grandson Ivan IV (the Terrible) began fighting for the title of tsar. Russian historians mostly believe that those purposeful men sought to copy the power of the Byzantine rulers titled *Basileus*. However, modern observers ignore the fact that the title of *tsar* in Muscovy meant something completely different. Muscovy had no real relations with Byzantium, although it curiously followed the events in it, in particular, those concerning the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Neither the borders nor the interests of Muscovy really intersected with those of Byzantium. The Moscow principality was part of the Golden Horde, thus the roots of its ideology and political system should be sought here. The Great Khan, the supreme ruler of the Golden Horde, had the title of tsar; and there was to be only one tsar in the vast expanses from the Crimea to Siberia. He was also called “the White Tsar”. Modern Russia does not like to recall the names of the so-called “old tsars” who ruled from the Volga banks seeing to that all local rulers obey the laws of the empire; and if anyone acted differently, they were severely punished. The Horde burned or otherwise punished Moscow several times, and the Muscovites learned well the lessons of the rational and cruel Eastern rule. Their teachers did not live in Constantinople, they lived in Sarai. For a long time, the Muscovite princes tried to take over the title of tsar with the whole scope of rights and powers characteristic of the eastern despotism. From time to time, Ivan III could sign a letter with the title of tsar, but those were no more than a toe in the water checking whether it is comfortable enough for a try. However, the positions of the Grand Princes on the international arena were not yet certain, and they took one step forward, then two steps back. Even Ivan the Terrible allegedly accepted the title at first, and then repented and refused, because the Crimean Khan promised to take revenge for his arbitrariness. And this issue was finally resolved no

sooner when Moscow felt its strength and gained actual independence. The title of tsar meant unlimited power in its Eastern interpretation, which was precisely what the Moscow rulers sought. A socio-economic formation was appearing in Muscovy corresponding to the eastern despotism (according to K. Marx's terminology). No eligibility of power could be thought of (unlike Byzantium, when the successor was chosen by a small synclite). The princes aspired to absolute power, and the bells summoning people for a veche, a popular meeting in Pskov and Novgorod, annoyed them. During the wars with these city-republics, the princes put forward special ultimatums demanding to destroy the bells; absolutism cannot put up with the existence of civil society and popular opposition. In the same way, modern Moscow reacted hysterically to the Ukrainian Maidans (2004-2005 and 2013-2014), which resembled the ancient traditions of the centuries-old law, i.e. directly applicable democracy, when people's assemblies could force the prince to change his policy or even dethrone him.

Moscow state ideology had to be up to the mark of the requirements of the eastern despotism and include missionary theses, as it was during the time of the Mongol rule. It was necessary to find an idea that would legitimize absolutist rule. The Muscovite princes did not even theoretically consider various models of European feudal rule, based on vassal relations and knightly-noble rules of honor. It should be mentioned that the form of government in the Kyiv state before the Mongol invasion corresponded to many European feudal traditions; the same was also observed within the borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where cities enjoyed the rights within Magdeburg law. Common political traditions opened wide opportunities for international relations. A classic example is the marriage alliances that Prince Yaroslav the Wise (980-1054) of Kyiv arranged for his children. He himself was married to Ingigerda, the daughter of the Swedish king. Elizaveta, Yaroslav's daughter was the wife of Harald III of Norway; Anastasia married Andrew I of Hungary; Anna married Henri I of France [1]. The descendants of Yaroslav the Wise followed this policy. But such a thing cannot be imagined in Muscovy. To give a princess in marriage to another country, especially a Western one, was considered humiliating for ideological reasons, because, firstly, not a single person in the whole world could

be equal to the Moscow ruler; and secondly, Europe was ideologically hostile to Muscovy. Napoleon Bonaparte once tried to marry Alexander's I sister in order to relieve the tension in the relations between the countries, but he was refused, because the official Petersburg took the proposal as an insult.

Muscovy copied the model of the khan's rule to detail: the leader should have absolute power, which cannot be limited by earthly factors such as positive law, public opinion, the highest aristocracy, and even the point of view of the Church. The tsar's power is from God, and God is the only being to whom the leader reports; the rest are his slaves – *kholopy*, even if they represent the old and noble aristocracy; no exceptions were ever allowed. Muscovy did not know the traditions of chivalry, privacy, urban communities and professional corporations enjoying their own rights. The Horde was based on other principles, which were transmitted to the new state; the legacy of the Horde tradition extends to this day. Thus, we state that the 15th century Muscovy was facing ideological processes caused by the needs of state building. The core ideas within the ideology were neither European nor Byzantine: the basis of the Moscow state model was the Eastern political system of the Golden Horde time. The core of Modern rashism lies in the Eastern-type absolutist ideology, perhaps bearing some elements of Byzantine ideology. However, each ideology must be proclaimed and articulated. Such an opportunity, and obviously not by chance, appeared in the first half of the 16th century, with the raise of a new theosophical concept saying that “Moscow is the third Rome”.

The history of the first rashist ideology based on a special theory is as follows. In the 1520s, an elder (monk) called Philotheus who lived in one of the Pskov monasteries wrote two letters to two addressees; the texts have remained till today. The first respondent is Grand Prince Vasili III, the second is a churchman, deacon Mykhailo Munekhen. It seems quite strange that a simple monk could send letters to the Grand Prince. What is known about the monk? Practically nothing, except that the approximate date of his birth is 1465, and the date of death is 1542. Perhaps he belonged to a small circle of literary intellectuals of that time (the country was almost completely illiterate) who had the privilege of addressing the Grand Prince? And the fact that the letter was preserved and reached dis-

tant descendants suggests that the document was given considerable attention.

The letters were aimed at preserving the morals and virtues of Orthodoxy. The author opposes astrology, homosexuality (Sodom's fornication) and touches on the rules of the sign of the cross. But the real highlight was the well-known formula: «two Romes have fallen, the third stands, and there will be no fourth». Philotheus boldly connects the reign of the Grand Prince and Muscovy, as a state, with the Roman and Byzantine Empires. *He calls them Christian kingdoms and proclaims the phrase «all the Christian kingdoms came together in a single kingdom of yours three times in a concise letter»* [2]. Rome and Byzantium, according to the logic of Philotheus, were destroyed by the will of God because of their fall. That is why the Grand Prince, who objectively takes care of all Orthodox Christians of the world, must be vigilant about morality and be sinless. Philotheus insistently appeals to the Grand Prince to realize the drama of the moment and his own responsibility for the Christians' fate, not to accumulate wealth on earth, but to support churches and monasteries, to take care of the eternal.

In fact, in this way Philotheus begins the imperial discourse and raises the topic of the transit of empires (lat. *translatio imperii*). It was believed that there could be only one true empire in the world at a time, and thus the title of “emperor” was exclusive. For example, the emperors of Byzantium violently reacted to the fact that Charlemagne put the imperial crown on himself; they recognized this title neither for the Ottonians nor for the Hohenstaufen dynasty. The Byzantine rulers themselves had made a long way to receive the emperor's crown. Mykola Danyilevych states: «*according to the mentality of the epoch, there could be only one real empire on earth, so as long as another one existed nearby (and in the 7th century it was the Persian Empire), Byzantium could not be called a real empire. Therefore, the war of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610–641) with the Persians was a holy war for the right to be called a real empire, a war for the divine sanction to be the foundation, the center of the world. It is for this reason that only after the final victory over the Persians in 629, Emperor Heraclius took the title of Basileus, that is, tsar. In addition, he was also titled an autocrator»* [3]. Obviously, Philotheus was familiar with such

subtleties, as he emphasizes the spiritual connection between the first, second and third Romes as centers of Christianity. The title of emperor would later be appropriated by Peter I, but 200 years would pass till that great moment. However, the political and ideological subtext present in the letters is obvious. Philotheus believed that the ruler of Muscovy was on a par with the rulers of Rome and Byzantium. He obviously lacked two things, namely his own patriarch and an imperial crown. But it was only a matter of time.

The intellectuals of Orthodoxy had already discussed such themes as the succession to Byzantium and the transfer of the religious center to another region. The Serbs considered Belgrade to be the future “third Rome”, and the Bulgarians suggested Veliko Tarnovo to take that role. However, both Serbs and Bulgarians were already under the heel of the Ottoman Turks, while Muscovy remained independent. And even earlier, Metropolitan Zosima wrote about Moscow as “the new Constantinople” in his treatise on *Paschalia* (the calculation of celebrating the Orthodox Easter). Obviously, at the beginning of the 16th century the idea was already in the air, and Philotheus simply conceptualized it in his Third Rome formula. Philotheus claimed that there would be no fourth Rome, because if Muscovy fell into sin, and then would be definitely destroyed by God, like he had destroyed previous empires, then this would mean the biblical doomsday. And the monk writes: *«after this we expect a kingdom that will never end»*. Therefore, researchers believe that the theory of the Third Rome has both a religious and eschatological character. Political and religious aspects are quite naturally intertwined in Philotheus’ logical construction, which makes the first rashism ideology theoretically structured. To strengthen his arguments, the monk cited the names of famous rulers whom he considered spiritual and, obviously, genetic ancestors of Vasili III: *«Do not you betray, oh tsar, the testament that your ancestors made, the great Constantine and the blessed Saint Volodymyr, and the great God-chosen Yaroslav, and other blessed saints, of the same root as you»*. Why did he mention these names? There is a certain logic here. Constantine I, emperor of Rome from the year 306 to 337, made Christianity the official religion, and in 330 he moved his capital to Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople. That is, the first historical character in a row in Philotheus viewpoint con-

nects Rome and Byzantium and ensures the transit of the empire and the capital of the global Christianity. But how can Moscow join this transit? And here Philotheus had no other way out but to latently introduce Ukraine and Kyiv into the discourse, without mentioning this stop of Christianity on its way to Moscow, because mentioning Kyiv would destroy the divine triad. Volodymyr the Great is the ruler of Kyiv who, long before the rise of Moscow, brought the Greek faith (as Christianity was then called) to the banks of the Dnieper river. He baptized Rus in 997, and later Ukrainian preachers and monks began their missionary activity in those regions, which are considered the cradle of modern Russia. The fundamental truth is that pagans on the lands of future Russia were mainly baptized by Ukrainian church leaders, not by Byzantines. Philotheus was aware of this sequence, but at the time of writing the letters, the independent state of Kyiv no longer existed, and the author gave the flag of Christianity into the hands of the Moscow prince, whom he passionately called *tsar* (Vasili III did not have the title of *tsar* and was not crowned), in order to raise its status to the level of the Roman emperors. Yaroslav the Wise (983/987 – 1054), whom Filotheus mentions, was Volodymyr's son, and it was during his reign in the 11th century that Rus-Ukraine gained power and highest cultural development, which Muscovy did not yet have even at the beginning of the 16th century.

Philotheus believed to do a great favour to his ruler and his descendants, providing them with ideological weapons to elevate the state and the status of Moscow rulers over all other countries and peoples. As for the method of combining rulers in genetic chains, in order to prove their right to the throne and the fact of divine anointing, it was generally popular in the Middle Ages and was based on the authors' imagination and outright falsifications. In Muscovy, this method was used according to the principle "if it's really necessary, we'll do it." Metropolitan Spyridon (Savva in monasticism) wrote a treatise *On the Gifts of Monomachus* (1510), in which he derived the genealogy of Moscow princes from ancient kings and emperors, starting from Octavian Augustus, and even from biblical times, from Noah himself. This is how a true ideology should be constructed, because here the facts do not need to be proven scientifically. One can include in the evidence base a myth that suppos-

edly has the force of irrefutable truth, and feel no remorse for that. Philotheus was not an exception and not the only one who fulfilled the task of creating a new ideology in such a way.

The sodomy issue should be paid special attention here. Obviously, homosexuality was very common in Muscovy, and not only among the common people, as we can see in Philotheus' letter. The issue makes up quite a dramatic part of it. Philotheus literally explodes with emotions: «*Of the third commandment I write, and I cry and speak bitterly to you. Pull these bitter weeds out of your Orthodox kingdom.* He continues his argument, citing the Bible and giving even physiological reasons like the following: *God created man and the seed in him to give birth to children, but we ourselves kill our seed and sacrifice it to the devil.* Then he makes a hint that was obviously understandable to the parties: *And such abomination has multiplied not only among the laity, but also among others, about whom I will remain silent, but let the reader understand*» [2]. But who could he possibly hint upon? Or did the Grand Prince himself indulge in this? In the history of Russian monarchs and their families, the issue of non-traditional sexual orientations never disappears. For example, tsar Peter I was notable for this sin. Testimonies of some insiders show that V. Putin is prone to pedophilia and homosexuality. Oleksandr Litvinenko before his murder directly accused Putin of the mortal sin [4], and the press also reported on the murder of the dictator's lover in Switzerland [5]. But all this is kept a profound secret at the state level. 500 years have passed, and still the homosexuality issue remains up-to-date for Russia precisely in the ideological discourse. One of the features of modern rashism is criticising the West for its tolerance of the gay community in general, same-sex marriages and open manifestations of the gay culture. In the rashist discourse, Europe is renamed as Gayrope, and various rumors are spread about the LGBT+ movement; for example, it is alleged that children in European countries are forcibly separated from their biological parents and given to be raised by same-sex couples. The Russian Orthodox Church and official propaganda are unanimous on this issue. They fight on the ideological front with the fall (as they understand it) and the right of individuals to independently determine their sexual orientation. It should be noted that Russia is not an exception in the global picture of group-

ing people within a population by their sexual orientation, but the homosexuality issue, according to rashists, should be hidden and not have public manifestations.

Marshall Poe, the American researcher of the Third Rome concept, has paid attention to the fact that modern authors quite often interpret the emergence of the concept as a sign of some “time axis” or a “turning point”. But is it really so? M. Poe himself is not convinced of this, since there is no confirmation that the concept was implemented in the spiritual or political life of Muscovy in the 16th century, and then in Russia [6]. One cannot but agree with this. The “Third Rome” had not been mentioned in official documents for a long time, but his ideas began a life of their own regarding imperial greatness, the Russians’ messianism, and the global protection of the Orthodox. The Third Rome concept could also have fallen out of the official discourse because this topic was picked up by Old Believer schismatics, who were ideological enemies of the Kremlin, and who were literally hunted by the government. (The split in Moscow Orthodoxy took place right in the middle of the 16th century). But the moment of glory of the Third Rome concept was yet to come: it became popular during the reign of the emperors Alexander II and Alexander III. The letters were published in the second half of the 19th century, they were often referred to and used by supporters of the imperial greatness and Russia’s “special path”. It was not a coincidence that surge of interest coincided with the wars against the Ottoman Empire for the Balkans and the desire of the Russian Empire to master the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles in order to bring Istanbul under Russian control. The Third Rome concept allegedly contained the legitimization of Russia’s claims to Byzantine heritage. Nicholas I shamefully lost the war he started for the possession of the straits (the Crimean War 1853-1856), but by the First World War this issue (the straits) was not only discussed in Russia, but also became the national slogan of the Great War. Thus, political rashism is closely related to the ideologeme suggested by Philotheus.

Historians, philosophers, and theologians have dedicated numerous works to the Third Rome concept, and the issue was not closed for study even in the Soviet times. On the contrary, Stalin was impressed by the idea that Moscow was the defender of the Slavs and the Orthodox, because this idea matched his geopolitical plans quite

well. Modern Russia is facing a real boom around the Third Rome concept: it is included in school programs, and numerous publications on the issue have been appearing [7]. It has turned into an integral part of modern rashism – spiritually at least, if not literally.

In general, I can agree that it was not the monk's letters that shaped the Muscovites' collective consciousness, but Philopheus managed to correctly grasp the trend in the development of collective consciousness. He put into words the ideas arising in the collective consciousness, that is, existing in the "fermentation" stage. Let's try to generalize everything discussed above and answer the question: what exactly are the derivatives of the collective consciousness receiving a theoretical shape in the Third Rome concept? In our opinion, the following core ideas can be enumerated:

The uniqueness and separateness of Muscovy: "We are not like everyone else, God himself has chosen us to preserve Orthodoxy", because we are the last true Christian kingdom on earth. Nothing will come after us.

Greatness and power: we are equal to the Roman and Byzantine Empires, moreover, we surpass them, because they fell into sin and God punished them, and we exist, we are increasing in land (we conduct wars successfully), therefore, we are acceptable before God. From here, the path to the idea of empire can be traced logically, because the Muscovite kingdom cannot yield to Rome and Byzantium.

Mission and messianism: Moscow has the exclusive mission of saving the world from sinfulness, this is a task from God, and no earthly laws or rules can hinder this holy work. In particular, the messianic nature of the "Third Rome" was emphasized by Ivan Kirilov [8] in the most comprehensive study of the concept.

Authoritarianism in the political sphere: the burden of the mission rests on the absolute monarchy, the performance of the mission depends on the behavior of the autocrat, his power must be absolute in order to direct all spiritual and material forces to defend Orthodoxy in its last home.

So, it can be said that Philopheus expressed the ideas already present both in the consciousness and subconsciousness of Muscovites. But what lay behind the inclination of the collective consciousness to welcome such a grand socio-political model? The hypoth-

esis is that the territory of Muscovy had already become a land of a special civilization type, which will be considered in detail in the second part of the book. The roots of the new civilization must be sought in the Greater Mongolia and the mentality of local tribes. There were the only sources and contexts of rashism. Moscow as a city, state, and country was formed in the bosom of the Chingizid state. This is a historical fact. Hence the feeling of imperial greatness; the idea of the limitlessness of the country's territory, the inexhaustibility of resources; the awareness of the power, allegedly granted by divine forces, to lay down the rule to others; great motivation to have an imperial center and an autocrat who rules everything, rules over tribes and peoples. At the end of the 15th century, the state transformation began demanding new meanings, but in practice they turned out to be old in essence and only new in form. The newest discourse reoriented mass consciousness from Horde meanings to the new imperial-Orthodox discourse, keeping the old subtext. Orthodox ideologues emphasized the spiritual connection with the distant (both geographically and historically) Byzantium. The special connection with Byzantium was gradually finding its way into the collective consciousness through ideology and under the influence of theosophical and political discourses. Finally, in the second half of the 19th century. Konstantin Leontiev, a conservative thinker, published his work titled «*Byzantinism & Slavdom*» where he developed a detailed conception that Russia and the southern Slavs are descendants of the Byzantine spirit with its Orthodox and monarchical values [9]. This work as well as others are speculative and doctrinaire in essence, as they are not based on any objective scientific material, historical and archeological data; besides, a logical and well-founded thesis about the Mongol roots of Muscovy is deleted from historiography. However, it should be stated that the first stage of the rashism ideology was constructed by church orthodoxy and conservative philosophers, and thus it was designed in such a way as to suit the imperial interests of the new tsars.

The situation in the Muscovy state changed significantly in the second half of the 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries, when, thanks to a series of military operations and skillful diplomacy, the state engulfed such western countries as Ukraine and Belarus. Ideological processes accelerated when Peter I proclaimed himself em-

peror and renamed the country from the Moscow State to the Russian Empire (1721); even before that event, the capital was moved from Moscow to St. Petersburg (1712) and the new state began to discover Europe. At the same time, one of the largest geopolitical thefts in terms of scale and consequences took place. Peter I renamed the Muscovite State to Russia (*Rossiya*), the name being rooted is the Greek variant of spelling *Rus*. The ancient and natural name of Ukrainians was now used by the country that colonized Ukrainian lands. Not everyone agreed with such innovations, e.g. Ukrainian noblemen and intellectuals tried to preserve historical memory and their own identity, but it was dangerous and had grave consequences for the “nationalists”. The story connected with the appearance of the manuscript titled «*History of Ruthenians*», also known as «*History of the Rus' People*» is a vivid example of the situation [10]. Discussions are still continuing as for the author’s name, because the author chose to remain anonymous, and it was not by accident. The book is considered to be the first modern history of Ukraine, but the author uses the old ethnonym *Rus*, and he never confuses *Rus* with Muscovites throughout the text. The manuscript, which was later published, was presumably written at the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th centuries. Serhiy Plokhiiy dedicated special research to the circumstances of the appearance of the «*History of the Rus*» and its significance [11]. Ukrainians’ identity under the pressure of rashism came under threat, and later, when the epoch of national revival, or rather its academic stage began, endonyms *Ukraine* and *Ukrainians* were widely circulated as substitutes. They were not unfamiliar to Ukrainians, as they were used in parallel with the words *Rus* and *Rusychi* in the Kyivan state. Their first documented use is in the annals dating back to 1187 [12, pp. 343, 347]. Obviously, the fact of this geopolitical theft can be considered a successful operation of the Moscow authorities inspired by the spirit of rashism; it was a technology of hybrid warfare: to break the cultural resistance of a neighboring people by appropriating its history, name, and cultural achievements. From this moment on, rashism acquires a distinctly aggressive imperial essence, which is how it exists to this day.

After Moscow had led successful colonial conquests in the west, the title “Tsar of All Rus” acquired practical political and administrative meanings. It was at this moment that “triune Rus”, *the so-*

biological doctrine of rashism was born. It was started by Ukrainian religious leaders of the 17th-18th centuries who joined the service of the Moscow tsar. They were the first to substantiate that the Russian people or “Holy Rus” has three branches, or nationalities: Great Russians, Lesser Russians, and Belorussians. Perhaps Ukrainian political leaders hoped to reign ideological processes and thus tried to defend their equality with Muscovites, who, starting with the time of Catherine II, began to be officially called *Velikorossy*, or Great Russians. However, hopes for the equality of all the three nationalities were in vain. Official Moscow started referring to Ukrainians as *Malorossy*, or Lesser Russians, emphasizing their dependent and secondary character. It is worth noting that the word *Malorossiya* was initially used by the Greeks in the sense of Lesser Russia by analogy with Lesser Greece, that is, a metropolis without colonies, the heart of the state. Subsequently, the name “Ukraine” and the ethnonym “Ukrainians” were banned by the censors, and so books, newspapers, magazines, and theater posters that used these names were banned from being printed. Alternatively, artificially constructed terms were used: “Southern Russia”, “Southern Territory”, “Southwestern Russia”. To understand the situation properly, imagine some English nationalists denying the existence of Wales and Scotland as independent ethnic, social and territorial units and officially referred to them as “Southern England” or “Northern England”. But Ukrainian cultural leaders waged a constant struggle against censorship during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century; for example, the part of Ukraine that was under Austria-Hungary was used as a national foothold. There, in Lviv, Ukrainian books and periodicals were more or less freely printed. This state of affairs lasted as long as until 1917. The Bolshevik governments changed the rhetoric, and from that moment on the names “Ukraine” and “Ukrainians” have been used freely, in Russia as well. But modern rashists cannot put up with this, they stubbornly refuse to refer to Ukrainians as Ukrainians and prefer to use the outdated imperial lexicon, the more so as Putin’s concept of war is to erase Ukraine and Ukrainians from the political map of the world and change the consciousness of people living in the occupied territories. In modern Russia, there are many texts speaking about Ukraine, its history, culture, albeit in a distorted manner, but

the words “Ukraine” and “Ukrainians” are never used for ideological reasons. This is a vivid and undeniable fact proving the imperial, colonial character of the rashist ideology.

The ideological picture of Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries (before the Bolsheviks seized power) can be formally presented as a symmetrical distribution of ideas to the “left” and to the “right” from the conditional center formed by the official monarchist ideology (see Table 1). In general, the establishment tried to maintain a balance, but still they preferred right-wing ideologies, relying on them for the support of the monarchy and opposition to revolutionary trends. From a sociological point of view, there was no real symmetry, as anti-Western sentiments have always prevailed in Russia being fed by the sentiments of the so-called “ulterior people”, who were not educated, believed in the hostility of the surrounding world, never went abroad, lived in the realm of mythologems, illusions and propaganda carried out by the reactionary Orthodox Church.

Table 1

Russian ideological movements in the 19th century

Radical right-wing ideologies	Moderate right-wing ideologies	Official ideology	Moderate left-wing ideologies	Radical left-wing ideologies
“Black Hundred” ideology: unconditional support for the monarchy, proto-Nazism, antisemitism, aggressive Orthodoxy.	Ideas of Slavophiles and national loyalists: Russia’s special path, criticism of Europe and Westerners, belief in unique Russian values.	The “Triune Rus” concept. The “Orthodoxy – Monarchy – Nationality” formula (the theory of official nationality). The “Russia is united and indivisible” slogan. The doctrine of Orthodoxy as the state religion, which unconditionally supports the monarchy.	Westerners’ ideas as for cultural and political orientation towards European countries, demand for reforms based on European models. The ideology of Western-style liberalism.	The ideology of Narodnik movement: the idea of peasant revolution and terror. Marxist ideology; the birth of Bolshevism as a radical version of Marxism.

The book aims at making a brief overview of the main pre-revolutionary ideologies in order to confirm the hypothesis that rashism has deep and systematic roots in the spiritual life of Russia, even in those stages of history that had a distinct European vector (Petersburg period).

So, the concept of a triune Russian people was the official doctrine of the empire until its fall in 1917. Both historiography and ethnography were focused on proving this ideology and finally suggested the following historical scheme: a single all-Russian people existed during the time of Kyivan Rus supposedly having a common language. Then feudal fragmentation began with the Mongol-Tatar invasion, and the basic ethnic community split into three nationalities that up to now have a lot in common and are doomed to exist in a single state. Insidious Western agents are getting out of their way to split this natural unity, and to that end they have secretly developed the “Ukraine” project in order to impose an identity on the Lesser Russians which would differ from that of the Greater Russians. This was done either by the Poles, or by the Austrian General Staff, and, of course, a handful of Ukrainian nationalists. Stupid Ukrainians fell for this conspiracy theory and believed in their separateness, putting forward political slogans about independence.

Old ideological theses of rashism have been revived in modern Russia with V. Putin proclaiming a well-known thesis that has already turned into a meme: “Ukraine was created by Lenin” [13]. So, in Moscow, Ukrainians are resolutely denied their originality and autochthony. The logic of the Rashists is as follows: “this cannot happen, because it can never happen”. The “triune” concept is a typical ideological construction, where corporate interests and political goals are clearly visible. Besides, it contradicts any grounded scientific information, which is a typical feature of any ideology. On the other hand, historical facts completely refute the thesis about the existence of a basic ancient Russian community, especially since the Russians’ ancestors are not even of Slavic origin. And the existence of an imperial medieval state with its capital in Kyiv does not obligatory mean that a common ethnic community existed within its borders. Dozens of tribes and nationalities lived in that country and had their own languages, customs, traditions,

etc. The language, indeed, was common, though not for popular use, but for the religious needs of Christians. The church language was Old Bulgarian, it was used at church services, because two Bulgarian thinkers Cyril and Methodius managed to translate the Holy Scriptures into one of the Slavic languages, which, unlike Greek, became accessible to the clergy with the acquisition of certain reading and speaking skills. From which the Christianization of Russia began. In Kyiv, the efforts of Cyril and Methodius were appreciated and thus helped the church language to appear, which could also be used as an official state language. In Kyiv, the so-called Church Slavonic language was later Ukrainized, and in Moscow it was Russified.

In Soviet times, when the attitude towards peoples was officially tolerant, historians changed their views in the sense that the appearance of three Slavic ethnic groups as equal historical actors was assumed to have happened in the 14th-15th centuries. The words *maloross* and *velikoross* were not used, because the first was considered a deliberate humiliation of Ukrainians, and the second was seen as a manifestation of great-power chauvinism. However, historically, science has clearly followed the party course, so when Stalin announced his famous toast at the Kremlin party about the special role of the Russkiy people in the victory over Hitler's Germany, the tone and assessments changed. From that moment on, Russkiye were interpreted as elder brothers in the family of Slavic peoples. During Brezhnev's time, Soviet ideologues eventually found an ingenious way out of this ethno-political impasse; in particular, they took off the edge of the issue by putting forward the "Soviet people" concept. This concept eliminated the old ethnicity and disputes regarding the genesis of the Slavic peoples on the territory of the USSR. Now it did not matter to which ethnic group you used to belong, because "a new historical community" was being formed, which no one had ever created before. It was officially declared to be based on internationalism, equality, socialist values and Soviet patriotism. In practice, the Soviet people concept turned out to be a latent form of rashism, because the central position was again occupied by the Russkiy people: it was the history of Russia, the Russian language and culture that de facto formed the basis for the new historical community. Closer to the end of the USSR, the

Russification of non-Ruskiye peoples accelerated significantly. This fate befell Ukraine as well. The Soviet people concept was destroyed with the collapse of the USSR, and it no longer made sense for Rashism to hide behind artificial structures, and thus it took on new sinister fascist and rashist forms.

The official ideology had one main goal, namely, to support the crown on the emperors' heads by preventing a revolution in the country; to achieve this goal, it was necessary to distance the state from the revolutionary France and the latest seditious ideas. The official political doctrine of the 19th century rashism was formed by Count Sergey Uvarov, President of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Minister of Public Education. It also included a triad, like the "Third Rome" concept did, but with a different content: "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality". S. Uvarov created his famous slogan on November 19, 1833 in a report to the emperor in connection with his appointment as Minister of Public Education. It was a conservative manifesto and an alternative to the motto of the French Revolution, i.e. "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality" (French: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité). During the reign of Nikolay I and his successors, the "higher values" triad was considered the official doctrine of the ruling class and the Russian Empire as a whole. It was also called "the theory of official nationality". S. Uvarov realized that the ministry should not only deal with educating young people, but also give them ideological instructions. On the basis of Uvarov's triad, the slogan of the Russian armed forces was formulated: "For Faith, Tsar and Country!", which gave meaning to participation in military operations and "heroic" death (or maiming) during numerous wars.

The theory of official nationality gained considerable popularity in the circles of the conservative intelligentsia. It was interpreted as the idea of a unique vector of Russia's development in contrast to the republican and atheistic trends that were gaining popularity in Europe. Konstantin Pobedonostsev (1827-1907), a famous statesman who was called the main ideologist of the counter-reforms of Alexander III, interpreted the official nationality theory as a union of the masses with the Orthodox tsar, where the official church plays the role of a bridge between the bottom and the top of the empire, and is the carrier of a corporate, that is, a general idea [14]. The theory was supposed to protect Russia from the

penetration of Western liberalism and democracy, which supposedly led countries to decline and disintegration. K. Pobedonostsev advocated the actual merger of the church and the state and was an opponent of any reforms, because even small changes could lead to the destruction of the empire. Still, the social basis of the country was not only made by the so-called Triune Orthodox *Russskiye*, but also by numerous Catholics, Jews, Islamists, and shamanists officially called “aliens”. Various restrictions were applied to Jews: they were not entitled to freely choose their places of residence, because the government established the so-called “settlement line” passing through Ukrainian and Belarussian lands, and the authorities turned a blind eye to the *pogroms* or even secretly initiated them [15, p. 551]. Almost 200 years have passed, and the triad of “Orthodoxy, monarchy, nationality” is once again the mainstream in modern Russia. The theory of official nationality is a component of modern rashism, because it expresses its spirit: traditionalism, anti-Western orientation, and the leading role of the official Orthodoxy represented by the Russian Orthodox Church. As for the monarchy, its equivalent, according to the expression suggested by the modern Russian conservative ideologist V. Surkov, is “the long rule of Putin.” In Russia, the “ulterior people” perceive the figure of Putin precisely in this way, as a tsar or emperor. This is the secret of his “long reign”.

The second ideological slogan of monarchical Russia was “Russia is united and indivisible”, which was included in the Code of Laws of the Russian Empire in 1906. The document began with the words: *The Russian State is united and indivisible* [16]. Such a beginning for the compilation of Russian laws in 1906 was not accidental, because the time of the revolution had come, nationalist movements were already ripening in the bowels of the empire, and socialist ideas on creating a federation were spreading. Still, the slogan itself had appeared earlier. There are reasons to believe that the call for indivisibility was a reaction to the Polish Uprising (1863) and the beginning of the Ukrainian national movement in the middle of the 19th century. A part of Poland, including Warsaw, had been part of the Russian Empire since the last division of the country between three states (1795), but the Poles dreamed of the reunification and revival of their country. The Russian slogan was supposedly a mirror image

of the Polish rebels' slogan, namely *Rolska jedna i niepodzielna*. In 1888, the tsarist authorities opened a monument to the Ukrainian hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi (1595-1657) in Kyiv, whose figure was supposed to symbolize the accession of Ukraine to Russia. The inscription on the slab under the figure on the horse was as follows: *To Bohdan Khmelnytskyi from the united and indivisible Russia* [17]. It was a certain prevention against Ukrainian separatism and a reminder to Ukrainians about the real state of affairs. The inscription was removed in 1919, when Ukrainians restored statehood in the format of the Ukrainian People's Republic. At the beginning of the 20th century Russian nationalist and statist parties included the slogan of indivisibility in the basic party documents. The slogan was picked up by the White movement during the civil war in Russia (1917-1920) and was formulated as follows: "For a great, united and indivisible Russia!". Its meaning, on the one hand, consisted in disagreement with the Bolshevik Berestei peace Treaty concluded with the Germans and Austrians, which provided for the alienation of a large territory in the west, and in a protest against the declaration of several independent states on the territory of the empire, on the other. The most consistent supporter of the "united and indivisible" was General Anton Denikin, who led the White Movement armed forces in the south of the former empire and received military and technical assistance from European countries. In April 1919, Denikin's government made a declaration to the Entente countries, in which it clearly stated that the ultimate goal of the struggle was the restoration of "a powerful, united and indivisible Russia" [18]. It was precisely because of the grate-power ambitions that the White Movement was not supported by Ukrainians, Poles, or the Caucasian national movements, and in the end, supporters of the "united and indivisible" suffered a military defeat. In practice, the leaders of the White Movement felt that the slogan was not popular in the regions of their operations, and they tried to correct it, closer to the end, some of the leaders even agreed to the "federation". But this did not save them. The Bolsheviks put forward more populist slogans and flexibly manipulated their content according to the audience: the communists promised the land to peasants, the national revival to the intelligentsia, the world revolution to the revolutionary romantics, to share the fortunes of the rich (rob what was robbed) to

the lumpenized masses, etc. Orthodox representatives of the White Movement considered their own position to be moral and one that was based on centuries-old imperial principles. It can be said that imperial rashism lost the war of ideologies during the revolutionary storm at the beginning of the 20th century, but it was fully retaliated later, at the beginning of the 21st century, in a country wanting to follow all the traditions of the Russian state, regardless of its name and form, taking greatness and power and the implementation of the imperial program as the main criterion. And from this point of view, the Soviet Union, Lenin, and Stalin fall into the “homologous series”, therefore they are welcomed in Putin’s state as equivalents of the “great Russia”. The Bolsheviks consolidated the empire and even expanded its actual borders after World War II; besides, they armed the country with nuclear weapons, and for that accomplishment they are appreciated in modern Moscow.

During the St. Petersburg period of the state history (1712-1918), Russia was oriented towards Europe to a certain extent, as the emperors and nobility mostly came from European royal and aristocratic families; the nobles used the French language in communication among themselves, and quite often it was difficult for them to use Russian; students from well-off families preferred to be educated at European universities, they spoke European languages and read Western literature more or less fluently. That is why the official ideology kept a balance between more radical positions, both of the left and right winds, and supporters of these positions criticized the government from their corresponding side. The government was attacked from the right flank by the so-called Pochveniks and Slavophiles, and from the nominally left parties it was attacked by Westerners, that is, those who focused on Europe. Mainly, the struggle took place at the level of intellectual polemics and was reflected in literary magazines. The ground for the beginning of the conflict between the Slavophiles and Pochveniks, on the one hand, and the Western-oriented intelligentsia, on the other, appeared after the war of 1812-1815. The victory over Napoleon raised the degree of patriotic sentiments, but Russian society looked at the life conditions and the level of freedom in European countries through the eyes of the army, and wisely assessed the economic and technical achievements of the West. The comparison was

not in Russia's favor, and among army officers even a conspiracy arose to overthrow the emperor and carry out reforms under the European model, the conspiracy ending in an unsuccessful rebellion in December 1825. The so-called "Decembrists" were subjected to repression" five ended their lives on the gallows, dozens of officers and hundreds of privates were punished by deportation to hard labor in Siberia. Nikolay I ascended the throne, and his reign is considered a period of reaction during which he transformed Russia into a large military camp. But the Decembrists sowed revolutionary seeds, and this would determine Russia's future. Both directions in the non-official ideological discourse finally took shape at the turn of 1830-1840.

The Slavophiles called themselves in a different way, "the Moscow party", or even "the indigenous", "natives". They criticized the Western bias, European cultural borrowings and defended the originality of Russia, pointed out the fundamental difference between rationalistic Europe and Russia, which is not well understood by the West. The famous Slavophile poet Fyodor Tyutchev managed to express the idea of Russia's incomprehensibility in the four lines of his famous poem:

You will not grasp her with your mind
 Or cover with a common label,
 For Russia is one of a kind –
 Believe in her, if you are able... (translated by Anatoly Liberman)

Slavophiles were looking for a special exclusively Russian path of development and believed it to be connected with the spiritual power of the Orthodoxy and the Russian peasantry. In general, they contributed to the awakening of national consciousness and inclined cultural players to create Russian-inspired works of literature, music, and opera. Westerners sharply and wittily criticized the Slavophiles as hardened and backward conservatives slowing down progress and blocking reforms. The most radical representative of Westerners was the philosopher Pyotr Chaadayev (1794-1856). Westerners advocated reforms, the abolition of serfdom, and criticized the government.

Slavophiles were not persecuted by the authorities because, firstly, they were "patriots", and secondly, they had supporters in

the government; westerners, on the other hand, were always under suspicion as potential enemy agents and transmitters of dangerous subversive ideas. Many of them ended their lives abroad, where it was safer to live. After the publication of the “philosophical letters” in the *Teleskop* magazine in 1836, Chaadayev was declared insane, and the publisher was sent into exile. The intellectual movement of Westerners eventually led to the formation of a liberal ideology, which would be picked up by the party of Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) at the beginning of the 20th century. It became visible between the two Russian revolutions, and then was destroyed by the Bolsheviks.

Slavophiles and Westerners were united by a common attitude to the “Ukrainian question”: none of them assumed the independence of Ukrainians and they unanimously condemned Ukrainian separatism. Among Ukrainian circles, the following saying had long been popular: “A Ukrainian intellectual ends where the Ukrainian question starts.” And this is a characteristic feature of rashism: for the absolute majority of Russians, regardless of their education level and intellectual development, imperialism is something much more than a political reality or a party program, it nestles in the subcortex of the brain, it is an archetype of their collective consciousness. The imperial archetype can sleep or slumber until the moment of alarm, and the signal point comes when Ukrainians begin to assert their natural right to identity and demonstrate the will to independent existence.

The British political scientist V. Pastukhov, referring to Arnold Toynbee, states that the situation in Russia in the 19th century was typical for backward countries, i.e., such a conflict is not unique and took place in other countries as well [19]. But in Russia, this dispute had a geopolitical component: will Russia be able to peacefully co-exist with European countries, or will it face a permanent war, when, after a brief truce, military conflict explodes with new force? Westerners, of course, were in favor of political rapprochement with European countries, loosening of barriers, cultural exchange, providing education and upbringing according to European standards. The radical wing of the Slavophiles tried to play the Slavic card in the East of Europe, in the Balkans, in Greece and everywhere else, where Orthodox people resided. The idea was to conduct propagandist work among the Slavs outside Russia, and to begin

military expansion at the right moment, relying on the so-called “fifth column” in the enemy’s rear. This point of view was defended by Nikolay Danilevsky, who presented it in his book titled *Russia and Europe* [20], which up to now remains a bible for Slavophiles, Russian nationalists and imperialists. In the book, Russia and Europe are positioned as eternal and irreconcilable enemies, and war is the only way to defend Russian interests, gain territory, and force itself “to be respected.” Actually, this is V. Putin’s military and political program. That is why we are looking for the roots of rashism in the ideological processes of the past and are convinced that rashism is an eternal factor in Russian society.

Pochvenniki (leaning on the ground, men of the soil) were ideologically close to Slavophiles, although they tried to distinguish themselves and be distant from both Slavophiles and Westerners. The Russian word *pochva*, or *grunt* in Ukrainian (its general English equivalent being *soil*) had two meanings: the direct one, because it is the basis of agricultural peasant work, the main source of Russian wealth in the 19th century, and the figurative one, in the sense of the national basis, the national social soil, which must be supported. Fyodor Dostoevsky, for example, was a pochvennik, because he criticized Slavophiles and Westerners for their ideological bias and division of people into “ours” and “not ours” [21]. But objectively, they were close to the Slavophiles, because they defended the idea of Russia’s uniqueness, and were suspicious of the West.

The ideological rivalry between the Slavophiles and Westerners continued until the Bolshevik coup and has been revived in modern Russia. The country is once again faced with a choice, and this time the conservatives have won. And whether it is a strategic or tactical victory, time will tell. Modern rashism, figuratively speaking, has absorbed the conservative tradition and feeds on the juices of Slavophileism and 19th-century Pochvenniks.

In the second half of the 19th century radical movements appeared on the political and ideological map of tsarist Russia, to be more precise – at its extreme poles. Socialist and communist ideas came from Europe, undergoing gradual transformation into purely Russian radical ideological and political currents. Also, radical nationalism of the imperial type broke in the ideological processes of the 19th and early 20th centuries, which closely

resembled European fascism and Nazism, but was more likely a precursor than an epigon of European fascism. In Russia, this trend materialized in the movement of the so-called “Black Hundred”, which was the general name for members of several radical right-wing organizations (Russkiy Assembly, Union of the Russkiy People, Union of Michael the Archangel, Russkaya Monarchy Party) that were active in 1905-1914. They suggested a program of active protection of monarchism, aggressive Orthodoxy and effective anti-Semitism [22]. For the most part, their activists did not represent the strata of the intelligentsia; they were petty bourgeois, workers, and urban lower classes. The ideology of the “Black Hundred” was easily understood by the broad social groups of “truly Russkiye” and “patriots”, which they considered themselves to be. The activation of the proto-Nazi movement took place at a time when the throne was shaking during the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907, the emperor was forced to make partial concessions and to convene the parliament (State Duma). In the ideology of the “Black Hundred”, a collective image of the enemy can be clearly traced: they are Jews, Poles, revolutionaries, Westerners, liberals, all “not ours” who threaten the crown and Russia. The Black Hundreds created armed detachments, and their first victims were the Jewish communities, because according to the conspiracist version of any Russian crisis, the Jews are always the culprits of the revolution. Also, anti-Semitism was a good tactical technique to switch attention to another information object. Militant organizations operated most actively on the territory of Ukraine and Belorussia, that is, within the settlement line, where Jews lived in large numbers. The slogans of the “Black Hundred” could be, for example, “Death to rebels and Jews!”, as it was formulated by the head of the Union of the Russkiy People in Odessa [23, p. 224]. The Black Hundreds went down in history as organizers of Jewish pogroms and public street actions, and thus they were ahead of the tactics of the Nazi movement in Germany [24]. These organizations were banned after the February Revolution in 1917, but the spirit of the “Black Hundred” has not disappeared and has been revived in modern Russia.

Thus, in tsarist Russia, rashism took various ideological forms, but the internal content remained unchanged: nationalism, imperialism, monarchism, Russian messianism, anti-Western

orientation and rejection of Ukrainians as a separate people with their own dignity and the right to their own history. Opponents of the rashist ideology tried to design alternative ideological and political programs, but they lost numerically and from the point of view of influence on the authorities, because the Slavophiles, Pochvenniki, the “Black Hundred”, and the official ideology of the ruling class were broadly supported by the “ulterior people” as the bearer of the rashist consciousness.

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1.3. WAS THE SPIRIT OF RASHISM PRESERVED IN THE SOVIET IDEOLOGICAL TRADITION?

In the second half of the 19th century the radical left wing was joined by the revolutionary ideologies of socialism and communism initially borrowed from Western Europe, but later transformed and adapted to the Russian worldview and mentality. The socialist movement in Russia took the form of the *Narodnik movement*, its ideologues developed a program of Russian peasant socialism, the path to which, according to the ideologues of Narodnik movement, lay through a bloody revolution devastating the ruling class. Adepts of Narodnik movement tried to campaign “the masses”. Confronted with the reality and political passivity of the peasants, who could not be swayed and directed to revolutionary feats, the Narodnik ideologues started putting forward more radical ideas. Russia became the cradle of European terrorism when in 1879 the Narodnik movement split, and the more radical People’s Will party announced a program of political terror; later, the Socialist Revolutionaries (the

SRs party) and anarchists picked up terror tactics. The terror lasted for four decades. The emperor was assassinated in 1881 after a series of failed attempts on his life, and later, a number of top officials were killed, ministers, governors, and chiefs of police departments among them; the same fate befell Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin. The latter was killed by the terrorist Dmitri Bogrov in a Kyiv theater during the intermission, in 1911 [1]. The slogan “call Russia to the ax!”, put forward by the ideologues of Narodnik movement at the very beginning, finally took on a bloody dimension considerably affecting public opinion. In general, terror has an important information component: information about incidents is broadcast by all the media, from rumors to the official press, thus bringing maximum publicity and social resonance to the attacks. Public opinion started shifting to a more radical part of the spectrum, the idea of revolutionary violence gradually captured consciousness, and as a result, many average citizens secretly or openly sympathized with the terrorists. Even the jury courts sometimes sided with the terrorists, as was the case with Vera Zasulich (1849-1919). In 1877, she shot at Dmitri Trepov, the mayor of St. Petersburg, wounding him, but the jury acquitted her, and the young terrorist was released from custody in the courtroom.

Anarchists also carried out attempts on the rulers' lives, although on a smaller scale than the SRs did. The revolution was ripening like a bloody fruit on the imperial tree, but the society's tolerance towards murderers can be explained from the viewpoint of our rashism theory. The terrorists obviously expressed the deep feelings of the people prone to violence and aggression. That is, the derivative of the terror ideology was deeply rooted in social psychology and collective archetypes. Russian society is internally prone to bloodletting and due to this fact, the collective unconscious finds some release in bloody experiences. Such a hypothesis should not be rejected, because the hunt of the undergrounders (illegals) for the chiefs and leaders of the empire would very soon turn into the state or “red” terror, which was announced by the Bolsheviks seizing power in 1918; and their opponents responded symmetrically, with “white terror”. The country was quite easily immersed in the bloody massacre. Later, with the appearance of the USSR, the situation did not change a bit, as the leadership actually pursued the policy of

terror throughout the years of the country's existence. For Russia, violence and bloodshed is the rule rather than an exception. It was V. Putin who found a way out of the Russian closed circle of violence by directing terrorist activity to the outside, transferring it to other countries' territory. And the people is quite satisfied with it, as Russia's "ulterior people" is ready to support such a policy. We can consider such attitudes and ideological manifestations as a component of rashism. Terror devalues human life, and then it is more convenient for the leaders to feed the population with a fascist policy.

The tsarist government responded to terror with repressions and carrying out numerous executions, including Lenin's brother – Aleksandr Ulyanov (1887) was hanged according to a court verdict. All this created a culture of revolutionary violence and romanticized death for an idea. In due time, Russia drowned in a real stream of blood when the civil war (1917-1920) unfolded. As for Lenin, he vowed to avenge his beloved brother, whom he considered an example of indomitability and revolutionary resilience. Fulfilling the vow, he personally ordered the shooting of the entire royal family. The order was carried out by the Ural Bolsheviks on the night of July 16-17, 1918. However, Lenin's attitude to terror was twofold. The Bolsheviks under his leadership rejected the tactics of terror on the way to revolution for reasons of expediency. They criticized the Socialist-Revolutionaries because of the ineffectiveness of their tactics, though not for principle or moral reasons. Terror did not lead the party to power, and for Lenin it was power that was the criterion for the success of the revolutionary process. Still, Lenin undoubtedly was an extremist. He ousted the moderate Marxists from the leadership of the Russian Social Democratic Party and created the Bolshevik Party as a band of revolutionary fanatics ready to fulfill the leader's will without a question. If it was necessary to mercilessly kill enemies for the revolutionary cause, Lenin and the Bolsheviks never thought twice. After seizing power, Lenin and the Bolsheviks demonstrated their readiness to kill to the fullest extent. So, in Russia, the ideology of Marxism acquired a purely Russian dimension: it was sinister, fanatical, and bloody. In his book *The Origin of Russian Communism*, the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev called Leninism a purely Russian phenomenon, and called the leader of the Bolsheviks "a typical Russian man" [2, p. 99]. In the state

of proletarian dictatorship created by Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and Co., one can trace, rather, the Asian, namely Mongolian tradition of absolutism, service to the state, personal servitude and slavery as a sociological principle.

Would Karl Marx have recognized Lenin as his student had the German philosopher seen the Russian's achievements with his own eyes? Probably not. This answer can be proven as a correct one, though indirectly enough, by a discussion between Lenin and Karl Kautsky, the leader of the German Social Democrats, taking place after the Bolsheviks had succeeded in seizing power in Russia. The discussion was ignited by the differences in the viewpoints on K. Marx' doctrine about the proletarian dictatorship. Lenin took this expression of Marx from the *Critique of the Gothic Program* and raised it to the height of the mainstream in his domestic politics. He interpreted proletarian dictatorship as the right to all-out violence in the interests of the revolution, regardless of any laws. Revolutionary expediency had to prevail over laws, morality, and customs. K. Kautsky believed that Marx had used the concept of the proletarian dictatorship accidentally, and his teacher's position as for the proletarian revolution had a different meaning. In the work *Die Diktatur des Proletariats* (1918) (its English translation was published just a year later as *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*), he held the opinion that democracy is inherent value in the struggle for the liberation of humanity, and socialism becomes impossible without it [3]. Lenin responded with the polemic work *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* [4]. The Bolsheviks' leader could not but react, because the issue of creating the Third Communist International was on the agenda, and such discussions were of a crucial nature for the ideologically engaged public in numerous countries all over the world. For the Bolsheviks, democracy was the same thing as it later became for the German Nazis, i.e. nothing more than a policy stroke to propagate their ideas: if you can use bourgeois freedoms on the way to power, then you should participate in the democratic process. When the power is taken, democratic principles can be thrown away like a used handkerchief or remade into a surrogate like "people's democracy", aka "socialist democracy", "Soviet democracy", and "sovereign democracy" (the modern Russian concept). In 1919, K. Kautsky continued the discussion in absentia

in his book *Terrorism and Communism*, where he strongly condemned the Bolsheviks for the state terror, lack of the freedom of speech, destruction of democratic institutions, empty rhetoric and pandering to the instincts of the crowd. He was anxious that if one model of socialism collapsed it could bring the destruction of socialism as a whole [5]. Leon Trotsky, who at that time was No. 2 in the Bolsheviks hierarchy, was next to join the discussion. He published a book with the same title as K. Kautsky did, but started it with the following words: *The origin of this book was the learned brochure by Kautsky with the same name* [6]. Both Lenin and Trotsky recognized democracy as an opportunity for the proletarian masses only, and they argued in a demagogic manner: they allegedly managed to create revolutionary political institutions which were a thousand times more democratic than bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

This polemic may seem archaic, but de facto it still continuing. When the old Russian Empire with its European landmarks collapsed, its territory saw the collision of two different cultural worlds, namely European civilization and Russian medieval tradition. Lenin was well aware of the fact that Democracy had always been foreign to the broad masses in Russia, and the whip in the master's hands was the eternal and self-evident value. Lenin rejected the humanistic component of Marxism and replaced it with the theory of political pragmatism devoid of any "bourgeois morality." From that point on, the paths of Russian communists and European socialists diverged forever. The same situation can be observed in the modern era: Putin and his accomplices are openly mocking democratic values, engaging in empty rhetoric and political fraud, and the "ulterior people", as the famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin put it, *The People are speechless* [quotation from *Boris Godunov*, translated by Alfred Hayes], because they are satisfied with everything that corresponds to their instincts and general attitude.

On receiving the full power, Lenin and his associates opened a new stage in the history of Russia's state ideology. Officially, it was called *the Marxist-Leninist ideology*, or *Soviet ideology*. All other competing ideas were banned, their carriers were repressed from time to time (and not only during some definite time period), even books representing such ideas were removed from libraries; strict censorship on printing existed, and the possession of prohibited lit-

erature at home was considered a criminal offense. Still, Bolsheviks were not the first to resort to such actions on the ideological front. Censorship on publications was introduced by a decree of Catherine II back in 1796 in response to the free-thinking of the French Revolution; censorship committees in the Russian Empire functioned continuously until 1917. Actual freedom of speech has existed in Russia for just a few months (from March to October), immediately after the 1917 democratic revolution. However, after the October coup staged by the Bolsheviks, the revolutionary authorities banned the so-called “bourgeois press”. Subsequently, censorship was institutionalized and carried out virtually until the end of the USSR existence.

The practice of banning printed products and other media has returned under Putin. Moreover, dangerous books are burned now. Such a tradition was transferred to the territory of Ukraine in 2022, when Russians seized Ukrainian cities and villages. In Russia, a large Federal list of the so-called *extremist materials* has been created comprises about 4,000 items. Ukrainian authors are also included in it. It is constantly reviewed, and new titles appear there based on the decisions of the lower courts. Managers of libraries are constantly brought to administrative responsibility for keeping books of the *extremist orientation*, and books are confiscated [7]. Rashism and freedom of speech are incompatible.

Eurocentric trends in Russia before the Bolsheviks revolution were only supported by the thin layers of the old elite, intelligentsia, and bourgeoisie. The massive destruction of these strata during the Russian revolution and civil war worsened the ideological balance in favor of the newest national loyalists. The relative share of rashism also increased after the destruction of the more educated part of the communist leaders with European experience (Leo Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin, Lev Kamenev, etc.) at the Moscow trials of the 1930s. The new Kremlin rulers preferred to live behind the iron curtain, they had a horror of opening both physical and information borders: Soviet people were supposed to only consume state ideology.

What ideology became actually dominant on the plane spreading over one sixth of the earth’s landmass? We question the propriety of using the *Marxism-Leninism* term (the term was proposed by J. Stalin). In our opinion, the school of thought of K. Marx, his utopia, were very far from the practice of Leninism and its core idea,

proletarian dictatorship. In the same way, Marx's ideas are not the basis for Maoism, Kimersenism, and other communist *-isms* of the 20th century. The *Leninism-Stalinism* term is more accurate; it expresses the ideology of a totalitarian socio-political system, whose markers are well-known theses and statements from the lexicon of irreconcilable, cruel, and permanent struggle, such as *Peace to the huts! War on the palaces!*, *world revolution*, *liquidation of the bourgeoisie as a class*, *armed uprising*, *proletarian dictatorship*, *if the enemy does not surrender, he will be destroyed*, *aggravation of the class struggle along with the development of socialism*, *enemies of the people*, *Gulag*, etc. Soviet ideologues, after deposing Stalin from the leader's pedestal at the end of the 1950s, tried to carry out an ideological rebranding and renew the Soviet ideology, but still it did not become Marxist. There was an attempt to add some humanistic meanings to the ideology, and to that end, the new generation of Soviet philosophers turned to the works of the young Marx, to his alienation theory in particular, bringing animated discussion, among others, on the idea of comprehensive harmonious development of the individual as the goal of communism, etc. But the authorities needed something else: to preserve the role of the world leader in revolutionary processes for Moscow, to prevent the union republics from withdrawing, to increase the efficiency of state administration in the centralized economy, etc. Rashism again began to crawl out of all the cracks of the ideological wall, with which the Soviet people were fenced off from the world. In my opinion, the ideological formula had the following form: Leninism-Stalinism = Communism + Rashism.

What did 70 years of Soviet power mean for the existence of rashism? Should this period be deleted from the chronology of the genesis of the phenomenon? On the one hand, Russian nationalism and chauvinism were declared alien (bourgeois) phenomena; at least until the end of the 1930s, Soviet leaders were careful to keep at bay any manifestations of rashism. They still remembered the rapid collapse of the Russian Empire, when more than ten national states emerged on its territory and non-Russian peoples were craving for distancing themselves from the imperial center. The Kremlin leaders had a well-grounded fear that manifestations of great-power ideology would destroy the construction of the federal state, which they

had initiated in December 1922 after intense debates and conflicts. It was important not to break the illusion of *equality* and *brotherhood* among the peoples of the USSR, which numbered about 200 ethnic units. At that time, no one said that the USSR was a kind of a modernized Russian Empire. Moreover, for such words, one could be charged with anti-Soviet propaganda which was a criminal offense. V. Putin revealed the “state secret” that the USSR was Russia, at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg on June 17, 2022. He stated the following, and not for the first time: *I spoke publicly and without any hesitation, the Soviet Union – what is it? This is historical Russia* [8].

We can see the cross-cutting lines of rashism from Elder Philopheus to the Soviet ideology, the latter quite naturally including rashist constants. They made their way through the nihilism of the first years of the revolution and the communists’ desire to defeat the old world. The following can be attributed to these indomitable ideologues, which are already present in *the Third Rome*.

The greatness of the USSR (Russia) and Moscow as the symbolic and spiritual center of the world, because all *working people* and the so-called *progressive humanity* is looking at the Kremlin with hope, waiting for liberation, hoping for protection from imperialists and warmongers, dreaming of socialism, the latter already fallen into the hands of the happy Soviet people. No country in the world had such a coat of arms as the USSR did: a hammer and sickle on the background of a world map. The symbolism was that capitalism had a short time left to exist, and soon a world federation of proletarian nations with its capital in Moscow would emerge. The USSR was considered the largest and most militarily powerful country that would win the final apocalyptic battle with the dark forces and communism would finally rule the planet. This is how Soviet people were supposed to think about the country, and Soviet ideology powerfully brainwashed them in this way. Thus, if the greatness of *the Third Rome* was only measured by the borders of the Orthodox world, where Moscow had to play the role of either Rome or Constantinople, then Moscow of the 20th century was a global phenomenon, a center to which the proletarian masses, national liberation movements, and communists of the whole world supposedly gravitated, like children are drawn to their father or mother.

This ideology gave the foundation for the down-to-earth state policy of the USSR, which tried to finance communist parties around the world, support revolutionary movements, arm the national governments of those countries that declared their orientation towards Moscow, Marxism-Leninism, etc. The Bolsheviks did even more than the tsarist officials for the real and pretended majesty of Russia (USSR), because, indeed, they turned it into a world power, made their enemies fear a nuclear attack, got bridgeheads in Asia, Africa, Latin America – that is, they did exactly what the masses expected. For these achievements, the *ulterior people* were ready to forgive the authorities for many wrongdoings. Even the aging leaders of the White movement in exile were forced to recognize the achievements of the Bolsheviks in the spheres where they had lost. There is information that Anton Denikin, the leader of the white movement in the south of the former empire, at the end of his life recognized Stalin as the Russian emperor, because he saved the empire, made it truly great, increased the territories and put other peoples under Moscow control. Philosopher N. Berdyaev in exile stated: «*As paradoxical as it may sound, Bolshevism is the third manifestation of Russian great power, Russian imperialism. The Moscow Empire was the first manifestation, Peter the Great's Empire was the second manifestation. Bolshevism speaks for a strong, centralized state. The will to social truth and the will to state power merged, and the latter turned out to be stronger*» [9].

The mission of the new communist Russia. According to the postulates of Soviet ideology, a revolutionary process has begun in the world (since the Bolshevik revolution), with the USSR (Russia) as its natural leader. The mission of the country (and the Russian people) is to lead the whole world to the victory of communism. Moscow allegedly played the role of a messiah who came to this world to strike down the enemy and save the faithful. Thus, this ideological model was something more grandiose than the old idea of the last Orthodox state, which is responsible for the salvation of sinful souls and preparation for the Second Coming. Messianism was also characteristic of Marxism, but here it was the proletariat that played the role of the messiah, who sacrifices himself in the struggle for a bright future of humanity. In Soviet Russia, the ideology shifted to the traditional rashist interpretation of the role of Moscow and Russia, in

general; as N. Berdyaev wrote in the work «*Truth and Lies of Communism, The Russian revolution caused a meeting and union of two messianic consciousnesses, the messianism of the proletariat and the messianism of the Russian people*» [10].

The idea of the red absolutism. Formally, the monarchy in Russia was abolished, the royal family was physically destroyed, the constitution stated that the USSR and the sub-federal entities were republics. However, the status of the head of the state leading the people and having unlimited power, was superior to the social position of emperors rather than equal to it, because the monarchs had not really enjoyed unlimited power over their subjects, economy, social and cultural life of the country. General secretaries had such power, the only thing that distinguished them was a different order of succession to the throne, as the USSR did not use the North Korean practice of passing power from father to son. The USSR, rather, used a formally undefined Byzantine model, when the successor was to be chosen by a narrow circle of top officials, or otherwise seize power through a mutiny. Attempts to lower the exclusive status of the General Secretary of the Communist Party were made in the late 1950s, with a campaign against the *personality cult*, i.e. against exalting the figure of J. Stalin to the level of a divine person, was launched. In practice, the cult was created by propaganda, mass media, and educational institutions, whose activities thus were to be adjusted in a certain way. But the safeguards were not enough for long, and already under N. Khrushchev, who was the initiator of de-Stalinization, the usual sacralization of the first person in the state started again. The leader could not be criticized, and all internal and external achievements were connected with the general secretary in one way or another. This is how the Soviet ideological system worked until its last days.

The special status of the Russkiy people. The ideas of the official closeness to people expressed in the Narodniki movement and triune Russia were not forgotten but transformed into a theory of the equality of socialist nations and the leading role played by the Russkiy people. Still, de facto there was no equality. Jews, Crimean Tatars, and Chechens were secretly limited in their rights until the very last years of the USSR existence. Ukrainians, on their part, were considered either spoiled or inferior Russkiye. During

the first twenty years of the Bolsheviks rule, Russkiy particularism, Russian nationalism, and manifestations of great-power chauvinism were suppressed as much as possible. Colonial policy regarding the national borders of the former Russian Empire was officially condemned, and famous Russian historical figures, military commanders, heroes of the imperial history were considered as feudal lords, serfs, oppressors and negative characters of history, in contrast to the positive role of the masses and leaders of various rebellions and uprisings. This was called *a class approach to history*. Everything began to change before the Second World War. In late December, 1936, the *Leningradskaya Pravda* newspaper published an article under the eloquent title of *The Elder among Equals*. In it, the author emphasized the special role of the Russkiy people, which is endowed with positive virtues, and said that its leading role had allegedly been recognized by the other peoples of the USSR [11]. This publication and similar ones, of course, could not see the light of day without the approval of J. Stalin, who was considered the theoretician of the national question in Bolshevik circles. Stalin was a Georgian, but at the same time he was the newest Russian emperor, and he deliberately chose the most numerous people with the experience of creating an empire and the corresponding consciousness as the foundation of a new socio-political structure. Aleksandra Kollontai (1872-1952), the Soviet ambassador to Sweden and a famous communist figure, left a diary entry under the influence of a two-hour conversation with Stalin in his Kremlin office in the autumn of 1939. It had the following maxim of the leader regarding the role of the Russkiy people in the oncoming war: «*All this will fall on the shoulders of the Russkiy people. Because the Russkiy people is a great people. The Russkiy people is a good people. The Russkiy people has a clear mind. It was born to help other nations. The Russkiy people has great courage, especially in difficult times, in dangerous times. It is proactive. It has a persistent character. It is a dreamy people. It has a goal. Therefore, it carries a larger burden than other nations do. You can rely on it in any trouble. The Russkiy people is invincible, inexhaustible*» [12]. Stalin expressed himself in a similar spirit officially, as well. Let me quote his well-known toast to the health of the Russkiy people, which he made in May 1945 at the official reception in the Kremlin in honor of the vic-

tory over Germany (first published in the Pravda newspaper on May 25, 1945). It began as follows: «As a representative of our Soviet government, I would like to raise a toast to the health of our Soviet people and, above all, the Russkiy people (boisterous, prolonged applause, cheers). I drink, first of all, for the health of the Russkiy people, because it is the most outstanding nation of all the nations that make up the Soviet Union. I raise a toast to the health of the Russkiy people, because in this war it has earned the title, as it did earlier, the title, if you will, of the leading power of our Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country» [13]. In the end, the Russkiy people received the unofficial title of *the elder brother*. The American historian David Brandenburg suggested a hypothesis regarding the reasons for Stalin rejecting the concept of total equality of nations and granting preferences to the Russkiy people. It was a pragmatic policy related to social mobilization during the wartime period. Russocentrism was designed to strengthen the social basis of the state at the time of critical confrontation with capitalist countries. At the same time, Stalin initiated the process of glorifying a number of historical figures of tsarist Russia, military leaders, writers, and scientists who were ethnic Ruskiye. The USSR history was now taught as Russian history [14]. The renowned Soviet writer Alexei Tolstoy (1882-1945) wrote the story titled *Russkiy Character* (1944) during the war. This was perceived in a positive context, but a similar wording like *Ukrainian character* had every chance to cause accusations of separatism and nationalism. *Russian* became synonymous with *Soviet*. Manifestations of love for Russia, its land, birch trees, fields, etc. was welcome in songs and literary works, but the same from the Ukrainian side was perceived with suspicion, as manifestations of nationalism. The terms *Russian nationalism* or *Russian great-power nationalism* were no longer used, because “nationalisms” could only be those of other peoples of the USSR. The Russians were like Caesar’s wife, beyond suspicion.

Religiosity. In the old rashist ideology, the Orthodox religion occupied an important place, as a purely Russian spiritual trait consolidating the monarchical structure, giving people the meaning of existence and filling the minds of ordinary mortals, preventing hostile ideology, Latinism or revolutionary ideas from entering there. The Soviet government launched a systematic attack on religion, de-

fining the newly formed country as the first atheistic state in the history of mankind. Moreover, the domestic policy was defined as aggressive (militant) atheism: religious communities were dissolved, churches were closed and destroyed, priests were repressed, atheistic education of the youth was carried out in schools and universities. Was this essential derivative of rashism lost? This is not quite so. It turned out that religiosity plays important social functions and the new government began experimenting to find an equivalent to the old religion. New objects of worship arose: the communist ideology, which was proclaimed an immortal teaching, and which had to be studied, appreciated, proud; the pantheon of the proletarian leaders, having both the main saints (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin) and a host of saints of lower levels; heroes who gave their lives for a bright future and who should be constantly remembered and honored; new signs and symbols that acquired the meaning of religious attributes, e.g. certain colors of flags, proletarian symbols, communist holidays, monuments, new heraldry, etc. Consequently, a communist quasi-religion emerged and gained strength, filling people's minds with canonical content just like the old religions did. Communist fanaticism arose, and people with this type of consciousness still live to this day. No exposure of Stalin's crimes or criticism of the Soviet Union can change their consciousness. It is the same as conducting atheist propaganda in the circle of traditional religious fanatics, for every doubt and objection they have convincing answers within the framework of their worldview. But during the Second World War, Stalin took a non-trivial step giving permission to revive the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church (1943). So, the Russian Orthodox Church once again took its place in the state and performed a useful function, mitigating the suffering of the masses. After the end of the war, the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church fulfilled an important task of the Kremlin participating in the destruction of the independent Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (spring 1946). And since the collapse of the old communist system, a real church boom has taken place in Russia, which was actively supported by the government, business, and the military; and the Orthodox component once again securely binds the edifice of racism.

When in government, communists seemed to strike a blow at the foundations of rashism, but at the same time, the Soviet ide-

ology raised its central theses on the shield regarding the special role, historic mission and overarching task of the USSR to defeat the capitalist West. If the name of the USSR be replaced by the word Russia, then all the puzzles will come together proving that rashism did not die in the 20th century, and the mass consciousness of Russians was sown with seeds that gave a rich harvest during the time of V. Putin. So, we will not discount this epic period, when the ideological heritage of old Russia was formally excluded from circulation, but in real life rashism was revived like a phoenix bird in new forms, preserving the old meaning. Imperialism, militarism, autocracy, and Russian nationalism were part of the Soviet collective consciousness, although it was not said aloud. And this consciousness did not disappear with the fall of the USSR. It may even be correct to introduce the *eternal rashism* concept as a reflection of the stability of ideology typical for Russian society at all stages of its existence. Now let's move on to modern times, when rashism reared its ugly head and took on extremist forms.

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1.4. RASHISM IN MODERN RUSSIA

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, in the territory of the USSR, and in Moscow happened almost instantly if regarded by historical standards, and resembled a rock slide in the mountains. It buried the Soviet ideology. The communist shell cracked like a nut shell, leaving the mass consciousness of Russians in a state of chaos, agitation, confusion, and uncertainty. Soviet ideology was closely connected with the exceptional status of the Communist Party, the latter producing ideologemes, keeping in hand the ideological apparatus (which was neither cheap nor uncrowded), controlling the media, and monitoring public opinion with the help of the State Security Committee of the USSR (also known as KGB). In the second half of the 1980s, the Communist Party had about 19 million members, who were supposed to bring the ideas of communism to

the masses. But this was only true in theory, as during the so-called “Brezhnev stagnation”, the authority of the party and its leadership were declining steadily, the attitude towards Soviet ideology became formal, and de facto it was a period of de-ideologization, which was especially noticeable in the youth environment. The ideological duel with the capitalist world had been lost, but not due to the lack of communist literature or the deterioration of school and university programs. Young people chose jeans, Western pop culture and did not believe in communist ideals. However, the absolute majority of the population followed ideological rituals and did not openly oppose the system till the very end of the mighty state.

Mikhail Gorbachev starting reforms in 1985, did not fully realize all the possible consequences of his innovations. He wanted to improve socialism and did not reject Leninism, but in fact caused the metaphorical rock slide, rolling the first pebbles of social change from above. *Glasnost* and democratization tore the communist system to pieces very soon. On March 14, 1990, the Moscow Congress of the USSR People’s Deputies adopted constitutional changes depriving the Communist Party of its monopoly on political power in the country and allowing other political forces to participate in the management of the country. The Congress of the USSR People’s Deputies removed the odious Article 6 from the old Constitution (1977), where the Communist party was defined as *the leading and guiding force of society, the core of its political system, state and public organizations*. On October 24, 1990, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic also canceled Article 6 of its Constitution, which gave all the authority in Ukraine to the Communist Party, because the structure of all the constitutions of the USSR republics complied with that of the USSR Constitution [1]. Other republics followed the suit. By this point, the party had actually lost its position as a distinguished and spiritual political force. Therefore, under a multi-party system, no political force was entitled to an ideological monopoly in society. This provision was later enshrined in Article 13 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The population was, as the saying goes, fed up to the throat with ideology, in general, and the elites had not yet found their way in the new situation thus succumbing to the general trend towards the “triumph of capitalism.” The initial accumulation of capital in an

atheistic country without any traditions and moral restrictions soon pushed the society to criminal capitalism. After the collapse of the old system, people's minds were dominated by various selfish ideologemes of the vital type, e.g. "enrichment at any price", "consumerism", and "primitive physical survival". It turned out that in the new conditions, when the old strategies of social adaptation were destroyed, the criminal way of survival and enrichment appeared to be most convenient and easy. Unrighteous money was made on embezzling state-owned enterprises, which had ceased working and underwent liquidation process; on small-scale smuggling across newly formed borders; on illegal drug trafficking and cultivating marijuana, etc. At the beginning of the 1990s, gangster groups emerged like mushrooms after the rain; various forms of racket, organized prostitution, and the production of counterfeit alcohol appeared, let alone the rise in traditional crimes. The mid-1990s saw an abnormal rise in official criminal statistics, although they recorded no more than a tenth of the real number of crimes.

The peculiarity of the Russian criminal world lies in the fact that it has its own ideology [2]. It was formed back in Stalin's Gulag camps and comprised (as a central link) the so-called "thieves' idea" and even "thieves' law". Firstly, they informally regulated the behavior of mafia bosses, or the so-called "thieves-in-law," and other criminals following their special code of conduct; secondly, they gave criminals a sense of their own existence. The criminal code of conduct has a natural supplement, i.e., a developed criminal subculture including criminal slang (also called criminal talk); prison rules, habits, and folklore; criminal tattoos; informal names, etc. Our hypothesis is that the ideology of the underworld had a significant impact on the mass consciousness in the 1990s and has survived as a supplement to rashism.

In the USSR, the onslaught of criminal ideology was contained artificially with the help of censorship and the state education system. Censorship prevented criminal slang, which constitutes a separate and fairly developed symbolic system of social communications in Russia, from penetrating into artistic works, and first of all, into the most mass film productions. The education system, for its part, controlled the language and behavior of children and youth. All these safeguards disappeared almost simultaneously, and the coun-

try entering new market relations was literally flooded with real and fake samples of the criminal subculture (as a business). Via movies and literature, ordinary citizens got acquainted with all aspects of prison life, especially the norms of the “thieves’ law”; rogue songs were played on the radio; the vocabulary of communication was permeated with slang words. Even politicians, parliamentarians, and notables did not disdain the latter. The forbidden fruit finally became available, and the people were eager to taste the criminal romance. Criminal ideology captured the minds of ordinary people forming a cynical and nihilistic attitude to social reality. A whole generation turned out to be immersed in the world of criminal concepts, images, and fantasies. It broke the fate of many, because next to the crime there always stands punishment, even if it does not come from the law enforcement agencies. In the 1990s, TV channels were broadcasting never-ending news about the murders of politicians, businessmen, and criminal authorities, because those were the times of biological Darwinism.

The criminal ideology spreading from marginal strata to the wider social space had a rashist color. First, the criminal subculture was mainly formed on the territory of Russia, the criminal leaders (thieves-in-law) came from the interior regions of Russia or from the Caucasus. The worldview of criminals was thus historically grounded on Russian archetypes of consciousness, such as teamwork, the principles of life and work in the village community, village assembly, etc. So, we can say that i.e. all these criminal meetings (or *shhodka*), and common funds (or *obschak*), and generally, the idea of criminal fraternity, were deeply immersed in Russian traditional village practices [3]. Secondly, Russian criminal subculture is a unique national phenomenon, its patterns did not copy foreign models, because Italian, Chinese, Latin American, and Japanese criminal traditions had their own archetypal foundations.

What relates the criminal ideology of Russian criminals to rashism in essence? First of all, it is the idea of the exclusivity of professional criminals, their superiority over other prisoners or civilians beyond the bars, which reflects the hierarchical ideas of Russians as a whole; then, the criminals’ isolation from the larger society, which is a projection of Russia’s isolation from the outside world; in the third place, the authoritarian nature of relations, strict discipline

and the possibility of quick punishment without unnecessary formalities; fourthly, Russian fate as doom; fifthly, the existence of a special mission to protect the criminal law and “pull” the young to the common cause, thus continuing the criminal tradition – as we can see, the enumerated features are quite close to the ideas of rashist messianism. The thieves’ idea indirectly supported the rashist vision of Russia as an exclusive agent of the world order, which is foreign to the ordinary world and carries some special “truth” in it.

There has always been a complementary relationship between the rashist worldview and that of the criminal world. This kinship was conveyed in the famous works by the traditionalist and soil scientist, Fyodor Dostoevsky. Russian fate has always admitted the possibility of crime and punishment on the path of life, and a well-known proverb gives the corresponding formula: *don't count out a prison cell, a begging bowl may come as well*. The Orthodox Church, for its part, added meaning to such unnatural symbiosis. According to the Orthodox priests’ view, every soul has hope for salvation; therefore, after a brutal murder, even a gang killing, involving women and children, it’s time to come to church, pray, and the parson will readily forgive sins for a nice amount of money. This is how it works in Russia. It is no coincidence that the Russian leader and ideologue of racism, V. Putin, has a direct relationship with the criminal world and criminal organizations, and often uses criminal slang. V. Putin’s criminal career is unique and unprecedented, because he tried on the images of all the main types of criminals. As a child, he was involved in the world of street crime and criminal authorities of Leningrad; as an adult, he served in an essentially criminal organization, the KGB of the USSR; then there came the years of large-scale economic crime in the rank of an official at St. Petersburg City Hall; finally, he proved himself as a political criminal and realizes his criminal talent at the highest level of the state hierarchy, war being a serious international crime.

It is not by chance that V. Putin places a bet on representatives of the criminal world in his hybrid military missions, and has appointed people with criminal record to leadership positions in the occupied territories. The Kremlin dictator understands their soul and they return loyalty, because they are well aware of the informal laws, or rules of the underworld, according to which the Rus-

sian leader himself lives. In 2014, he placed a bet on this contingent when capturing the Donbas region. The fact that this Ukrainian region has always had an abnormally high percentage of men with criminal history helped Mr Putin a lot. In the past, criminals from all over the USSR flocked to the Donbas, and those released from camps were allowed to settle there if they agreed to hard mining work. V. Putin and his aides were well aware of the social specifics of the region and drew local criminals to their side by providing them free access to weapons, alcohol and drugs [4].

The connection between the Putin regime and the criminal world is a unique phenomenon. In the summer of 2022, when the Russian army trying to advance on the territory of Ukraine almost completely lost its more or less professional infantry, the invaders faced a great shortage of manpower. It was then that V Putin decided it was time to use prisoners. He dispatched his right-hand man and confidant, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to levy people to the Wagner private military company. Mr Prigozhin himself is the head of the group and some time ago organized the so-called Olgino troll factory in St. Petersburg to conduct information warfare. Ye. Prigozhin went to places of imprisonment by helicopter and called on inmates to join PMC Wagner, promising a high salary and amnesty after six months of service (surely, both the former and the latter are only possible for those who are lucky enough to survive). V. Putin's aide has an outstanding criminal and prison experience, this fact raising his status in the prisoners' eyes. In 1979, the Kuibyshevsky Court of Leningrad found Ye. Prigozhin guilty of theft, but the court decision did not include imprisonment; it was only in 1981, when the Zhdanovsky Court deprived him of liberty for 13 years under such Articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, as *theft, robbery, fraud, and involvement of juveniles in criminal activity* [5].

Coming to Russian prisons as Mr Putin's confidant, he treated the inmates as equals, and to the astonishment of the audience, he said that Russia is ruled by a criminal group (that is, their friends). Preference was given to persons convicted of murder, robbery, that is, prone to violence. Here is the direct speech of one of the convicts, who readily listened to Mr Prigozhin's speech, but to his frustration, he did not get to the front: «*They asked if I had killed. They preferred to take those convicted under Articles 105 and 111 (Murder*

and intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm). Out of 400 people, 150 were selected. I went through everything, passed the commission, but at the last stage the FSB officers came, and because of the tattoos I did not pass, because I had a swastika tattooed on me. I think that they gathered those who had nothing to lose in life, but I was not lucky» [6]. The mission was partially successful, as several thousand Russian criminals were recruited and sent to the front under the call signs according to their criminal nicknames (*pogonyalo*). In this story, it is the motif of the kinship of souls that is interesting: the bonzas of rashism, who started their “careers” in the criminal underground and then rushed to the top, when a critical moment came, reunited with ordinary criminals who were not lucky enough to join the leadership core of the criminal political group, and thus stayed on the bunks. Mr Prigozhin’s recruiting was in itself a completely illegal affair, even under the laws of the Russian Federation, and it gives reason to consider V. Putin’s regime to be criminal by nature.

The role of criminal ideology in the post-Soviet period has not yet been thoroughly studied, but it is seen as unprecedentedly important. At least the top of society, the so-called *passionaries* (Lev Gumilev’s term), like Prigozhin, quite naturally combine the ideology of rashism and criminal ideology. The latter gives its followers absolute confidence in the right of the *high caste* to do evil, teaches them to look down on ordinary people, disrespect the law or use it as a club against competitors, if you happen to be the boss. The Russian national idea and the criminal idea both came to the surface in the era of Putin’s Russia, intertwined into a single entity and transformed into war crimes on the territory of Ukraine. So, on the way to the triumph of aggressive rashism, the “criminal pause” was an important milestone.

At the beginning of the 1990s in Russia, the conflict between Slavophiles and Westerners reappeared, though it had never disappeared actually, but was only suppressed by Soviet ideology. In that unique and short period called *the spring of democracy*, Westerners, or liberals, figuratively speaking, beat their opponents with a score of 10:0, because a corresponding demand then existed in society: the West was seen as manna from heaven, the capitalist path was believed to be a natural one, having no alternatives. Many citi-

zens resorted to the so-called economic emigration to the West so as not to wait for their homeland to reach the same standard of living and freedom as the ones specific for the USA or Germany. Russia was dominated by ideologues of a Western liberal orientation promoted by the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007). The new political elite planned and implemented reforms that in a short period of time would lead the country to the path of capitalism, turn the majority of its population to beggars, form the class of medium and large owners and a small group of oligarchs, who actually determined the political course of the state.

The *spring of democracy* ended very soon, immediately after the bloodshed and shelling of the Parliament building in Moscow in the fall of 1993. At first, the situation looked like a simple psychological conflict within the top leadership of the state, taking place between the self-confident and power-loving *Tsar Boris* and the parliament together with the vice president, who did not want to recognize the dictatorial style of Mr Yeltsin's government. Various right-wing nationalist groups, as well as left-wing communist and socialist groups, joined the rebels starting street violence and capturing the parliament building. Such an alliance may not seem natural, but the eternal conflict between the national loyalists and the Westerners came to the surface. Both the left and the ultra-right, due to their ideological principles, opposed the reforms and surrendering of Russia's imperial interests to the West. From my point of view, they were all rashists expressing their dissatisfaction with B. Yeltsin's political course. The *revanche* failed at the time, but Russia's return to its natural position as an opponent of the West seemed a matter of time.

Until the autumn of 1999, democracy was formally preserved in Russia (although the presidential elections of 1996 undermined the belief in the triumph of democracy in Russia, because suspicions arose of foul play on the authorities' part), therefore, the state enjoyed freedom of speech and had a generally Western orientation. But society's demand was changing, and dissatisfaction with B. Yeltsin's rule put Westerners under attack. The oligarchs believed that they had found a good replacement for the feeble *Tsar Boris*, but they were fatally mistaken, because they were dealing with the whole KGB of the USSR rather than with a featureless former KGB

officer nicknamed “Moth”, and though the KGB had earlier experienced difficult times, at that period of time it managed the situation from underground – or so it seemed.

The authorities in Russia, as we have shown you drawing on the example of the 19th century, generally held centrist positions with a certain attraction to the right wing and nationalists, as the latter were ready to defend the government against the revolution. Even during the term of B. Yeltsin’s office, the Russian authorities began to look for a similar centrist ideological position, which would correspond to their interests and remove accusations of their subservience to the West. In 1994-1995, an attempt was made to put forward an ideologeme called *democratic patriotism*, formulated by the then chairman of the Federation Council, V. Shumeiko, and the press secretary of the president, V. Kostikov. Later, this ideologeme became the grounds for the main theses of the President’s Message to the Federal Assembly and was called “On strengthening the Russian state”. This centrist ideology included the following: 1) the concept of creating a new political nation called *Russians*, which included all people living in Russia, no matter what ethnic group they belonged to; 2) general patriotic rhetoric positioning Russia as a great power; 3) a statement on the need to reintegrate the post-Soviet space, where Russia was assigned the leading part; 4) resurrection of the formula *united and indivisible Russia* [7]. This event can be interpreted as almost the first step of the government towards rashism. But the political situation did not yet make it possible to rollback the reforms and make the final turn towards the *Third Rome*, as Russia was immersed in an unsuccessful military campaign against Ichkeria (1994-1996). The stars in the sky had not yet aligned for the triumph of rashism. However, the trend was obvious: the vector of ideology shifted from the Western to the nationalist direction, from radicalism to conservatism, from the free market to strengthening the role of the state in the economy.

Anti-liberal trends in the second half of the 1990s were personified by Yevgeny Primakov (1929-2015), generally perceived as a conservative Soviet leader, who was affiliated with the special services of the USSR and Russia, and held various government positions. An incident on March 24, 1999, made history, when Mr Primakov, the then prime minister, was on his way to the USA to pay an official

visit. Still on flight, he was informed that NATO had bombed military facilities in Serbia, and he ordered the pilot to turn the plane back to Moscow. Journalists called the turnaround of the plane “Primakov’s loop”, and it is believed to have been a turning point in Russia’s foreign policy and the beginning of the deterioration of its relations with the West. Some members of the current Russian government believe that modern foreign policy owes to this statesman, because it is based on *Primakov’s line*, or *doctrine* [8]. So, for some time he was seen as the successor of B. Yeltsin, but it did not last long, as he was removed from his position two months after the U-turn over the Atlantic. Here, we will cite two important reasons why he did not become president: firstly, Mr Primakov was two years older than B. Yeltsin, and the current president preferred to see a person from another, younger generation in office; secondly, Mr Primakov was a Jew descending from the family of a Kyiv doctor, his real the surname was Kirshenblatt, and for a country with a pronounced anti-Semitic mentality, this was a big bug [9]. V. Putin, unlike Ye. Priakov, an “old whale in politics”, was very cautious at the beginning of his career, and no one understood his priorities, although experienced human rights defenders claimed that nothing good could come out of the KGB bosom.

In the early 1990s, Russia became a free country for the second time in its history (the first time happened in 1917), but this period was very short. Does a democratic society with liberal principles of existence need ideology? There are two points of view here. The first one is that all societies and states have their own ideology, because a core idea is needed for them to exist and develop. The second one is that ideologies are inherent in unfree, totalitarian societies, where the government is in urgent need of manipulation with its people, constant social mobilization, militarization and preparation for war. If we stick to the first view, then it is worth considering ideologies in free and unfree countries as being qualitatively different, especially in terms of the way of spreading and conveying key ideas to people. Totalitarian countries have numerous developed ideological apparatuses covering the entire population without exception; this is a separate type of information industry with broadcasting content, when the ideologemes of the ruling class are broadcast to the masses. At the same time, the state authorities ensure that there is

no opposition, those who disagree with the ideological course, or alternative and apocryphal versions of the official ideology. A democratic society has nothing like that, it is characterized by pluralism of beliefs and convictions; still, it does have some fundamental values that are promoted and protected in various unobtrusive ways. From childhood, people learn to value personal freedom and democracy, understand that they have a certain set of rights guaranteed by the state, that it is worth protecting the environment, and in recent decades the ideas of social protection, solidarity, and justice have become popular. Is it ideology or something else? Alexander Zinoviev (1922-2006), a Russian dissident philosopher, critic of both communism and capitalism, who was exiled to Germany in 1978, explained the situation in the West as follows: «*The existence of a particular western ideology is denied. But this is actually one of the ideas of Western ideology... Ideology is hidden, dissolved, scattered in everything that is intended for people's mentality, i.e. in literary works, films, special books, popular science and science fiction works, newspaper and magazine articles, advertising, etc. It merges with non-ideological phenomena to such an extent that the latter are simply unthinkable without it. This makes it invulnerable to criticism. It is everywhere and in everything, and therefore it seems as if it does not exist at all... People there do not even notice that from birth to death they are constantly present in the field of ideology. They consume it together with everything else they consume for their mental nutrition. They do it without any effort, without coercion, freely, without meetings*» [10, p. 333]. A. Zinoviev introduces the concept of the ideosphere into the political and philosophic discourse, and in the West this concept includes a number of subjects supporting a common ideology. The goal is to shape people's consciousness in such a way that common thoughts support the preservation of society [12, p. 247].

For modern Russia, the issue of ideology in its classical form was quite acute, despite Art. 13 of the Constitution. The Russian collective consciousness is used to the fact that core ideas are formulated by some person or group of people. This also has a pragmatic aspect from the point of view of an individual, who has to follow the *general course* to easily fit in society. An important function of ideology is to unite heterogeneous masses of people with a national idea and

common identity. The Russian population, by the very nature of this society, is atomized, and this poses a danger of splits, separatism, and the demise of the empire. Russia has never been a one-nation state. Even the semi-disintegration of 1991 did not solve the problems of the Russian Federation. The war in Ichkeria proved this fact. What unites the native inhabitants of this Caucasian republic with other citizens of the Russian Federation? Almost nothing, but what separates them is their historical memory, hatred of Russians and the Kremlin, the involvement of the latter in the genocide in 1944, mentions of the 50-year war in the Caucasus in the 19th century, etc.

In modern Russia, a nation can only be imperial, and this requires imperial glue to connect things that cannot be connected for good. According to Émile Durkheim's social solidarity theory, people's consciousness should be filled with common ideas, for example, beliefs, a common identity, the enemy image, a sense of danger, etc. The already mentioned Chechens did not have and do not have anything similar in common with Russians, because the Caucasian people practice Islam, do not identify themselves with Russia, have their own traditions, language, and worldview. What remains is what E. Durkheim called *mechanical*, or *inorganic solidarity*, when a force compels everyone to follow common rules, obey laws, or at least refrain from fighting each other. In the 21st century Moscow again used brutal force in relation to Ichkeria.

But the social solidarity problem does not only affect the so-called *national outskirts*. Many residents of Siberia call themselves *Siberians*, not *Russians*, and those living in the Ural region refer to themselves as to *Uralians*. Common religion, Russian Orthodoxy, is a weak unifying factor. During the civil war of 1918-1920, the Orthodox, who were parishioners of the same churches, wore body crosses, received communion together, fought in the same army on the fronts of the First World War, zealously destroyed each other *en masse*, tortured, buried alive, burned in the furnaces of steam locomotives, drowned each other under the ice on rivers, etc. The Soviet government, through violence and terror, united the empire into a new state, at the same time imposing a rather powerful ideology on people, supposed to fill their minds with an attractive utopia.

But in due time, the Soviet state disappeared, and likewise the old ideology did, and as a result, social stratification and completely

different social interests added to the national vector of separation of Russian citizens. The Russian political scientist Stanislav Belkovsky writes the following on this matter: «*The elite of the ninet1990s and the rest of the nation have nothing in common, neither a common destiny nor a single national interest. Everything that is good for the Chukotka-London oligarch Abramovich is bad for a locksmith Ivan from a small town, and vice versa. They don't even have a common enemy. For the oligarchs, the enemy is the Russian people-encumbrance (together with the Prosecutor General's Office, stunned by the sudden independence). For the Russian people, the enemies are the oligarchs and, by tradition, the USA. (However, the place of the United States may soon be taken by fraternal China). A typical example of alienation can be given here: an oligarch will never voluntarily share natural rent with the people, just because (s)he cannot imagine such a thing as giving up his/her financial interest for the sake of the relative well-being of 145 million speechless lumpens who deserve nothing but death. What a nation!*» [12]. So, no new unifying ideas emerged in the 1990s, just as there were no authoritative ideologues trusted by the masses. Russia stood on the edge of the abyss, because incomplete disintegration of the empire could cause a separatist collapse. The Kremlin leadership realized this possibility and looked for a way out of the crisis.

In Russia, the search for its own national idea began, which was supposed to play the role of a new ideology and be attractive to society. An original way to obtain it was found: in July 1996, the *Russian Newspaper* announced a competition for the Russian national idea. Participants were supposed to write an essay of about 1250-1750 words, and the winner would get 10 million rubles (about US\$ 2,000). By the way, the idea didn't come out of nowhere. This was preceded by a meeting of B. Yeltsin with media representatives who supported him during the election campaign, the meeting taking place on July 12, 1996. B. Yeltsin stated that New Russia lacked a national idea, or ideology, and that was not good, so he asked the journalists to give the problem some constructive thinking [13]. As one could have predicted, the competition did not come up with anything outstanding. But it is noteworthy that at that time the proposals were dominated by ideas as for the course towards New Russia, i.e. the country was seen as a market, democratic and social one,

not a single suggestion was made to go backwards. The search for a national idea is a favorite pastime in Russia, but soon the idea of New Russia somehow disappeared by itself, and today, conservative and traditional ideologemes dominate the sphere. Another public action on the collective search for ideology took place in November 2017. On Facebook, as part of the *Leaders of Russia* competition, it was announced that *Leaders of Russia* was an open competition under the patronage of the Presidential Administration, and anyone could participate. One and a half thousand people dreaming of a political and administrative career (leaders of the new *Putin generation*) joined both the competition and discussion on the national idea; their task was to formulate their vision of the ideology for Russia. The word “new” was no longer added to “Russia”. The task specification said that the national idea should serve to unify the multi-ethnic people of Russia [14]. The slogans proposed by the participants did not contain the words “democracy”, “human rights”, “market economy”, but rather many pompous and patriotic words that should correspond to the spirit of the new era of V. Putin’s rule. This makes sense, because the contestants had to make it to the finals, and for that, they had to anticipate the authorities’ expectations. After all, one could just as well do without any contest, unless it was about testing loyalty and intelligence, because V. Putin had already expressed his position a year earlier during a meeting with the active members of the “Leaders’ Club”: patriotism was to become the new national idea. Let us quote his words: *we haven’t got and couldn’t have got any other unifying idea except patriotism* [15].

One should not align Russia’s turn to traditionalism with the person of V. Putin only. He grasped the public’s desires, because in the dispute between the national loyalists and the Westerners, the latter began to lose ground catastrophically. The fairy tale of capitalism lost due to the Bolsheviks ended with the economic crisis, the default of 1998, and the significant impoverishment of the so-called basic layer of Russian society. Democracy did not give a quick result, and in the eyes of the majority, it was also to blame for chaos, lack of control, arbitrariness of officials, and the suffering of ordinary people. Suddenly the name of Stalin appeared on the scene, and the attitude towards his personality became the acid test showing the trend towards authoritarianism. Rashism has not

gone anywhere, it has simmered both in the depths of the people's consciousness and in various "social gaps", gathering together the ultra-right, communists of various orientations, conservatives and Soviet Orthodox. Politicians and public activists calling for the immediate revival of the USSR, severing ties with the West, declaring their own *Russian civilization* and starting an aggressive foreign policy, in the 1990s still seemed to be ordinary revanchists (like the neo-Nazis in Germany). Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Eduard Limonov, Alexander Prokhanov and other similar personalities from the nationalist camp made outrageous statements from time to time, appeared on political shows, started their own political projects, but were rather perceived as political clowns from the past. But Russia is not a European country, its historical fate is special, it is not focused on the future, but always returns to the past. In the end, the national loyalists won, and V. Putin led the movement towards the *Third Rome*.

It is widely believed that the resurgence of rashism in its aggressive and dangerous form is due to the Versailles syndrome that has gripped the Russian ulterior people. In this respect, the paths of National Socialism in Germany and Russian imperial consciousness have common features. The starting point is a shameful defeat and acute feelings caused by the loss of imperial greatness and the subsequent triumph of the victors. The consequences of the First World War for Germany are well known, but was there any national humiliation for Russia and its citizens? As a result of the agreements signed by the leaders of the three "Slavic republics" in the Bialowieza Forest in 1991, the USSR collapsed, giving birth to independent states soon recognized by the whole world. Still, the Russian Federation remained the largest country in the world in terms of land area, it concentrated the nuclear weapons of the USSR, possessed huge natural resources, preserved access to the oceans and seas, kept to itself several military and civilian fleets, as well as the larger part of the military-industrial sector, and the like. Russia took over membership in international organizations and received the status of a permanent member at the UN Security Council. Russia was accepted to the elite G7 club by the world leading powers, it strengthened foreign policy contacts, and large capital investments poured into its economy. At the time when the USSR was broken, Russian leader-

ship in general and the Prime Minister Yegor Gaydar in particular, were well aware of their own advantages: the country could boast huge oil and gas deposits on its territory, but now all revenues from selling energy resources on the international arena would remain in the Russian budget (and its leaders' pockets). Moreover, there was a widespread opinion in the Kremlin that the former republics would very soon comprehend their inability to solve fuel problems, and would once again fall under the power of Moscow. And when the world oil prices rocketed (this coincided with V. Putin's rise to power), the gain from Russia's monopolist position in the energy sector became a self-evident truth. So, was there any national humiliation? Everything depends on the point of view and intellectual abilities of those who are concerned with such a question. There are two components here: firstly, the economic position of the vast majority of the population and their way of thinking, and secondly, propaganda that inflamed social wounds.

The shock state of those who lost everything at the very first stages of market reforms caused negative attitude of the masses towards the liberal economy ideologues. The surnames of Anatoly Chubays, Yegor Gaydar, and Grigory Yavlinsky became swear-words. In a state of frustration, people lose the ability to think rationally; still, it should be noted that the emotional way of perceiving reality traditionally prevails in Russia. In the late 1980s – early 1990s innovations implemented by supporters of the market economy generally caused positive emotions and strong hopes for a better future, but as soon as in the mid-1990s, the situation changed dramatically. The masses are normally driven by emotion, and at that time their emotions spoke for those calling in the opposite direction, to familiar things and historic personalities. Everything converged on Stalin as a symbol of stability, greatness, and social order. Expressions like “Stalin would give you a lesson” or “under Stalin they would be executed” became popular memes. On the other hand, all opponents of market reforms, imperialists, right-wing and left-wing party militants carried out active propaganda work. They were united in their criticism of liberals and Westerners. Various arguments were given, statistical data indicating a crisis was used as a proof-point, nostalgia for the past was exploited, military victories were mentioned together with memo-

ries like “oh, everyone used to fear us”. Westerners were quickly losing their symbolic capital, which was acquired at the beginning of the reforms mainly due to advances and expectations for the best. All that remained for Putin to do was to complete the triumph of rashism in the newly formed country.

Another version of the reason why liberals and Democrats lost in the battle is rather conspiratorial. According to it, there was a Chekist conspiracy: the KGB did not disappear along with the USSR, but switched to illegal covert activities, preparing itself for revenge. V. Putin, who himself was neither a leader nor a well-known persona (at the beginning of his career he did nothing but carried the briefcase for St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak (1937-2000)), and he was introduced to Boris Yeltsin through a circle of people close to the president. That is, a special operation took place in the spirit of the KGB operational combinations. The president believed that the silent, young-looking, helpful and intelligent former KGB officer was exactly the person he needed to take the burden of managing the state off his shoulders and protect the interests of his business family. V. Putin was well aware of the mechanism of the special operation, his role, and the forces behind it. He reported on the preliminary results in his typically cynical manner at the celebration of the anniversary of the Extraordinary Commission in the FSB building in Moscow on December 20, 1999: *I want to report that a group of FSB employees sent on a mission to work undercover in the government, is fulfilling its tasks of the first stage* [16]. The hall burst into applause. Ten days later, Boris Yeltsin officially declared V. Putin to be his heir. Operation “successor” ended in favor of V. Putin and the so-called *Leningrad Chekists* and conservatives, in general. Still, no one could see the future, and later Boris Yeltsin would regret his choice more than once.

Our point of view is grounded on the sociological approach: the matter lies in the structure of Russian society and the rashist mass consciousness. Later events (the war against Ukraine) will clearly highlight the ratio between the two parts of the Russian community: the traditionally rashist majority aspiring to authoritarian rule and state greatness referred to the pro-Western minority as (approximately) 80% to 20%, and more pessimistic version gave 90% to 10%. These percentages reflect the data of sociological

surveys, the extent to which the population supports V. Putin and his aggressive wars. With such a people, the next president of Russia should have been either Primakov or Putin. But it was necessary to send a signal to the society that the new leader was exactly the one people longed for. And Putin and the people behind him (for example, Nikolai Patrushev, at that time the director of the FSB), organized a bloody information war. First, four residential buildings were blown up in Buynaks, Moscow, Volgodonsk, and then the Second Chechen War was launched as a way to allegedly protect Russia from terrorists. A young FSB officer, A. Litvinenko, who emigrated to the West, revealed the secret of blowing up houses by FSB employees to promote the candidacy of Putin, who at that time was scarcely known [17]. Later, in November, 2006, A. Litvinenko was brutally murdered by hitmen sent to Great Britain. The ex-officer was poisoned with radioactive polonium, and he died agonizingly at University College Hospital in London. The public inquiry into the circumstances of Alexander Litvinenko's death opened in the High Court of London in January, 2015. Sir Robert Owen presided over it. On January 21, 2016, a report of more than 300 pages was published, finding the FSB and possibly President Putin himself guilty of organizing A. Litvinenko's murder. As a result, Great Britain stopped cooperation with the Russian special services [18]. One of the murderers, Andrey Lugovoy, was made by Putin a member of the State Duma, despite the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, finding A. Lugovoy guilty of murder [19]. Killing traitors is an absolutely typical tradition both in the criminal world and in the KGB. For Putin, as a mafia leader, it was a logical and inevitable step, because he publicly expressed himself using criminal vocabulary and demonstrated authoritarianism. Gradually, the people grew fond of him, and critics of the government disappeared, because the country received a "master" who was not to be trifled with. This is the very thing that rashism demands, to have an autocrat who would take responsibility for Russia's greatness, and then the fates of individual citizens would not be important any more.

We can make a preliminary conclusion: after the fall of communist ideology, the so-called ideosphere of Russia experienced emptiness, or complete confusion at least, bringing attempts to find a na-

tional idea, even in an artificial way. The ideology of New Russia was defeated and went off the radar in early 2000s. Step by step, conservative ideologues won back the space for “eternal rashism”, which was perfectly preserved in the depths of the people’s consciousness and was gradually emerging, becoming more self-confident with each year. The revanche of the traditionalists was victorious, as they finally received an undisputed leader in the person of Vladimir Putin. He appreciated all the advantages and bonuses of turning to the old national tradition and conservative ideology. From that moment on, the ideology of rashism was taking ominous forms, because under its banner society was militarized, opposition and democratic freedoms were destroyed, and the country was preparing for the war hardship. All this is very reminiscent of the turn to Nazism.

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1.5. IS RASHISM A FORM OF FASCISM?

By the beginning of the 21st century, rashism had finally liberated itself from artificial restrictions turning into an independent and peculiar form of fascism. The main evidence of this result can be found in the unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine with the aim of destroying the state and annexing the territory to Russia. Not a single democracy in the whole world acts in this way or even broods over such plans. Still, it is just impossible having the separation of powers, democratic control over the government, and freedom of speech, even if a leader lost his mind. Instead, fascist regimes in their evolution inevitably reach a point beyond which they unleash aggressive wars. Accordingly, their ideology should justify such decisions as the correct, well-founded and long-awaited ones. Such was the path of Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and the corresponding ideologues duly justified their military violence.

Rashism, in our opinion, is a more widespread phenomenon than a simple set of ideologemes. Rashism is a system. From a methodological point of view, it is important to distinguish three incarnations of racism: 1) the mentality of the *ulterior people* being the bearer of “eternal rashism” for many centuries; 2) the socio-political system of rashism, which is functionally connected with the corresponding ideology; 3) the ideology of rashism, which is the immediate subject of our research. These three incarnations can be seen as forming a pyramid, with ideology being the so-called top of the iceberg. It is determined by the features of mass consciousness and the specifics of the political system, which, in their turn, remain fundamentally unchanged. So, the ideology of rashism crowns the socio-political system, while its function is to ideologically legitimize the way of thinking and the system of government, which have had a civilizational influence since the very moment of Muscovy creation.

It was not by chance that the system of rashism evolved into a fascist-type society, but because of the inner essence of the Russian cultural tradition. Mental rashism turned out to be an excellent basis for totalitarian socio-political systems to emerge. First Lenin and Stalin took full advantage of the tradition, and nowadays Putin has picked it up to establish an authoritarian regime. According to many criteria, modern Russian society corresponds to the model of

fascism. Though the idea is not new, it gains importance in the context of our study, because figuratively speaking, the “exacerbation of the rashist disease” in the 21st century paves a logical path to a fascist-type society.

Zbigniew Brzezinski was one of the first to notice that Putin’s regime resembled Mussolini’s fascism, and to enunciate this conclusion in *The Wall Street Journal*, publishing his program article *Moscow’s Mussolini* (Sept. 20, 2004). The guru of political science and geopolitics saw what others did not; he introduced the “fascist oil state” concept and compared Putin’s rule with that of Mussolini [1]. Russians also noticed the reversal from nationalism to fascism, though it happened a little later. In 2006, Yakov Gilinsky, a well-established criminologist and sociologist, presented an article titled *Ordinary Russian Fascism*, where he analyzed the phenomenon of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and manifestations of radical nationalism [2]. Despite the fact that he described the phenomena within the framework of street crime, i.e. at the lower social strata, the trend he depicted was quite obvious: nationalism was winning the collective consciousness and becoming more radical. The modern Russian state is recognized as a fascist one by a number of Russian liberals, e.g. Harry Kasparov, the world chess champion, who constantly opposes the Kremlin; or Vladislav Inozemtsev, director of the Center for the Study of Post-Industrial Society. The latter believes that though the comparison of Russia with fascist Italy is quite accurate, still it is not a really Nazi country (due to the absence of extreme nationalism) [3]. As for the West, Timothy Snyder [4] is the one writing about Russia as a fascist country in the most consistent and argumentative way.

Marlene Laruelle tried to oppose T. Snyder and Russian liberals, deploying a whole system of evidence against considering Russia a fascist state. Her book, which was published in 2021 [5], caused an animated discussion in the West [6]. M. Laurel’s arguments seem to be rather strange, with some of them being a direct copy of Russian propaganda. She does not see the aggressive intentions of the Kremlin, does not believe that it exploits irredentism, considers the annexation of the Crimea to be an exception, and as for the Donbas, she does not mention it at all. She considers the concept of fascism to be too vague and used as a label by opponents of Russia.

In her publications, Putin's actions are explained by the incorrect behavior of NATO led by the USA. The researcher writes the following: *Both the 2008 conflict with Georgia and the 2014 split with Ukraine were Moscow's reaction to what it interprets to be the West's willingness to change this post-Soviet order by incorporating Georgia or Ukraine into its transatlantic structures* [7]. Here we should add that M. Laruelle is a long-time admirer of Russia, has won acknowledgement in that country and has her books on Russian history translated and published there [8].

Since February 24, 2022, the number of people ready to recognize Putin's regime and his actions as fascist has increased. Timothy Snyder writes in *The New York Times* that fascism as an idea has never been defeated, and this cult of irrationality and violence has never been destroyed as an argument: *It's not the first time Ukraine has been the object of fascist war. The conquest of the country was Hitler's main war aim in 1941. Hitler thought that the Soviet Union, which then ruled Ukraine, was a Jewish state.* The American historian comes to conclusion that if we further the fascist logics, then Ukraine, having an ethnic Jew as the president, is also an artificial state without the right to exist [9].

In July 2022, the article *Vladimir Putin is in thrall to a distinctive brand of Russian fascism* was published in *The Economist*. The wording of the title fully corresponds to our opinion as for Mr Putin's role as the captain of a ship named *Fascism*, or, to be more precise, *Rashism*. Rashism evolved into a form of fascism after Mr Putin had deliberately opened Pandora's box: *«A decade ago Mr Putin's popularity began to wane. He responded by drawing on the fascist thinking that had re-emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union»*, the newspaper states [10].

For the first three to four years of his rule, Mr Putin tried to maintain the image of a pro-Western reformer, and this is partly evidenced by the projects that his team was engaged in. But in 2003-2004, a certain reversal occurred, when the Chechen resistance was crashed, oil prices began to rise, and Mr Putin felt the power of being the sole owner of a country literally charged with neo-Stalinist expectations. The reforming team around him began to crumble (M. Kasyanov and A. Larionov were among those who left), and he started showing favouritism. Then, step by step, the newly emerged

dictator abandoned his former Western orientation, implementing a completely fascist program instead: authoritarian rule, renunciation of democracy and freedom of speech, centralization, state capitalism, destruction of the opposition, militarization and, finally, a great war. Rashism, the Orthodox Church, and nostalgia for the USSR were his spiritual supports. However, the manner in which he created a fascist (rashist) state was special and corresponded to the principles of the KGB, namely, to do everything secretly and by proxy (e.g., in the mode of special operations or response maneuvers), to resort to mimicry, to conduct active information events in order to confuse world opinion.

Mr Putin was in no hurry to establish various paraphernalia: he did not change into semi-military clothes and boots, his pompous military parades remained within the limits of the Soviet tradition, and on the outside he sought to have the image of a fighter against terrorism and, in general, to be useful to the leaders of great powers. He pretended to be a reliable partner in the energy sector, although his entourage started talking about an “energy and gas empire”. Also, political corruption (the so-called *Shrodzerization*), of relations with the West contributed to the world elite’s loyal attitude towards Putin, who was wise enough not to burn boats but rigidly draw his line. The movement towards a fascist state has accelerated significantly since 2014, when V. Putin transferred the hybrid war against Ukraine from a latent phase to the active one and managed to “bite off” about 7% of Ukraine’s sovereign territory. It was the apotheosis of Putinism and at the same time the point of evolution of the regime, which corresponds to the old proverb: “The die is cast, the Rubicon is crossed”. The majority of Russian society accepted the slogan “Crimea is ours!” with great enthusiasm, and here we can well draw an analogy with the events of the spring of 1938, when the German people enthusiastically received the news of the Anschluss of Austria, and it was a moment of Hitler’s personal triumph. From that point on, the great-power and militarist discourse literally rocketed, rashism was freed from the shackles of decency, and the thesis “Russia is rising from its knees” became dominant in the collective consciousness uniting the “tops” and “bottoms” of society, the nation’s center and outskirts.

The claim that Russia's modern regime and ideology is a species feature of the generic concept of "fascism" has to be proven. It is also important to establish the connection between Russian fascism and rashism as a traditional spiritual core of Russia from the time of the first Moscow princes until now. A system of criteria for fascism as a social system should be designed and then applied to Putin's Russia.

To begin with, let's turn to the definition of fascism present in the English-language Wikipedia: «*Fascism is a far-right, authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology and movement, characterized by a dictatorial leader, centralized autocracy, militarism, forcible suppression of opposition, belief in a natural social hierarchy, subordination of individual interests for the perceived good of the nation and race, and strong regimentation of society and the economy*» [11]. We find approximately the same definition in other sources, for example, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Expanded definitions have the advantage that they partially contain criteria to define the phenomenon. Let's consider the processes taking place in Russia over the past 20 years, using the following signs of fascism: 1) establishment of lifelong authoritarian rule, leaderism, autocracy; 2) information dictatorship and restrictions on freedom of speech; 3) suppression of the opposition; 4) corporatism; 5) xenophobia and racism; 6) centralization of the economy; 7) militarization of society and the unleashing of wars; 8) promotion of national greatness, creation of an awesome model of the past, present, and future.

Establishment of lifelong authoritarian rule, leaderism, autocracy. Mr Putin was supposed to have stepped down as president for good back in 2008, but today he is still ruling Russia. This is the main argument proving his usurpation of power and bringing the political regime closer and closer to fascism. V. Putin neither seized power in a revolutionary way, nor lead a column of supporters marching on the capital, nor went to prohibited rallies coming under bullets or police batons. He took power through agreements made within the government apparatus rather than in a democratic way (despite his claims), as it is difficult to call a celebration of democracy those processes taking place in the Kremlin corridors and bringing a specific person to the position of president no matter what. But once he took advantage of the democratic procedure, he, like Hitler, decided to forever forget the steadfast

principles of democracy. Mr Putin served the maximum term as president, and then committed a political scam together with Dm. Medvedev, assigning the latter to play the role of a “placeholder” for four years (2008-2012), thus ensuring himself a lifetime rule. The usurpation of power must have taken place during his very first legitimate term in office, otherwise the trick with Medvedev could not have happened; in the future, the norms of the constitution and laws were rewritten at the dictator’s whim.

Fascism cannot exist as a system under conditions of democracy or collegial rule. Fascism needs a leader, duce, fuehrer, helmsman, etc. Putin pretended to be a democratic leader, but methodically and consistently strengthened his one-man power, gathering around his person the so-called *Leningrad Chekists*, friends from his childhood and youth, who owed him everything and, according to their biographies, were criminals; as for independent persons, they were thoroughly removed. His state policy was reduced to centralization, reducing the powers of the regions, strengthening power vertical (e.g., he abolished the election of governors), all of which was justified by the need to fight separatism and “stitch” Russia together. At the same time, his personal power was strengthening, and this did not only happen in a formal way, but also, and to a greater extent, through informal practices and relations. In the end, the people felt that a new tsar appeared, and most Russians were satisfied with this fact.

The struggle for individual rule resulted in the destruction of more important institutions, i.e. multi-party system, legislative power, media, and in general, all those structures that, at least theoretically, were designed to prevent the usurpation of power. Whether consciously or not, Vladimir Putin implemented the famous Nazi slogan: “One People, One Nation, One Leader!” (in German: “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer”), meaning that no buffers of influence are needed between the leader and his people. Now courts of various levels, legislative and law enforcement agencies, state media are nothing more than departments in a notional corporation, where Putin is CEO.

The consequences destroying once independent branches of government are well illustrated by the case of February 21, 2022, when V. Putin convened the Security Council of the Russian

Federation, so that the political elite would confirm the leader's aggressive intentions. The proceedings were shown on tape delay, although such proceedings are not normally broadcast on TV at all. The world was shocked by the look of helplessness, fear and wretchedness of Putin's political elite. The dictator kept a distance of 20 meters away from the rest of the gathering and, like a school teacher, questioned everyone, whether they were "for" or "against" the recognition of the independence of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic. In fact, the question concerned the beginning of the so-called SVO (special military operation), that is, his war against Ukraine. The performance made a depressing impression, as the top managers of the regime representing various state institutions behaved like confused children, stumbled and twaddled. But the observers understood that the autocrat purposefully surrounded himself with gray mice without any individual position and honor, and the Security Council, as an important state body, is worth nothing more. There only real person present at that gathering was Vladimir Putin, and he could say about himself: "I am the state". For weeks, he has been hiding in various bunkers, which are rumored to lie 300 meters deep underground (in case of a nuclear attack), and from there he rules the largest country in the world at his own discretion.

Information dictatorship and restrictions on freedom of speech. Fascism always brings about brutal brainwashing and ideological manipulation of people, things which G. Orwell insightfully described in his dystopian novel *1984*, and these were the first actions of V. Putin as president direction. During the times of B. Yeltsin, freedom of speech and media were flourishing in Russia. Quite often, the mass media sharply criticized "Tsar Boris", but the president never imposed bans or restrictions on the press and television, although his supporters did recommend him to take such steps. He understood that the new Russia desperately needed free voices, it seemed like an axiom for him.

V. Putin, as a former KGB-man, is quite knowledgeable about the techniques of manipulating mass consciousness, as the relevant subjects were taught at the KGB school. He was also sure that the defeat in the First Chechen War was caused by the lack of control over the mass media and the anti-war context supported by the

leading Russian media. So, he took control over the leading TV channels, forced the owners to either flee the country or agree to hand over their shares, expanded the circle of media acting as the mouthpiece of the Kremlin, and pushed opposition information platforms to the margins. Under federal law, opposition media are either labeled as “foreign agents” [12] or forced abroad under the threat of repression.

V. Putin felt the benefits of controlling the media in August 2008, when carrying out a planned military attack against Georgia. At that time the press and television already worked in unison with the Kremlin information agenda. Gaining victory, V. Putin awarded a number of journalists and editors at a reception in the Kremlin with a special medal. He repeated this scheme in 2014 after a successful military mission in the Crimea. Before making an attack on Ukraine in 2014, he took care to spread Russian propaganda to the countries all over the world. Quite expensive international media projects were carried out under the auspices of *Russia Today*, helping Russian television channels and Internet resources to become available to almost any country. The dictator tries to influence public opinion on a global scale, using Western democracy and freedom of speech for his own purposes.

V. Putin has revived the propaganda system that seemed to have died forever in the early 1990s. The only difference is that it is no longer Soviet propaganda, but Russian propaganda. Billions of dollars are spent on its support. It is imbued with ideas of rashism and works in a brainwashing mode. Information dictatorship makes the basis for autocracy and militarization of the country. Propaganda raises the image of Putin to the heavens and incites the masses against the enemies of Russia. Who exactly is Russia’s enemy at a definite moment is determined by Mr Putin himself, today the two main ones are the USA and Ukraine. Thanks to propaganda, the *ulterior people* welcomed the invasion of Ukraine, as the media presents it as a global war against the collective West.

Suppression of the opposition. In democratic countries, the existence of political opposition is a sociological law. In fascist ones, its absence is the law. Putin was rather fast to deal with the opposition, as it turned out to be weak, and the masses showed no significant desire and energy to protect the so-called democrats.

As a result, liberals and opponents of the Putin regime today are divided into three parts: 1) are in prison or have outstanding criminal sentences and prefer to behave as cautiously as possible, 2) have gone abroad and criticize the regime from there, 3) remain free up to now, but fear detention, arrest, or trial. There is another category, those murdered or killed under mysterious circumstances. Not so long ago, Boris Nemtsov used to be a bright leader of the opposition from among Yeltsin's cadres. B. Nemtsov believed that the threat of fascism was more real than a return to communism, because the latter is the past, and the former is a feasible future. He sharply criticized Putin and believed that he should resign. In the last interview, 30 hours before his death, he compared the fates of Hitler and Putin [13]. He was murdered right in front of the Kremlin.

The opposition was broken when it was denied a seat in the State Duma. There had been no fair elections in Russia for a long time and the distribution of seats in the parliament was (and still is) decided in advance in the Kremlin offices. Since the predicted defeat in the 2003 elections, the democratic opposition has had no access to the authorities. The last time a small faction from the democratic opposition (Yabloko Party) entered the State Duma was back in 1999, that is, before Putin's presidency. Since 2003 and until today, the parliament has been sterile from critics of the regime; instead, the dictator created his own United Russia party, which holds a parliamentary monopoly. In addition to his own unchanged majority of United Russia, Putin allows two or three pseudo-opposition parties to be present in the parliament, namely: the left Communist party headed by Gennady Zyuganov, and a right party headed by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Both pseudo-oppositional forces are imperialist, they speak for a great Russia and against the USA, support Putin's wars, etc. At the right moment, all these "oppositionists" are happy to unite around Putin's ideas. Parliamentarianism in Russia is dead. Under Putin's rule, the State Duma dutifully grinds out various laws needed by the leader and his party. When on March 1, 2014, the issue regarding the permission to introduce troops into the territory of Ukraine (without any exaggeration, it was a fateful decision for Russia and the whole world), was brought up for consideration in the upper chamber of the Federation Council, only one MP abstained from voting FOR it. This MP was Boris Ponomarev, and after this

act of courage he was forced to flee to Ukraine. In 2022, not a single vote was cast against the war. So, how is the State Duma different from the Reichstag of Hitler's time? After the start of the great war against Ukraine, V. Putin needed to adopt such a norm of the criminal law that would make it impossible to criticize his actions and war crimes committed by the military in Ukraine. The State Duma had no hesitation in voting for Federal Law No. 32-FZ dated 2022. It provides for the amendment of Articles 31 and 121 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code and imposes criminal punishment *for disseminating knowingly unreliable information about the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and their operation, as well as for public actions aimed at discrediting the Russian army and actions of state bodies abroad* [14]. 404 MPs voted "for" it, and not a single one voted against or even abstained. The law is also called "military censorship" or "fakes about the army" by average people. Similar unanimous votes were held for the so-called partial mobilization and annexation of the sovereign territories of Ukraine.

The street opposition practically ceased to exist after the defeat of Alexei Navalny's anti-corruption movement. The movement's leader was cast into prison, joining many of his followers. From 2011 to 2019, A. Navalny was deprived of freedom for 474 days in total (232 he spent in the detention room, and 242 he stayed at home, on house arrest) for organizing public actions [15]. In 2020, he was poisoned by FSB officers but survived it by the skin of his teeth; he then went to Germany to undergo medical treatment, and on January 17, 2021, he returned to Moscow and was detained at the airport. From time to time his term in prison is extended, so it is obvious that he has no chance to be freed as long as V. Putin remains in power.

The ruler of Russia, like any dictator, is concerned about his personal security and the power of the regime. To protect it against possible popular demonstrations, V. Putin has created an armed police army, the Russian National Guard, numbering about 300,000 soldiers, who are well equipped, trained to suppress street riots and are headed by a specially trusted person, Viktor Zolotov. The head of the state has personally known Mr Zolotov for several decades, their first acquaintance dates back to V. Putin's St. Petersburg period, when he was deputy mayor of Anatoly Sobchak, and V. Zolotov

was hired as a bodyguard. On numerous occasions, V. Putin invited V. Zolotov for boxing and judo sparring matches. It is the FSB which deals with the record files of oppositionists, as it used to be organized in olden times, when the KGB of the USSR dealt with political dissidents. Appropriate anti-democratic legislation has been created to carry out repressions anywhere about the country. The legal penalty is planned in such a way that it is possible to bring individuals to criminal or administrative responsibility for any action that can be expected from the opposition: for meetings and rallies not coordinated with the authorities (in Russia, individual pickets are allowed, although they also end in arrests); for statements contradicting official propaganda; for any criticism (including the one made in social networks) of the army, Putin, Stalin, etc.

The case against Aleksei Gorinov was an emblematic one. In early July 2022, the Moscow Municipal Court sentenced the City Council Member A. Gorinov to 7 years in prison on the grounds that during the debate at the City Council session he publicly called “the special operation” a war and claimed that planning a children’s drawing holiday when dozens of children were dying nearby, in Ukraine, was blasphemy [16]. The judge was guided by the provisions of Federal Law No. 32-FZ dated 2022, which can be interpreted as broadly as it is desired and is widely used against those who disagree with the war or its methods. Russians generally deny the fact that the Russian armed forces are conducting military operations in Ukraine, killing civilians and children, call it a fake and interpret it as serious ground for indictment. It is officially stated that the special operation does not affect civilians, and all the destruction of civilian objects and murders of civilians, if any happens, is caused by actions of “Ukrainian Nazis”, as Ukrainians generally tend to kill themselves and blow up their own buildings; thus, Russians have nothing to do with such crimes. This is how propagandists explain the situation on political shows watched both by Putin’s electorate and Putin himself (he does not know how to use the Internet). It’s Orwell’s dystopia that has come to life, isn’t it? A. Gorinov is 60 years old, he was in the group of the White House defenders in 1991 during the anti-Gorbachev uprising in Moscow, when activists managed to defend democracy and freedom of speech. Mr Gorinov admitted that he did not think he would live to see the times when people would

stand trial for their speech in Russia. The well-known human rights defender Leonid Gozman was arrested right on the street in August 2022 and sent to trial; he received 15 days of arrest for a post on Facebook in 2020, where he compared Stalin with Hitler. However, all the above-mentioned facts were surpassed on April 17, 2023 by Vladimir Kara-Murza case, who received an unprecedented 25-year-term in a high-security prison for criticizing Putin's regime. For the Kremlin, he is a particularly hated figure among the dissidents, because Western institutions turned to him for consultations when deciding to impose sanctions against Putin's regime representatives. In order to receive formal possibility to apply draconian measures against him, the Russian judiciary charged him with treason, along with the traditional accusations of making fakes about the Russian army and cooperating with banned organizations. This outraged the Western world, the sentence was condemned by the USA and the EU, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain summoned the Russian ambassador in London Andrey Kelin and made an official statement [17].

So, the opposition field seems to be thoroughly cleared, the dictator has taken all precautionary measures to protect himself and the regime. Actually, Mussolini and Hitler did the same.

Corporatism. The dictator's dream in any fascist country is to rely on an ideologically homogeneous people consolidated by the leader's ideas, loyal to the dictator, and convenient to be ruled. Hitler and Stalin almost achieved this goal: they either destroyed or soundly isolated the opposition, "enemies of the people", or undesirable ethnic groups, so that their societies appeared quite coherent under the heel of repression. The leader positions himself as the father of the nation, who takes care of his family, protects it from enemies, bestows material benefits, etc. Patriotism should unite both the rich and the poor; both workers and employers. In order to express one's patriotism, loyalty to the regime and love for the dictator, a person joins mass political organizations, the presence in which is like a "mark of quality" on the forehead.

In this regard, V. Putin solves various difficult tasks, taking into account the impossibility to station a new Gulag or implement a mass destruction of undesirable elements (such measures are history); and Russia itself really is quite ethnically and religiously heterogeneous.

However, he has managed to advance in this direction, as well. He is trying to unite the masses on the basis of deep-rooted rashism, i.e. great-power feelings, pride for a great country, the glory of military victories in the past and in the present. And his approach does work. The topic of Russia's enemies and the fact that the country is a fortress surrounded by the enemy is being exploited quite deliberately. It is widely known that there is nothing better for establishing fascism than solidarity based on fear, hatred and uniting people against a common enemy. Russians are once again talked into believing in their special mission and outstanding role in the world, as the idea of exclusivity also promotes an illusory unity. "We are large, rich, strong, fair, and it is for that fact that they don't like us, and envy us" – this is a widespread stereotype of the mass consciousness, and Russian propaganda plays out this plot professionally.

Like all fascist leaders, as soon as he took power into his own hands, Putin made the ruling United Russia party as he saw fit: it always gains majority in the parliament, has spread its branches all over the country, and plays approximately the same role as the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) or CPSU in the Soviet Union did. Officials and those planning an administrative career have to become members in Putin's party. It supposedly expresses the deep interests of the people and should unite patriotic Russia. Youth and children's organizations have been also created, which are analogues of the Komsomol and pioneer organizations in the USSR. Still, a profound difference exists between Stalin and Putin: the latter is ready to send abroad all those who disagree with him. Millions of Russians have left the country for various reasons, but the government does not interfere with this process, and moreover, it strongly recommends the opposition to leave the country.

It can be said that V. Putin has concluded a peculiar social contract with the nation: he shares the profit from selling energy carriers with the people, and society responds with loyalty. This worked for several years in a row, when the prices for a barrel of oil were growing wildly, and the refrigerators of the population were regularly replenished with high-quality foreign products. The main thing was not to be interested in politics, not to go to opposition rallies, but to watch state TV channels and stay at home. The corporatist model of the country reached its maximum when the people united around Putin

during his wars, which propaganda presents as a triumph of Russian weapons and spirit, as a result of Putin's policy of "getting up from the knees". People are ready to forgive Putin for the deterioration of economic indicators and living standards, but they will never forgive him for Russia's defeat and humiliation.

Xenophobia and racism. As a rule, fascist systems cannot do without it, although it is not a leading criterion. If the bet is on xenophobia and racism, then fascism turns into Nazism. There was a noticeable difference between the Italy of the Duce and the Germany of the Führer in this respect, although Mussolini, under pressure from Hitler, took certain steps towards anti-Semitism and repression against the Jews at the end of his reign. Xenophobia and racism (a sense of one's own superiority) have always been commonplace in Russia. In the first years of the USSR, authorities struggled against them, but the Russian Federation has actually returned to the practice of great-power chauvinism and anti-Semitism from the worst times of Russian history.

In Russia, everyone who did not belong to the titular ethnic group received derogatory names that became deeply embedded in everyday vocabulary. In one of the interviews at the beginning of the 2000s, B. Nemtsov linked this very tradition with the possibility of fascizing the country, and answered a journalist's question as follows: *Fascism is perhaps the most realistic prospect for Russia. You yourself gave the figure somewhere that only 20 percent of the people in Russia are in favor of democratic capitalism. There were figures that 48 percent of respondents do not like Jews. With Chechens, the percentage, I think, is even higher. Skinheads are just let be here. The majority of our public, from ordinary cops to governors, is categorically against the so-called "darkies". The very expressive term "beasts" speaks volumes; although "beasties" is perhaps even cooler. They say there is no national idea. It seems to me that the Russians are still a little shy to admit that they want fascism.* [18]

The Kremlin, of course, is not interested in shaking up the situation inside the country, but in fact it does nothing to extinguish xenophobic and racist tendencies. The war against Ukraine showed the consequences of the racist worldview in the highest echelons of the Russian government: representatives of the so-called non-Slavic peoples (Buryats, Tuvans, other Siberian nationalities, as well as

representatives of Caucasian nationalities (Chechens, Dagestanis, Abkhazians, etc.), Volga Tatars Bashkirs, etc.) were sent to the front *en masse*. In the first months, there were almost no soldiers and officers from Moscow and St. Petersburg. Why so? Because nobody would feel any pity for *darkies*, or *beasties*? Or maybe this is part of demographic policy? To reduce the number of non-Slavic peoples and then resettle Ukrainian citizens of Slavic origin to the interior regions of Russia *en mass*? Without a doubt, Putin's fascist state includes some elements of Nazism, and this is especially vividly expressed in the attitude towards Ukrainians, who are denied the right to exist as a separate people and a political nation.

Centralization of the economy. All fascist rulers want to keep their hand on the country's economy, because they need resources to carry out the military program, and business which is free cannot but raise suspicions: is there any risk that the capital owners have too much freedom, that they will rally against the autocrat? So, V. Putin decided not to postpone the solution to the issue of centralizing Russia's economy, or rather laying his hand on it. He did it in a way that corresponded to his criminal worldview and already acquired skills to solve economic issues in a gangster way. He taxed the so-called oligarchs, took some of the big businesses for his own benefit, so that disgruntled owners were either forced emigrate (e.g., Vladimir Gusinsky, Boris Berezovsky) or put to prison (Mikhail Khodorkovsky, head of the Yukos oil company, whose fortunes were estimated to be 15 billion dollars in 2003, served 10 years and 2 months in prison and completely lost his company) [19].

Formally, V. Putin is an official living on a salary, but he has found original corrupt ways to replenish his wealth. Observers believe that he is a secret billionaire with a fortune of at least \$200 billion. He has created a circle of "friends" to whom he transferred the assets of profitable enterprises and oil fields, and these friends share profits with Putin and are his "wallets". Such a scheme, in particular, was revealed in the investigative film by A. Navalny [20].

It is obvious that in certain cases fascism can have an economic mission as a religion of modernization [21], that is, the centralization of the economy is used as a lever, for example, for rapid industrialization (like Stalinism and Hitlerism did in the

1930s). Has Putin changed the country for the better during his long reign? Qualitatively – no, he hasn't. The country remains a large gas station. The possibility of modernization theoretically existed due to the fantastic inflows of funds from the oil sales, but the money was stolen (about 1 trillion dollars was transferred from Russia to world banks by private individuals); or invested in the army and police, special services and information operations; finally, it was primitively guzzled away because Putin had to fulfill the social contract. Russia remained on the sidelines of scientific and technological progress, because the suppression of freedom reflects badly on the economy. In Russia, there is a general rule: only those can become rich, who obtain the authorities' permission for that (accordingly, the permission must be paid for). This collision is the basis for *Leviathan* (2014, directed by Andrey Zvyagintsev), one of the best Russian films of our time, which is not liked by Russian authorities. The director showed the actual Russian reality, when an official in a remote place of the country destroys a business because its owner, a local entrepreneur refuses to pay for the "blanket of protection" and does not want to lose his dignity. And the situation seems to have no way out. According to the racist recipe, centralization is dictated of the criminalized top of society and the stagnation of the free economy.

Militarization of society and the unleashing of wars.

Why is fascism inherently aggressive? This system arises as a result of the will to power, violence, the desire to destroy enemies and become famous for ages. From the very beginning, Hitler did not hide his aggressive plans to conquer the living space for the German people, which he proclaimed in *Mein Kampf*. The army, police, and special services are favorite toys of dictators; as a rule, dictators personally care for their condition and development. They conduct magnificent military parades and maneuvers, take care of the funding and morale of the soldiers. On the one hand, in this way they prepare for internal escalation, and on the other, for aggressive wars against neighbors. The concentration of unlimited power, material resources, the media in one person's hands and the absence of opposition are favorable conditions to prepare for a war. Mussolini and Hitler demonstrated this in full; Putin seems to be following their predecessors, forgetting their finale.

Putin's regime provides a classic example of fascist aggression with all the typical pretexts for it, namely: imperial motivation, geopolitical calculations, the desire to demonstrate the greatness and power of the country and the leader himself, large resources, petro-dollars, the militaristic legacy of the USSR, etc. A separate motive is settling accounts with those peoples who have shown disrespect to the figure of the leader and do not obey the dictator's will. The military program of aggressive rashism is presented in more detail in subsection 3.7 of the book, but it seems that this criterion of the fascist regime does not require special proof due to its empirical obviousness.

Promotion of national greatness, creation of an awesome model of the past, present, and future. All fascist regimes and their bonzes are concerned with the national greatness issue. National myths play an important role in this matter, as their function is to affirm the greatness of the ancestors' spirit, to heroize history, to prove the justice of current demands and claims to certain territories. Ideologues and propagandists receive appropriate orders for pseudo-historical literature, patriotic works of art, narratives that should glorify the great past and settle the idea of superiority, strength, selectivity, and majesty of the people and its leaders in people's minds. Mussolini preferred to see Italians as the spiritual descendants of the ancient Romans and the continuation of the history of the Roman Empire, positioning himself as a Roman emperor. The Nazis considered themselves the successors of Teutons, Aryans, mythical heroes of German blood, who acted in distant epic times, and this is the reason why Hitler was immensely fascinated by Richard Wagner's operas. In order to settle the awesome model in the minds, large-scale celebrations and costumed events were organized picturing legionnaires and knights with their faithful ladies in the costumes of Roman patricians or folklore dating to the barbarian era.

The same path is followed by modern Russia, which corresponds one hundred percent to the Third Rome concept and all forms of rashist ideology. The goal of the epochal turning point in Russia is to create a grandiose patriotic model of Great Russia in the minds of citizens and to fix it there forever. The state supports and generously finances the movement for the glorification of the illustrious ancestors. As always, Russians steal and lie in the process. They use plots from the times of the medieval Kyiv state, to which Muscovites

have no relation; or from the Soviet history and the victory over German Nazism, privatized by the Russians. (The third chapter of the book is focused on thorough analysis of the latter as a phenomenon of “victory obsession”. Here, it is enough mentioning the fact that Russian greatness is described in the categories of the past, but any reasonable plans for the future either do not exist, or are not openly emphasized. De facto, Putin is throwing Russia into the abyss, defying the civilized world. But in the propaganda model broadcast to the masses, everything looks different: Russia is as large and powerful as ever, the Western world is degrading, and the Russians are saving the West from decline and decay. According to Russian ideologues, Russia has never attacked anyone, but only liberated, protected, rushed to help, even sacrificing its own interests.

Putin’s state system is postmodern fascism in the post-truth era, the basis of which is made up by traditional rashism in its radical form. Putin did not so much create a system of fascism as he opened the floodgates for rashism, which was restrained by both Russian emperors and Soviet leaders who built socialism on the basis of imaginary internationalism. Now the obstacles in the way of rashism are removed, it has become mainstream, and the Third Rome concept has finally won. Nothing fundamentally new can be found in the modern ideology of rashism, except that the enemies have changed. When rashism was born, there was no USA yet’ instead, Catholicism and Latinism were synonymous with Western civilization.

The ideology of rashism has not acquired a more or less consistent theoretical form, remaining nothing more than a conglomerate of ideas, feelings, myths and stereotypes that are quite organically combined in the minds of Russians. Thus, Ivan the Terrible, Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Putin found their place in the same line of great rulers who built the empire, expanded its geography, and therefore they are “ours”. The Soviet period is not a cursed time that arbitrarily took the lives of millions of Russians, but a period of power, when the country gained military victories and designed nuclear weapons. The ideas of Russia’s greatness, messianism, autocracy, traditionalism, the existence of enemies on the borders and in the world that must be fought, the glorification of the army and military victories, even if they are not real and exist in the form of a myth, were and remain the cornerstones of rashism.

In fact, rashism is an archaic worldview born hundreds of years ago and remaining unchanged until the 21st century, posing today an imminent threat to its neighbors and countries all over the world, in general. During “Putin’s long rule”, rashism was becoming more and more relevant. The Kremlin authorities are actively using rashism ideas in their move towards a totalitarian system. In the last two decades, the state and society have been fascized, with rashism in this sense standing in the same line with Italian fascism and German National Socialism. Rashism as a specific ideology contributes to the integration of Russian society in a composite formation and unites *the ulterior people* around the leader. The essence of racism and its social functions can be more or less obvious, but the genesis of Russian ideology remains unclear. What historical circumstances gave rise to the rashism system? When did it happen? Why has it existed in an almost unchanged format for 500 years, or even longer? These questions will be considered in the next chapter of the book.

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CHAPTER 2

THE CIVILIZATIONAL BASIS OF THE RASHISM IDEOLOGY

Our hypothesis is that the foundations of rashism as a form of mass consciousness, ideology and socio-political structure are tightly “sewn” in the civilization that developed hundreds of years ago around Moscow. They constitute its core, its civilizational socio-cultural matrix, which has been continuously broadcast to this day. Both the failure to realize this fact and its conscious rejection causes the existence of the so-called *mystery of Russia* and *the mysterious Russian soul* in the Europeans’ minds. Indeed, why does it happen that Russia despite having excellent chances to turn into a modern democratic state during the XX-XXI centuries, again and again slipped into primitive authoritarianism and still poses a mortal threat to the world? Why have the Westerners been marginalized in modern Russia, losing to the imperialists so quickly? Why does the ulterior people fail to aspire to democracy and freedom, but is satisfied with Putin’s regime, despite it being essentially fascist? We will not find a satisfactory answer to these and similar questions unless we connect ideological processes with the deep essence of Russian society.

In late June 2022, the Commission of the US Congress on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) held a hearing on the *Decolonization of Russia*. One of the panelists, Casey Michel, had previously published an article of the same title in *The Atlantic*. He rightly believes that even changing the authoritarian regime to a democratic one (as it has already happened) is not a solution to the Russian problem. The researcher considers the root of the problem to be the failure to “reprocess its history”, and as

a result of this failure “Russian imperialism... presents the most urgent threat to international security” [1].

Half a century ago the American historian Richard Pipes (1923-2018) tried to solve the “mystery of Russia” – that is, to reflect on the nature of rashism – in his book *Russia under the old regime* [2]. He believed that the origins of Russian authoritarianism (including the communist regime) should be sought in the distant past, because Russian historical traditions born in the Middle Ages tend to be inherited; Russia cannot get off the conventional rails, along which it is doomed to roll all the time – in a circle, we should add. I am going to develop this valid point and hope to reach the starting point of the “Russian tradition”, or rashism. In this way, I hope to confirm the proposed hypothesis and put an end to the “mystery of Russia”.

2.1. WHY THE CIVILIZATIONAL APPROACH?

The concept of civilization is the only widely known scientific tool within social and humanitarian disciplines, which allows covering significant historical periods and thinking in coherent and stable categories, while “class,” “group,” “state,” “nation,” even “empire” are more fluid concepts, as they are not instruments of deep scientific exploration with respect to time and space. What is so specific, then, in the civilization concept? It represents the fact that social diversity in time and space can contain an unbreakable component, certain social and cultural constructs that are not devalued within the time continuum. Regarding the limits of the historical continuum, the average time for civilizations to exist is close to 1000 years, and possibly more. During this period, many local historic events take place, generations change, states arise and decline, wars break out, scientific discoveries and technical innovations appear, but certain things remain unchanged in the structure of social life within the framework of civilization space. They determine the nature of civilization. In different scientific traditions, they are called differently: cultural type; soul of culture; sociocultural code; civilizational matrix; archetype of civilization; structuring ideas; episteme; the instinct of the people. The spatial continuum can cover dozens and

even hundreds of peoples, ethnic groups, states, and countries that belong to the common “body of civilization”.

The civilization concept houses both universalism and particularism, so that it is possible to delve into the structural elements of each individual civilization, abstracting from other “social bodies” while using the general postulates of the theory of civilizations. I give priority to the civilization concept due to the fact that, on the one hand, rashism is a rather specific phenomenon that does not have an exact semantic match in other social systems; and on the other hand, the object of my research is a certain constant in Russia’s history. We cannot pin the emergence of this constant down to a specific date, figure, event or period within the framework of the general history of the Russian state in such a way as to find a causal relationship. The reason for the appearance and existence of rashism in all its guises does exist, but it lies in a different social space than the history of Russia itself. It is only by building upon the basis of the civilization concept that it becomes possible to find a cause-and-effect relationship of the phenomenon of rashism. To do this, it is necessary to find the point at which the Russian civilization appeared and analyze its social and cultural context. This makes the focus of the current chapter.

The concept of civilization is by no means new, as it arose in France in the middle of the 18th century. The term “civilization” has changed its meaning: in the beginning it referred to material and technological progress and was intended to separate the modern from the traditional, backward; the heights of progress from barbarism; urban civilization from rural tradition. To be civilized meant to set a high goal. A subject or nation reaching the highest phase of development was considered civilized. Etymologically, the term *civilization* comes from the Latin word *civilis*, which corresponds to the qualities of a citizen as a city dweller; so, the city personified the achievements of civilization. It was believed that civilization is concentrated in cities, where modern architecture develops, educational and cultural institutions are established, intellectual elites gather, etc. Later, the term “cultural imperialism” appeared, when West-Europeans began thinking of themselves as the vanguard of human civilization. In the colonial period, a moral responsibility towards “backward” peoples arose in the form of “the white man’s burden”.

Starting with the first half of the 19th century, the term *civilization* began to be used in the plural. Europeans were slowly realizing the fact that technological progress is not the exclusive dimension of civilization. Staying in colonies and getting familiar with Arab, Indian, and Chinese cultures lead to the idea of a multiplicity of cultures, moreover, a hypothesis arose that cultures do not intersect and do not connect, that is why the idea of linear progress was ruined – the idea, whose locomotive is a handful of Western European countries, as it was previously believed. The writer and traveler Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) expressed this opinion in a concentrated way in the most popular lines of *The Ballad of East and West*, which seem proper to be quoted here: *East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.*

In the second half of the 19th century, civilization studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field of research, and individual civilizations became its subject; researchers carried out a comparative analysis of different civilizations; a general civilization theory was created; structural anthropology arose as the study of cultural constants of individual communities. The circle of civilizationists includes famous Western scientists, such as Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), Peter Sorokin (1889-1968), Carroll Quigley (1910-1977), Rushton Colborne (1901-1968); Alfred Louis Kreber (1876-1960); Philippe Bagby, Fernand Braudel (1902-1985), Samuel Huntington (1927-2008), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), William Hardy McNeill (1917-2016), Adda Bozeman (1908-1994), Felipe Fernandez-Armesto (1950), Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (1923-2010), Christopher Henry Dawson (1889-1970), etc.

If the main points of the civilizational discourse are singled out, several basic theses can be formulated.

Civilizations (in the plural form) are social units that constitute intermediate social links between the universal human civilization and peoples, nations, and states. Their number of civilizations existing both in the past and present is limited, and different viewpoints exist as for the geography, names and features of civilizations. Oswald Spengler singled out eight great cultures in his work *The Twilight of Europe*: Babylonian, Arab-Byzantine, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, Mexican, Greco-Roman, and West European. Arnold J. Toynbee in his monumental multi-volume work *A Study*

of *History* conducted a comparative analysis of 26 civilizations, 16 of which belong to the “disappeared” cluster. Philip Bagby in his work *Culture and history. Prolegomena to the comparative study of civilizations* (1958) [3] singled out nine main civilizations: the Egyptian, Babylonian, Chinese, Indian, classical (ancient Greek and Roman), Peruvian, Central American, West European and Near Eastern ones; and 29 peripheral, or secondary civilizations.

A civilization can include a certain number of peoples and states that have common cultural characteristics, the latter being a unique integrating factor (for example, the Western civilization or the Latin American one). However, other options exist, as well, e.g. when one state, nation or empire can be equal to a separate civilization (Japan, Russia), as there are no rules regarding the physical size, the number of internal social elements, etc. In general, each civilization is a unique result of social history. Therefore, it is necessary to equip ourselves with the historical method of knowledge, to study archaic facts and draw conclusions for the present. This idea gives basis to researching the object in question.

Civilizations are not eternal. Each has its own cycle from birth to death. The names and number of stages of the cycle differ among different authors, but cyclical development is a more or less agreed thesis. Civilizations are dynamic objects that retain core (or basic) cultural elements as long as they exist. But what happens next? Civilizations do not disappear for good, as they obviously fulfill a certain mission. At the end of the cycle, individual material and spiritual results become bricks in the construction of new civilizations. This idea will be applied regarding the birth of the Russian civilization in the context of civilizational linkage (i.e., imitation of hereditary elements of another civilization).

The existence of a separate Russian civilization is questioned by criticizing it from various viewpoints. The first group of critics, mainly coming from outside Russia, do not see any civilization in this social space in the broad and first sense of the term, considering it a synonym for backwardness and retrogradation. They do not find any cultural originality in Russia, and point out that cultural symbols from balalaika to matryoshka, from kokoshnik to accordion, from borscht to dumplings are not Russian but borrowed from other peoples: the Chinese, Turks, Ukrainians, etc. The second group (or

Russian Westerners) insist that Russians are a part of Europe, so to isolate Russian civilization means to close the window to Europe, which was first opened by the first Russian emperor, Peter the Great.

From the point of view of civiliography, Russia is obviously a separate cultural type, if you do not reduce everything to the *bala-laikas*, *ushanka caps* and *matryoshka dolls*. The exclusion method can be used here. Russia is a geographical space from the Pacific Ocean and China to the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. Does it belong to the Japanese, Sin (Chinese) or Islamic civilizations? No, it does not, although it borders on them, it exchanges material things and cultural phenomena with its neighbors. Is Russia part of Europe? In our opinion, it is not, it is a specific Eurasian space. At one time, geographers drew the border between Europe and Asia along the Ural mountain range. It was so convenient for them that they found a natural border to demarcate something and organize the world map. On this basis, large areas of the so-called Central Russia, the Volga region, and the North were assigned to Europe, and the inhabitants were assigned to Europeans. As a result, misunderstanding arose, which had a number of unpleasant and unpredictable consequences. Since the Russians actively colonized the east to as far as the Pacific Ocean, an even more absurd idea appeared, to consider Europe as the space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. But everything was shattered by the politics of Putin's Russia, which unexpectedly (from this misleading point of view) turned into a monster that does not identify itself with Europe and sincerely desires to destroy Europeans. My opinion is just the opposite: I believe that this U-turn is an absolutely natural reversal of Russia's domestic and foreign policy, because historically, mentally, and politically, the latter has never been Europe. It is rather unwise to take random geographical calculations as the basis of civilizational borders, which are not determined by rivers, straits or mountain ranges, but by cultural factors.

It is useful to trace the attitude towards the idea of Russia-civilization shown by different sides of the discourse. Let's start with the Western classics of civilization studies. In general, they are characterized by a rather restrained vision of the object's cultural uniqueness. The vast Russia is reduced to a dwarf size under the lens of the civiliography. Oswald Spengler, who used the concept of culture (the

soul of culture), singled out the Russian-Siberian culture, which, according to the German philosopher, was just emerging at that time. According to his scheme, a culture in its development gradually transforms into a civilization, and the Russian-Siberian culture had not yet crossed that Rubicon. O. Spengler completely excluded Russia's belonging to Europe, despite the persistent demands of St. Petersburg to be considered Europe. He said that the very word "Europe" and the complex of ideas arising under its influence were the only reason that forced Europeans' historical consciousness to combine Russia with Europe into a single entity [4]. But the German philosopher also saw the opposite: those who could be attributed to the masters of public opinion or the mouth-piece of "the ulterior people's" sentiments did not accept the thesis that Russia belongs to Europe. He also mentioned the fact that the Russian instinct very correctly separated "mother Russia" from "Europe" due to hostility embodied in Tolstoy, Aksakov and Dostoevsky, among other great thinkers of the day [4].

Some authors call Russian civilization "Orthodox civilization", which, in fact, is a wrong judgment, because the Orthodox branch of Christianity goes far beyond the borders of Russia in any segments of history. Russian imperialists think within the concepts of the borders of the world Orthodoxy, because in their dreams, the Russian empire should absorb all Orthodox countries. And it is understandable, as the opinion that the dominant religion is a defining feature of civilization is still rather widespread in the community of civilizationists. Russian nationalists use this position to assert their rights over other nations where the Orthodox religion is widespread.

Arnold Toynbee singles out two Orthodox civilizations: the Orthodox-Byzantine civilization, which he defines as "the main trunk", and the Orthodox-Russian one, which only appears in the 10th century. One cannot but agree with this theory, because here we are talking about the Kyivan state, the baptism of Rus, which was carried out by Grand Duke Vladimir in 988. But in his reflections, the English historian faced a major methodological problem: how could Russia be added to the second Orthodox civilization? And that is exactly what he wanted to do, not seeing the obvious civilizational difference between Kyiv and Moscow, which was still to be founded almost three centuries after the baptism of Kyiv. In

his further reflections on the second Orthodox civilization, Toynbee falls into utopia and anti-historicism. He tries to explain the progress of Russian civilization as a response to the challenge of the Mongol invasion led by Batu Khan. It is unclear what sources the respected scientist used, but according to his version, the Cossacks were the main driving force standing behind the spread of the second Orthodox civilization. He does not specify which Cossacks those were in particular. However, quite different groups of armed men existed under this name, living from the Ukrainian Dnipro to the Urals and Siberia. They had different ethnic origins, distinct goals, their own military organizations, and unique battle histories. According to A. Toynbee, it was the Cossacks who carried the flag of Orthodox civilization to the East. Here the historian turns on his fantasy and writes about something that has never happened in reality. So, allegedly, the Cossacks accepted the challenge of the horde and used the tactics of an asymmetric response. The scientist says: *The Cossacks, who performed this unprecedented feat, were frontiersmen of Russian Orthodox Christendom who were tempered in the furnace and fashioned on the anvil of border warfare against Eurasian nomads (Batu Khan's 'Golden Horde')*. And further: *These original Cossacks were a semi-monastic military brotherhood with points of resemblance to the Hellenic brotherhood of the Spartans and to the Crusading Orders of Knighthood. In their methods of conducting their truceless warfare against the nomads they realized that, if a civilization is to wage war with success against barbarians, it must fight them with other weapons and resources than their own.* [5, c. 142]. Such an unexpected response of the Cossacks was mastering the tactics of fighting on large rivers, which in themselves instilled terror in the nomads: *it was by boat and not on horseback that they eventually won their way to the dominion of Eurasia. They passed from the Dniepr to the Don and from the Don to the Volga. Thence in 1586 they crossed the watershed between the Volga and the Ob and by 1638 their exploration of Siberian waterways had brought them to the shores of the Pacific on the Sea of Okhotsk.* “ [5, c. 143]. The quoted passage gives the impression that these Ukrainian Cossacks (by the way, Cossacks is an umbrella term, referring to both Zaporizhzhia Cossacks and registered Cossacks, though they had different sta-

tuses and tasks) moved from the banks of the Dnieper River to Siberia and the Far East. Using modern language, we would call this statement a fake, because Ukrainian history does not know such a movement. Siberia and the Far East were conquered by the Muscovites, and the Russian tsars used the Cossacks and their chieftains for this purpose, still those were not Ukrainian Cossacks, but their own subjects, and of course it was not the Cossacks who played first fiddle here. Another important detail should be clarified: all large and small rivers in Eurasia carry their waters to the either north or south, but in no case to the east or west, so conquering the Eurasian spaces by moving on ships was impossible in principle. The conquest of Siberia is the state policy of Muscovy and Russia, which was carried out for a long time in memory of the glorious past, when the great empire of Chingisids held these spaces under their rule, and it was the Muscovites who considered themselves the descendants to the glory of the Mongols. Historical facts do not support the thesis that Ukrainians and Russians belong to a common civilization, and the Ukrainian Cossacks certainly could not do such a stupid thing as conquering Siberian spaces for Muscovites. What can we conclude? It is quite difficult for a Western observer to navigate the nuances of historical events in the East in order to draw up a correct civilizational map.

The same mistake (i.e., using a formal religious criterion) was made by S. Huntington when he included a map of modern Ukraine in his famous book, dividing its territory according to religion and classifying Ukraine as a divided country [6 p. 159]. Religious divisions do not always coincide with civilizational boundaries, and Ukraine itself is a nice proof for that statement. The presence of Greek Catholics, Orthodox members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which until the start of the war in 2022 were subject to the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (the Patriarchate of Constantinople) did not prevent Ukrainians from uniting in the bloody struggle against the Russian enemy. Religious issues are pushed aside, because the war, indeed, has turned out to be an inter-civilizational one, but according to a completely different divide than S. Huntington imagined.

I strongly disagree with the authors using Orthodoxy as a civilization criterion. There is no doubt that not only Ukrainians, but

also Georgians, Greeks, Romanians, and Bulgarians will obviously disagree with the thesis of a single Orthodox civilization, but the Russians use immature theories to prove their “historical right” to huge territories that do not belong to them in any way. In fact, Orthodox Christianity is very different in Ukraine and Russia, as well as in other countries, not to mention dozens and hundreds of cultural elements that determine the specific difference between Russia and other nations in Eastern Europe. These “trifles” are actually crucial in the struggle against civilizational imperialism. It feeds on unverified, *a priori* patterns, when authors who have not deeply studied the empirical material draw speculative conclusions with one stroke of the pen.

It is worth mentioning that not all typological systems have a separate place for the “Russian” or “Orthodox” civilization, and those having it often classify it as secondary or peripheral. This is what Philip Bagby did, he included the Russian civilization in the list of 29 secondary ones [3, p. 181], though did not mention its geography and the cultural factor. He was opposed to using the religious factor as a generalizing criterion, although he assumed that at the subconscious level, religion can influence values and various spiritual manifestations. Ph. Bagby was a supporter of the comparative analysis of civilizations, which should take into account a large number of cultural elements, values, concepts and various factors. This is obviously a more correct way from the methodological viewpoint, but it causes a problem with the processing of large arrays of information, and brings up the problem of the accuracy of the selected primary elements. In general, it is the informative part where comparative studies cannot avoid subjectivism.

And what do Russians themselves think about their own civilizational identity? Without exaggeration, Russia is experiencing a civilizational boom: nowhere in the modern world we can see so many monographs, textbooks, and articles published on the topic of the civilization theory and Russia’s place in the global civilization structure. Let us present only a small part of this “theoretical treasure”. As of 2014, Nikolay Morozov carried out a bibliographic study of “Russian civilization studies” [7]; in recent years, new extensive publications [8] have appeared. Russians have supposedly recovered from an ideological defeat when Marxism-Leninism, which

created many preferences for eternal rashism, became history in the early 1990s. Before that decade Moscow had been interpreted as a world center in the march to communism. Now, rashist ideas have sprung up against the background of the civilizational paradigm. It seems that, finally, the Slavophiles, the national loyalists, the Eurasians, the Black Hundreds, the Imperialists and their various descendants have found their “Holy Grail” that opens the gate to true power. Now no one prevents Russians from thinking about themselves, whatever they want to, and from creating “civilizational nationalism”. They are trying to prove that Russia is a separate civilization that courageously resists the destructive influences of the West and is the hope for “progressive humanity”.

What Russia has really outdone Europe in is civiliography. It was started by Nikolay Danilevsky (1822-1885) in his voluminous treatise *Russia and Europe* [9]. This is a real manifesto of Russian civilizational nationalism and imperialism, which is more relevant today than ever. Russian imperialists pay respect to the author, and consider his creation something like the Bible. The book is constantly being reprinted and popularized, though it is not (yet) placed on bedside tables like the Bible in hotels in Protestant countries. However, it was the Russian writer who introduced the concept of cultural-historical type and divided the world into civilizations. He classified the Egyptian, Chinese, Assyrian-Babylonian-Phoenician, Jewish, Greek, and Roman types as cultural-historical types. As for the modern world, he singled out two leading types, the Romano-Germanic and Slavic ones. N. Danilevsky believed that future belongs to the Slavic type, in which Russia plays the leading part. The scientist himself was an arch-conservative: he strongly criticized Darwin’s theory, he considered democracy “a harbinger and tool of decay”, and the main thesis of his book is the inevitability of Russia’s collision with Europe. He “saw” a victorious war in the future, when the consolidated armed Russian masses would literally overwhelm European countries. Still, the characteristic feature of this approach, which remains relevant for the modern heirs of the Russian nobleman, is not the differentiation of Europe: for these gentlemen, all Europeans are the same, they are a priori hostile to Great Russia, they want to limit it in its natural right to seize border territories, etc. The refrain throughout the book is the thesis that

Russians are not Europeans, they are capable of uniting the Slavic peoples around themselves and then start threatening Europe. N. Danilevsky called for the creation of a super-Slavic political community (the All-Slavic Union) from the Adriatic to the Pacific under the auspices of Moscow. It should include: the Czecho-Moravian-Slovak Kingdom, the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, the Bulgarian Kingdom, the Romanian Kingdom, the Hellenic Kingdom (Crete, Cyprus, Epirus, and Rhodes, in particular), the Magyar Kingdom, and Tsargorod District. In general, modern aggressive Russian civilizationists do not renounce such ideas. It was under this banner that they launched a war against Ukraine, which they interpreted to be the first step to future greatness.

In the 1920s, the idea of Russian civilization as a separate subject not belonging to Europe was picked up by a circle of intellectuals fleeing from Russia as a result of revolutionary events. They called themselves *Eurasians*. The intellectual movement was founded by Prince M. Trubetsky (1890-1938), economist and geographer P. Savitsky (1895-1968), theologian G. Florovsky (1893-1979), and the music critic P. Suvchinsky (1892-1985). Later, several dozen Russian emigrants in various European countries joined the movement. They were convinced of the rapid decay of the European culture and saw the way to salvation, firstly, in constructing borders between different cultures, and secondly, in turning to Asia, from which the life-giving impulse for the revival of Russia must come. The collection of articles titled *Exodus to the East* (1921) was their flagman publication. The last Eurasian, as he called himself, was Lev Gumilyov (1912-1992), who was sent to Stalinist camps three times “as a precaution”. He was not involved in politics, but unfortunately, he had “non-Soviet” parents, the famous poets Nikolay Gumilyov and Anna Akhmatova. In general, this movement supported the anti-Western discourse. L. Gumilyov believed that the roots of the Russian super-ethnos should be sought in the Great Steppe, and, the “complimentary” ethnic groups for Russians are not Europeans, but steppe Turkic peoples. So, the theoretical foundations of Russian civilizational nationalism were laid in the 19th and 20th centuries. It was marked by a relentless intellectual turn from the West to the East.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, a rapid growth of interest has taken place in civilization studies along with a bias for search-

ing for Russia's special place and role in the history of civilizations. Why has this happened? Russian conservative politicians and humanitarians actually used the theory of civilizations to conceptualize their rashist worldview, which had been relentlessly paving the way after certain ideological swings in the 1990s. Aleksandr Dugin, the main ideologist of the "conservative revolution" and Eurasianism in Russia, became the new movement's mouthpiece. For some time, he was not accepted in serious academic circles, as the idea of a separate Russian civilization was initially viewed as a false concept promoted by radical nationalists.

A. Dugin called to declare Russia a special civilization, declaring that *if Russia takes such a path and recognizes itself as a civilization... this will mean a crusade against the West, a denial of its universal mission...* [10, p. 450]. The turning point to the new ideological platform may be found in 2005-2007, when a document with the telling name *Russian Doctrine* went through broad presentation. This paper, completely imbued with the ideas of civilizational nationalism, was a manifesto of Russian conservatism and united representatives of various anti-Western currents [11]. Now the idea of rapprochement with Europe is becoming unpopular in Russia, and more and more people speak of a special Russian path to the future. This radical change happened when Russia's higher military and political leadership adopted the corresponding viewpoint. An important place in this process was obviously taken by Vladislav Surkov. At different times Mr Surkov held the positions of Deputy Head of the President's Administration and Deputy Head of the Government of the Russian Federation; V. Putin made him the curator for mass media, justice, and various humanitarian directions of state policy (cf. it with the role played by J. Goebbels during the *Third Reich*); he also headed "the Ukrainian sector" and took an active part in the hybrid war against Ukraine. V. Surkov put forward the idea of "sovereign democracy" and substantiated the need for an autocratic regime based on Russia's historical tradition [12].

From that moment on, Russian civilization studies literally exploded: conferences, symposia, round tables are held on this topic, relevant training courses are introduced into educational programs, thus really resembling the propaganda methods of Marxism-Leninism in the USSR. The first leaders of the Russian

Federation have confirmed the irreversibility of abandoning the European orientation. The article by N. Patrushev (Putin's number two, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation) *Does Russia need "universal" values?* Has proved emblematic. The answer to this question is negative, modern Russia does not need any European values, because it relies on its own traditions [13]. This marks the final break with the West, which is evidenced at the highest political level. The very fact of such a publication says that the matter is done, and there will be no turning back. N. Patrushev did not express a personal point of view, but the consolidated position of the Putin regime.

What do liberals, supporters of the European path feel? Their position is rather pathetic. They either try to protest cautiously (in the intellectual discourse only) or are overcome by fatalism. What scares modern Russian Westerners? The country is becoming archaic, renouncing the possibility of modernization on European principles; under the slogans of "Russian civilization" and "special path" the country is obviously sliding towards a fascist dictatorship. A number of liberals spoke against declaring Russia a separate civilization hostile to the West. Thus, Aleksandr Verkhovsky and Emil Pain actually introduced the concept of "civilizational nationalism" into scholarly discourse. Their review of the civilizational trend that has engulfed Russian humanitarians and politicians ends with the following phrase: *from a strategic perspective, the "special path" of civilizational nationalism is definitely a dead end, which contradicts the global trends of the world development* [14]. Actually, the battle has already been lost (for today), Russia has followed its usual path of rashism. Pessimists, who used to be optimists back in the 1990s and advocated Western orientation, now throw up their hands and say something like the following: Russia is a country of slaves; this is a fate which no one can escape; here we can see deep-rooted needs of the *ulterior people*, and so on.

Russian imperial nationalism is developing according to the rashist patterns and contains the same theses as eternal rashism does:

- Russia is separate nation, not similar to other countries; it is based on traditional Orthodox values determining the very essence of Russian civilization;

- Russia has its own mission; its task is to allegedly carry spirituality and oppose the unspiritual Western world;
- the natural state form for Russia is an empire headed by a chief, a leader, a monarch, while democracy, if permissible at all, is a formal thing within the framework of the “sovereign democracy” concept;
- the leading role within the civilization belongs to *the Russkiy people*, which outwardly represents all other nations and ethnic groups that have entered (voluntarily or forcibly) into the body of civilization;
- Russia is large and powerful, so the West is not entitled with dictating its terms to Russia, limit Russia’s borders, impose international law, and for Russia, it is necessary to have super-powerful armed forces and prepare for war, if it wants “to go its own way”.

Now it is time to determine the Ukrainian viewpoint on the phenomenon of Russian imperial civilizationism. First of all, whether or not to recognize oneself as a separate civilization is an internal matter for Russia and its citizens within the limits that do not threaten other countries and peoples of the world. Whether the Caucasian, Siberian, Volga peoples agree with this is an issue for the internal Russian discourse. Secondly, Ukraine and Ukrainians do not belong to the Russian civilization or the Russian super-ethnos (Gumilyov’s terminology), and I am going to prove this fact within the scholarly discourse. Still, the best proof for it is the implacable struggle of Ukrainians against Russian imperialism and the Moscow empire in all spheres, from military to cultural ones. Thirdly, the separation of Russians from Europe, done during their civilizational projects, must be accepted as a reality: in fact, and in the minds of most Russian theoreticians, Europe and Russia are different social worlds. Actually, there is one fundamental difference between Russians and Ukrainians in their views on civilization: the former believe that Ukraine is part of their cultural space and Moscow is allegedly entitled to control it, while Ukrainians do not think so and emphasize their European origin, mentality, and culture, which are not compatible with the so-called *Russkiy world*. Ukrainians do not want to live in captivity in the Russian empire, cut off from European tradition.

Today, Russia has found itself in the theory of Russian civilization; rashism, like an oriental genie, has escaped from many years of captivity and is ruled by the evil will of an eastern tyrant. There is a chasm between European civilization and Russia, because the latter completely and deliberately rejects the values for which Europeans have fought for centuries. Values, on their part, are the core of culture and the cultural code that every civilization carries.

The next subsection shows at what point in history and under what circumstances exactly the Russian (Eurasian) civilization was born, and why rashism became its cultural feature.

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2.2. THE MOMENT OF BIRTH OF RUSSIAN CIVILIZATION

How are civilizations born? The answer to this question has been given by A. Toynbee. He believes that there are two ways: 1) the people’s response to external challenges, 2) branching off from a mother civilization. The English historian considers the first way within his own Challenge and Response theory. So, the

“Challenge” can be one of the following: (1) “hard countries”; (2) “new ground”, for example, resettlement to overseas territories; (3) “blows”; (4) “pressure”; (5) “penalization”. The burden of the “response” is borne by the creative minority, which leads the more passive part of the population. This is how a new civilization can emerge. But “A Study of History” suggests another very promising idea for our work, namely, the emergence of modern civilizations through, so to speak, “budding” and the formation of “daughter” civilizations. Therefore, “Response” is not formed in the plane of interaction with the natural environment or a brutal enemy, but rather in the realm of family relations between the “ancestor society” and the “descendant society”. A. Toynbee describes the alternative mechanism of the birth of a civilization as follows: *Starting with the mutation of primitive societies into civilizations we have found that this [the nature of the geneses of civilizations] consists in a transition from a static condition to a dynamic activity; and we shall find that the same formula holds good for the emergence of civilizations through the secessions of internal proletariats from the dominant minorities of preexistent civilizations which have lost their creative power. Such dominant minorities are static by definition; for to say that the creative minority of a civilization in growth has degenerated or atrophied into the dominant minority of a civilization in disintegration is only another way of saying that the society in question has lapsed from a dynamic activity into a static condition.* [1, p. 69-70]. This is roughly how we see the process of the genesis of Russian society, whose mother was not Russia, but the Mongol Empire or the Mongolosphere. Russia, in my opinion, is not a primary civilization, it is the heir of an earlier and not “canonical” (from the civilization viewpoint) steppe culture.

However, my point of view does not coincide with the historical canon established in the official Russian historiography. Here, I will briefly present the Russian version. It looks like this:

- The history of Russia begins with Kievan Rus. The Grand Dukes of Kiev were the first Russian tsars even before the founding of Moscow (this is the reason for V. Putin to order for a monument to Vladimir the Great to be erected in the center of Moscow). According to the Russian version, there were no Ukrainians at that time, but “ancient Ruskiy people” who spoke the “general

Ruskiy language”. Such an interpretation of history allegedly entitles modern Russians to see Kyiv as their ancient capital.

- Slavs initially living on the Kievan Rus territory gradually settled on the lands in the east, where Moscow later arose; they transferred “Ruskiy” religion and culture to the territory where Muscovy was to appear.
- In 1147, Prince Yuri Dolgoruky of Kiev founded Moscow. It was ruled by a branch of the Rurik dynasty, which had Norman roots and was represented by the Kiev princes.
- In 1237, the Batu-khan horde attacked the eastern lands; In 1238, Moscow was taken by storm, it entered the Juchi ulus (the indivisible empire of Genghis Khan formally existed until 1266, and later it split into several uluses). Later, Moscow began to develop for some unknown reason, annexing neighboring lands and principalities, and by the end of the existence of the Golden Horde it had grown into a fairly powerful state.
- Russian historiographers call the time when Moscow was part of the Golden Horde the “Tatar-Mongol yoke”, and in modern school textbooks it is referred to as the “Horde rule”. A yoke is an element of horse harness, and figuratively it means slavery. The term “yoke” as a characteristic of the Mongol rule became established after N. Karamzin wrote his “History of the Russian State” (although it had been used earlier) and became widespread in the 19th century. According to the Russian historical tradition, Moscow was in vassal dependence from the Horde, paid taxes to the Saray, bore the burden of slavery and dreamed of liberation. Sometimes Moscow defied the Horde, and for this it was punished (burned). This was done, for example, by the Moscow prince Dmitri Donskoy, who fought against the army of Mamai in the Battle of the Kulikovo Field (1380), but this battle did not bring independence to Moskovy.
- In modern Russian historical maps, the Principality of Moscow is depicted as a territory next to the lands of the “Golden Horde”, thus creating a visual effect of a dependent, but fundamentally separate (non-Mongolian) state, where the old Ruskiy dynasty ruled.
- Independence from the Horde came under Ivan III (1480). From that moment on, nobody and nothing could prevent Muscovy from being the center of Orthodoxy and Ruskiy Slavic

culture. Moscow takes on the mission of “collecting Ruskiy lands”, treating it as a moral justification for its expansion to the west, still continuing in the 21st century.

Ukrainians have no place in this pseudo-historical scheme, and real facts are ignored or distorted. The 19th century scientist Karl Marx did not believe in the Russian version, and wrote the following: *The bloody mire of Mongolian slavery, not the rude glory of the Norman epoch, forms the cradle of Muscovy, and modern Russia is but a metamorphosis of Muscovy* [2]. Even in Russia itself the official concept is not broadly believed in. It was questioned in the 20th century as well, for example, by Eurasianist L. Gumilyov, who believed that there had never been any “yoke”. He said that Muscovy had acquired the status of a full-fledged ulus within the framework of the great empire receiving all the benefits of its position. That is, being part of the Golden Horde was not evil, but rather a specific feature of Russia’s historical path. The modern Russian historian O. Shkaratan directly writes that the Muscovite state arose within the “body” of the Golden Horde [3, p. 96]. The question of the genesis of Russian civilization is not secondary, because the solution to “the riddle of Russia” depends on answering it. Who exactly inspired the first Muscovites: Kievan Rus or the Golden Horde? The answer will also give an understanding to why and when the phenomenon of rashism arose.

Personally, I adhere to a completely different viewpoint as for the emergence of Muscovy and Russian civilization, as a whole. It consists in the following.

Muscovite lands were not an organic part of Russia. Kiev officially owned these territories for a certain time, but they always remained a separate social space. No Slavs lived there, but Finno-Ugric tribes, who spoke their own languages, had a separate history, and had a lower level of cultural development; they were mainly forest people who inhabited the narrow free spaces of land along the numerous lakes and rivers. They cannot be called agrarians, as they remained fishermen, collectors of forest gifts, and hunters; their agriculture was rather primitive. Commercial grain was not produced, as the soils, unlike Ukrainian ones, were not fertile. The Stone Age ended quite late, and no impulses for development came there. Herodotus in his *History* called these people androphages, that is, cannibals. No developed states could be found there, either; rather, quasi-state

entities were popular, e.g. chiefdoms as a transitional form of government from the kindred structure (or clan) to the state.

Ukrainians (Rusichi) had no significant interest in the eastern lands. Firstly, there were no communication routes. The Rusichi called these territories Zalesye or Zaleshchansky lands, which reflected a natural fact: almost impassable forests lay between Rus and Muscovy, stretching for hundreds of miles. There were no navigable waterways, either. The basins of the Dnipro and Volga rivers do not interconnect. The route along the Dnieper connected the Baltic with Byzantium, and in ancient times it was called “from the Varangians to the Greeks”. Moscow is located on the banks of the Moskva River (a toponym of Finnish origin), which flows into the Volga. The route to the south along the Volga is the direction to the Caspian Sea and Persia (Iran). Secondly, economic relations were practically non-existent due to extreme poverty of local tribes, and lack of crafts, development of mines, own coin, etc. The gifts of nature collected by the natives were the same among the Rusichi, and their delivery to Kiev was very expensive. Thirdly, the local population was unfriendly to foreigners, the inhabitants of the forests tried to kill the newcomers, e.g. the corresponding fate befell the first preachers of Christianity. This mental feature of members of closed societies may have later formed the basis of Westernophobia, hatred of Latinism and Europeans. It existed a priori at the subconscious level, and in a later era a certain rationalization, an explanation by local ideologies was added: why Europeans are dangerous for Muscovites.

However, certain connections did exist. The princes of the rulers of Kyiv went there in search of principalities, following the Norman traditions. Taking small detachments (*druzhyinas*) and priests fulfilling their separate pastoral mission, the adventurers went east to face the alternative: either to perish or to establish their own principality (that is, to deprive the local chief of his land and people). Vasily Klyuchevsky, who is considered to be the most authoritative Russian historian of the 19th century, called such descendants of Kiev Dukes “outcasts”, because only those who had no chance of obtaining (or even theoretically struggling for) the throne of Kiev or any other principality in Russia dared to take such adventures. Before the Mongol-Tatar invasion, there were two more or less successful principalities in those lands, whose rulers were princes relat-

ed to the Kiev dynasties: the Vladimir and Suzdal principalities. But it was not them who became the basis for Muscovy, and then Russia.

If we look at the emergence of Russian civilization from an alternative viewpoint, the question of when and under what circumstances Moscow arose gains fundamental importance. It is the political and spiritual center of a child civilization: as soon as Moscow disappears, Russian civilization will disappear as well. Step by step, a new empire emerged from Moscow, replacing the Golden Horde in the vast expanses of Eurasia, and with it, the spirit of Muscovy spread and encompassed the collective consciousness of the colonized peoples.

The Russian version about the founding of Moscow in the middle of the 12th century is based neither on material facts nor on independent testimony. It originates from records in Russian chronicles, none of which has survived in its authentic form, and the scribal copies were mercilessly edited and falsified to suit the current political situation in the country. They cannot be trusted in such sensitive political matters as the founding of an empire. Russian history was constructed in the 18th century, when the first emperors began to worry about their own origins and tried to retouch the picture of the past in order to look worthy next to European monarchs. If Peter I had not chosen a European orientation, but had been immersed in the East, there would have been no need to renounce the “old kings” and the glorious Mongolian past; on the contrary, the eastern origin of the empire would have been a matter of pride. It was in the 18th century. that the ideological turn towards Europe was made and it was necessary to lay down the trumps. All the more so since the rulers were no longer descendants of the Chingizids or Turkic nobles, but natives of the German principalities. Catherine II, understanding the ambiguous situation all too well, decided to solve the problem once and for all in favor of the European origin of the Russian monarchy by using the concept of a common history with the Kievan state. She assembled a special historical commission, which was supposed to review the existing documents and correct the country’s history; issued orders clearly expressing her viewpoint of the history of the Russian state; and on behalf of the commission, ancient documents were collected from all the archives, monasteries, and state institutions where rare objects were kept, and brought

to the capital. One can only imagine the commission's attitude and treatment of the documents; as a result, little remains of the real history. Volodymyr Bilinsky (1936-2022) [4] thoroughly described the work process of the "historical commission" giving various details, citing names and facts. That is why the Mongol period of Muscovy can rightly be called "the Dark ages". Perhaps the time will come when Russian historians themselves will understand these issues without any ideological bias. Today, this is a complete utopia, because V. Putin has personally taken up the resolution of complex and controversial issues. In this he imitates the emperors.

What is the official Russian version of Moscow founding based on? In the Ipatiev Chronicle, there is a place where the Rostov-Suzdal prince of Kiev origin, Yuri Dolgoruky, calls on his ally, the Novgorod-Siversky prince Svyatoslav Olgovich: "Come to me, brother, to Moscow". And this place in the manuscript was first noted by the famous Moscow court historian N. Karamzin (of Tatar origin, his real surname was Kara-Murza), who wrote the history of Russia to the government's order. The importance of the event attracting the chronicler's attention arises immediate suspicion, as such an insignificant action would not have been included in the authentic annals. A certain methodology was developed for the annalistic tradition, what should be recorded and what should not. If during the year no wars, coups, deaths of the rulers, plagues, the appearance of comets or any other important things happened, then the chronicler would write: "nothing has happened this year". From the standpoint of the 18th century empire it was extremely important to record the reference to Moscow even before the Mongol invasion, so a few words were probably inserted, though they obviously contradicted the chronicle tradition. But the person who made the entry must have had a hidden sense of humor, because the reason for choosing to bring Moscow "into the spotlight" is rather ridiculous: having a good lunch in an impassable forest thicket, in an area that takes more than one week to get to, looks quite absurd.

I would like to mention here another interesting date, 1158. It also comes from a chronicle of dubious quality, telling the story of the boyar Kuchka, who was allegedly beheaded by Yuri Dolgoruky; after execution, the prince allegedly ordered to build the city of Moscow on the site of the village where the executed man lived. V. Kly-

uchevsky pondered over these strange records and finally found, as he thought, a resolution to the issue of the date when Moscow was built. In his opinion, at first there was a kind of village (where one could have a good lunch) on that site, and only later the prince ordered to enclose it with a stoccardo, thus giving it the characteristics of a “town” [5]. But why he did it remains unclear, because Yuri Dolgoruky did not live in that area, and none of his plans were related to the mythical Moscow. He was even buried in Kiev rather than in Moscow. Besides, Dolgoruky’s residence was located in Suzdal, which is in 137 miles away from Moscow, if one takes a modern highway. Isn’t it too far to locate a summer house there, at a time when no roads had been built yet?

But the decisive blow at the official Russian version was made by the Mongols. Being smart conquerors, after capturing this or that area they conducted population censuses in order to understand what tax they could count on. For this, they kept a whole staff of “numerators”, i.e. literate officials who could make records, calculate, etc. Moscow does not appear in the first two censuses! The Russians could not falsify these data, because the reports of the Mongolian numerators (obviously, their function was performed by the Chinese) were preserved in foreign annals. Moscow only appears in the documents of the third census carried out in 1272.

A detailed historical analysis made by V. Bilinsky proves that the event of founding the city took place around 1272, and the initiative belongs to a Khan of the Golden Horde, namely, Mengu-Timur [4, p. 200–214]. From this moment on, the history of the city can be traced by certain artifacts indicating the presence of human activity on the territory of the city.

Towns do not emerge by themselves, unexpectedly and without any reason; a certain interest is needed, a real necessity for a new town to emerge. We do not see any interest in Yuri Dolgoruky, moreover, he did not operate in that area at all; but the new owners of Zalesye, who managed this region, obviously had an interest in founding a fortified settlement. In my opinion, Moscow began as a trading station, a transit point on the way of tax collectors, who formed caravans and sent the taxes by water to the capital of the empire, Saray. The location of Moscow was chosen precisely for these reasons. At that time, the Mongols were in a transitional state from

a nomadic life to a settled life, and they were beginning to build towns. They founded several towns on the territory of modern Russia, e.g., Tula and Kasimov. Actually, the Mongols themselves were not engineers, but they knew how to manage other people, set tasks, and achieve the set goals. And they had an understanding of the general trend: the nomadic way of life was coming to an end, so it was time to open a new page in history.

But who inhabited Muscovy? A glaring contradiction is present in this issue. There is a proven historical fact that the territory of the Moscow Principality and its neighbors had been long inhabited by Finno-Ugric tribes, who settled on a large territory in the triangle between Lake Ladoga, the Taimyr Peninsula and the lowlands of the Volga River. These were Moksha, Erzya, Mari, Udmurt, Karel, Khanty, Komi, Sami, Mansi, Nenets, Izhortsy, Veps, Merya, Selkup, Nganasan and others. Almost all toponyms, such as names of rivers and old settlements (Moscow included) are derived from the Finnish language. The contradiction here lies in the fact that this is the same territory that in the Russians' imperial consciousness is marked as the initial territory from where the Russians spread to other lands. The historical cradle of the Ruskiye should lie here, but the place is already occupied by others! Russians either try to avoid this topic or invent versions that do not stand up to criticism. The Ukrainian historian Oleksandr Paliy states the following: *The territory of the Rostov-Suzdal principality of the 12-13th centuries, from where modern Russia grew, completely coincides with the land of the Mery people, extending north to Beloozero, upstream of the Msta, Mologa, Kostroma, and Unzh rivers, and in the south bordered by the Klyazma and Moskva rivers* [6]. It should be added here that a fairly large Moksha people lived further south, and their territory also bordered on the territory of Muscovy.

Practically no Slavs, or Rusichi could be seen in those lands during the period in question, if not to consider a small percentage of those coming from Rus together with renegade princes. This becomes clear if to consider the results of long-lasting archaeological and anthropological research carried out in the 19th century. In particular, it was conducted by Count Aleksey Uvarov (1824-1885), the founder of the Moscow Archaeological Society, an honorary member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, a person completely

devoted to science (and not an ideologue). His expedition surveyed 7,729 burial mounds in the former Moscow, Vladimir, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, and Ryazan provinces. He established that those mounds belonged exclusively to the lay (Finnish) ethnic group of the 7-12th centuries, while not a single Slavic burial was found [7]. At the same time, the anthropology professor Anatoly Bogdanov (1834-1896) studied the skulls in the mounds. In 1865-1866, he excavated burial mounds in the Moscow province and wrote his doctoral dissertation *On the Moscow mound tribe*. On the basis of calculating the main index (craniological index), A. Bogdanov showed the absolute difference between the found skulls and the Slavic type skull. The skulls of the Finns turned out to be “long-headed”, while the Slavs were brachycephalic, that is, their skulls were “round-headed” [8].

The interest of Russian scientists is obvious, they were looking for evidence of their origin. It is very reasonable, considering the general trend of the 19th century, when issues of national revival and identity arose, when ethnography, folkloristics and the search for the origins of the *Volksgeist*, i.e. “the spirit of the people”, became a new trend. Thus, the research gave us a fixed fact as for the ethnic homogeneity of the original inhabitants of Muscovy, and not a single scientist undertakes to refute this fact empirically. But it is precisely this fact that Russia prefers to ignore. Russian historians, in order to get out of this impasse, once invented the theory of the great resettlement: allegedly, Ukrainians left their lands *en masse* and moved to Zalesye for unknown reasons. There were so many of them that they outnumbered the natives. Accordingly, the immigrants brought with them their culture of the Eastern Slavs. I wonder, why they didn't found their villages and towns with typical names reminiscent of their homeland, as all immigrants do? There is nothing similar on the territory of modern central Russia.

One of the first Russian scientists, Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765), tried to connect the Slavs with the Finno-Ugric peoples (Chud), because otherwise he did not understand how the appearance of the Russkiy people could be explained. In a purely deductive way, he came to the conclusion that there must have been a movement of Slavs to the east and their merging with the local people: *...even then, the Chud and the Slavs merged into one people in some places...*, he writes in a poetic message to the heir to the throne,

Pavel Petrovich [9]. He did not provide any evidence; his theory was purely speculative. Indeed, the Russkiy people did not appear from nowhere on the land possessed by the Chud (the collective name of various northern Finnish ethnic groups).

Fantasies on this topic spread in Russian historiography in the 19th century, and then were picked up by Western authors without any constructive thinking. V. Klyuchevsky wrote that the Rusichi “skinned through to the northeast”, and that there existed *an out-flow of Ruskiye forces from the Central Dnieper region to the Upper Volga* [5, p. 172]. Muscovy appears to him something like a reservoir, into which “people’s forces” flow from everywhere: *Due to its geographical location, Moscow, like a central reservoir, was taking in people’s forces streaming from all the parts of the Russkiy land threatened by external enemies* [5, p.194]. The famous French civilizationist Fernand Braudel took this position, noting that starting with the 11th century, part of the nationalities that inhabited Kievan Rus began to migrate (one might even say – flee) to the northeast, i.e. towards Rostov (Rostov the Great is meant here, but not the current Rostov-on-Don). It was in these forested places that the history of new Russia began, it was here that the mixing of Slavs and Finns, representatives of the Mongoloid race, who had been the first to inhabit those areas took place. Thus, these are the roots of the ethnic group called the Great Russians, F. Braudel concludes [10]. The French author makes a tracing of Russian books, whose authors solved an important political task, namely, to prove that Russian civilization is an organic continuation of Rus, therefore, it is osculant to Byzantium and Europe. R. Pipes also found nothing better than staying within the false paradigm: *The Slavs inundated the indigenous Finns, ultimately assimilating them by intermarriage. The mixture of the two nationalities resulted in a new racial type, the Great Russian, in which, from the infusion of Finno-Ugric blood, certain oriental characteristics (e.g. high cheekbones and small eyes), absent among other Slavs, made their appearance.* [11, p. 38].

Where are the weak points of the theory of outnumbering the natives, of “flooding” their territories by the Slavic wave from the west? First of all, we have no genuine historical records, artifacts, or traces of the great resettlement. Such an event should have been reflected in the historical memory of the people, should have passed

into folklore (not to mention the chronicles), forever engraved in toponyms, etc. Nothing of the sort has been recorded. Secondly, there is no motive for resettlement. The 11th century was the peak of the power and prosperity of the Kievan state. Who should the Russians run away from? Neither demographic explosion nor any facts of overpopulation in Rus (which did not have enough arable land) have been recorded. It is hard to imagine that ancient Ukrainians, born agrarians accustomed to their climate and having the famous black soil, would flee to a region with long cold winters and poor soils (the non-black soil zone of Russia) and narrow earthen spaces along the banks of waterways, which the locals would have fought to the death. An interesting fact should be noted here: F. Braudel further contradicts the logic of his theses in the same text saying that Russian cities of that time [meaning Ukrainian cities under our terminology] were real Western cities. Over the centuries, he states, Kievan Rus was famous precisely for the brilliance of its cities, which symbolized the prosperity of the country: in this respect; there was no lagging behind, no gap between the West and the East of Europe. That is, natural farmers allegedly fled from a prosperous European country to a semi-wild land outside their civilization, where the natives would rather kill the newcomers; as for the soil, only cabbage and turnips could ripen there, and the place for fields had to be first reclaimed from the forest... Where is the logic here? If to suggest that the reason for all that was a hypothetical escape from enemies, then one should remember that the latter systematically came to Rus from the east, but not from the west. A powerful state stood behind the Rusychi, and when it did not resist and another invasion from the east turned out to be fatal for Rus (Baty's attack is meant here), the epoch had already changed, and the population had to flee to the west (like it happened in 2022).

Moscow historians tried to find arguments to connect Moscow with Kyiv, because for Russians it is an important part of state ideology and politics. On the other hand, Western historians did not critically perceive ideas from Russian sources. To my opinion, no mass resettlement from Rus to the lands on which Moscow arose took place in that distant epoch. Then the question arises: who did inhabit Moscow and its nearest lands? The natives, as we have just found out, were the Finno-Ugric people, and more specifically, the

Merya tribe. This is a firmly proven fact. Anthropologically, the Finno-Ugrians belong to the Caucasian group; if desired, they can be taken for a variety of Slavs, if one does not go too deep. True, R. Pipes said that their facial features were untypical for Slavs, but this peculiarity can be explained by the typical Finns' appearance or, even, by the influence of the Great Steppe peoples, the latter living close to Rus. The natives were at that low level of development, when people are not yet concerned with the problem of identity. Their descendants still live in this region, but they are already called "Russkiye". For the most part, they do not see this as a problem, because their cultural underdevelopment in the old times contributed to the inoculation of a new identity.

In Moscow itself, the population and languages were diverse. The natives there occupied the lower stair of the social hierarchy, and their language was the speech of the lower classes. Moscow is a Mongolian project, from the beginning it was inhabited by those who were called "Tatars", that is, representatives of various Turkic peoples, Horde people performing official duties. They mainly immigrated from the Volga and their numbers grew significantly as Moscow transformed into a metropolitan city. The Tatars used their own languages, e.g. the Kipchak language, spoken by the Polovtsy, was widespread, and it was considered privileged in the Steppe. Undoubtedly, the state language functioned, i.e., the language of the Mongols and Saray. The top of society had to know it, because it is difficult to imagine that local rulers would communicate with the statesmen of the Center through an interpreter. This would be a sign of disrespect causing grim consequences. How could one ask for a yarlyk entitling him to reign from the Great Khan in a language he did not understand? Language follows power, this is a rule for all ages and epochs. The Mongols used the Uyghur language. In this language, the flow of documents was managed in the state, yarlyks were issued, and church privileges were certified. This is also a well-known fact, as translations of yarlyks have reached current times, but the originals were deliberately destroyed in Muscovy after the end of the Mongol period [12]. Therefore, the process of shying away from the old tsars (the rulers of the Golden Horde in the 13-15th centuries) began even earlier than the historical reform of the 18th century.

Two more languages played an important social function: Old Bulgarian (Russkiy language) and Arabic. These are church languages used at Orthodox services and in mosques, respectively. In the beginning, it was difficult to say which of the religions would become dominant, because they existed in parallel. Both languages were considered elitist, they were used by religious hierarchs and intellectuals of their time, they provided an opportunity to read books and conduct correspondence. Subsequently, the “Russkiy faith” (Orthodoxy brought from Rus) won in Moscow, thus starting the process of spreading the Slavic language to all the residents of Muscovy. This is what the Grand Princes and the policy makers in Moscow decided when they separated from the old empire. The approval of the new state language was done by force, like everything else in the Moscow state. The city, the army, and the bureaucracy were quickly Russified. The transition, obviously, took place quite quickly, and then the Russkiy language spread to the countryside. However, in the 19th century Finno-Hungarian dialects were still spoken in Russian villages. A paradox arose: a Slavic-speaking, but ethnically predominantly non-Slavic state emerged. However, the situation began to improve after the colonization of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands. The process of institutionalization of the Russkiy language was facilitated by educated Ukrainian players who were intentionally invited to Moscow. However, modern Russian language remains more distant from Ukrainian than Serbian and Bulgarian do. Modern Russian language was finally formed only in the 19th century thanks to writers, authors, and linguists and, just like before, it was broadcast from the city to the village. The final point was put by the cultural revolution carried out by the Bolsheviks in the 20th century to eliminate illiteracy. Accordingly, the locals in the villages were taught the standardized Russian language rather than their native dialects.

“Russkiye” is an ethno-political community formed in a way that corresponds to the technologies of social construction. That is, there was no historical ethnos that would develop naturally, have its own language and historical homeland (the cradle of the ethnos). Russian culture has always gone from the city to the villages, and not the other way around, as it is characteristic of historical peoples. Moscow, obviously, was the place where *Ruskiyness* was formed,

and then spread to numerous ethnic groups that were part of the empire. This explains the unnatural quantitative growth of the number of Russkiye and, conversely, the catastrophic rapid decrease of other ethnic groups, including the natives of Muscovy, who were not destroyed physically, but a new identity was implanted in them.

From the moment of its foundation, Moscow quickly turned into a regional political center. Virtuous Russian historians could not resolve the historical paradox: why did Moscow, which was actually a village “yesterday”, rose up so quickly and made the population of more developed cities and principalities its subjects? They put forward various rather fantastic versions, but they did not want to take into account the Saray factor, because it broke the version of Moscow’s relative independence. We believe that it was the attachment of the Center to the Moscow princes that was the decisive factor. Why did Saray help Moscow? From the very beginning, this city was their pet project if we consider the story of its birth and spirit. I am inclined to support the opinion substantiated by V. Bilinsky regarding the fact that the ruling princely dynasty was not the descendants of the Rurik family, but came from the Chingizid family. In his book *Moscow of the Horde*, V. Bilinsky put forward the theory that the Rurik dynasty ceased to exist after Baty’s conquest of the Rostov-Suzdal and Ryazan lands. Therefore, from its foundation in 1272, Moscow was ruled by one-hundred-per-cent Chingizids, the first of whom was Peter Ordynsky [13]. This corresponded to the Horde state tradition, where the uluses were to be ruled by Mongolian princes. It would be strange if they put rulers of foreign blood on the throne in a city they founded, and such things were not done contrary to the will of the central government of the empire. The local prince had to receive a yarlyk, a document entitling him to rule the territory, from the supreme rulers, the Great Khan (the White Tsar), in particular. A specific ceremony existed requiring the candidate to undergo slavish humiliation: he had to crawl between the fires to the feet of the Great Khan, thus showing his complete submission.

Therefore, the attempt of modern Russian historians to somehow distance Moscow from the Saray, to show its relative independence and proud spirit, does not stand up to scrutiny. Everything that Moscow received in the first period of its progress had to be blessed in Saray. And the gains were fantastic. First of all, the son

of Peter Ordynsky, Prince Yuri (1303-1325), received the yarlyk for the title of Grand Duke thus becoming the first among other princes, although he had more worthy rivals, as Vladimir, Suzdal, Tver and other cities and their princely dynasties had objectively more rights to leadership. However, everything was decided by the central government in Saray. Muscovy received the status of an ulus, and that was a decision made on the banks of the Volga. The Golden Horde comprised half a dozen uluses forming the basis for the internal military and political structure of the empire. The legal concept of ulus was developed during the time of Genghis Khan and never changed. The founders of the uluses were certain clans (iliyas) from among the Hordes, therefore, those who were historically the first aristocracy moved from the Volga to Moscow. The ulus could only be headed by a prince from the Chingizid clan. The ulus had its own army – tumen, and took part in wars started by the central government. Besides, the empire controlled various peripheries that did not formally belong to the ulus, but Saray received taxes from them. Kiev and Novgorod were not uluses, although they had to pay the tax. Muscovy was formed precisely as an ulus, its rulers were appointed by Saray, they took an active part in internal politics, intrigues, races for power, civil wars, etc. Muscovites' worldview was based on the spirit of the Horde from the very beginning. Secondly, in 1325 Metropolitan Peter of Kiev and all Rus moved his residence to Moscow, which was to be done with the consent of Saray. Moscow turned into the spiritual center of the Orthodox part of the Golden Horde. Thirdly, the next ruler Ivan I or Kalita (1325-1340), under the title of Grand Duke, received the main prize of collecting the tax from other dukedoms for the capital on the Volga. As a result, Moscow quickly enriched itself and expanded the territory of the dukedom. Fourthly, the Moscow Grand Dukes, by force or bribery, vassalled various apantage princes, started bloody wars and made raids on their neighbors, and then received yarlyks from the Great Khan to legitimize the captured. After the fall of Saray, it was the Crimean Khan who gave yarlyks on owning territories and settlements, and Moscow's dependence on the Crimean ulus remained until the end of the 17th century. This was the real situation in the epoch later called "the Tatar-Mongol yoke".

Muscovy was expanding because no one could stop the henchmen of the Horde. In what follows a very brief overview of Moscow's

conquests is given, which turned it into a powerful state even in the times it still remained under the authority of the Horde: Kolomna (1300), Pereslavl-Zalessky (1302), Mozhaysk (1303), Rostov (1328), Galich, Uglich (1330s), Vladimir (1363), Rzhev (1368), Nizhny Novgorod (1392), Murom (1392), Vologda (1397), Ustyug (1397), Rostov (1447), Suzdal (1440s), Perm (1451), Yaroslavl (1463), Veliky Novgorod (1478). Moscow adopted the aggressive spirit of the Horde and entered into a rivalry for the inheritance of the Mongols.

Moscow's military activity had a certain logic in it even after the Golden Horde collapsed. For some reason, no one asks the question: how did Russia occupy a colossal area on the Eurasian continent? Was it an accident? A happy coincidence? My answer is that the Muscovy rulers considered themselves to be the successors of the Mongol state and in fact they managed to take over the very lands making up the main part of the Asian empire. The local rulers also understood this logic and were ready to pay the tithe as a tax to Moscow, just as they used to pay "the old tsars" in Saray.

The Great Steppe, a natural environment for nomadic peoples, remained the geographic basis for a number of empires in that space. By their nature, the inhabitants of the steppe are hunters and warriors, they are aggressive, they do not understand borders, and are prone to expansion. It was within this steppe space that large empires arose again and again, waging constant wars for territorial expansion. This has been going on for the last two thousand years (perhaps even longer), although later the steppe peoples in the vast majority changed their way of living to a more or less settled one. But it was the Great Steppe that gave birth to great empires. About two thousand years ago, the Hun Empire was born in this geographical space and expanded like a snowball, so that eventually the Hun hordes invaded Europe and attacked both parts of the Roman Empire. These are the events of the mid-fifth century, when the Huns were led by the famous Attila. In the second half of the first millennium, the Ottoman Empire, or the Turkic Khaganate arose. Its boundaries at the peak of its power quite precisely correspond to the steppe space from China to the borders of modern Ukraine. The border between settled and nomadic cultures along the streams of the Siversky Donets and the Kalmius was relevant in those distant times and became up-to-date during Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

According to the chronology, the Khazar Khaganate was the next empire here, and finally, the Mongol Empire, the largest state in the history of mankind, appeared in the spaces of the Great Steppe. The Russian Empire, the USSR, and the modern Russian Federation are located in the same coordinates. The Northern part of the Eurasian continent remains divided between two civilizations, the European and Russian ones. They treat each other in an unfriendly way.

Ukraine has always stood in the path of the eastern hordes and in most cases fulfilled its mission, to protect itself and Europe from invasion. For this, the ancient rulers of Kiev built counterworks on the territory of modern Ukraine, which are an analogue of the Great Wall in China. It was so long ago that the exact chronological framework of the construction and the builders' names have long been forgotten. Among the people, the folds in the fields received a mythological name, the Serpent's ramparts. The wall, according to the calculations of Ukrainian researchers, has a total length of about 2,250 miles. [14] The hordes usually advanced from the depths of Asia along the steppe roads, reached the South of Ukraine, invaded the territory of the Azov region, reached the Crimea and the mouth of the Dnieper, and then turned north to attack Ukrainian cities and villages. Looting is an important part of nomadic life and the goal of the horde. Here they were awaited by the armies of the Kievan state who used walls and equipped strongholds. The main thing was to prevent the hordes from using their main trump card, an attack with a large mass of cavalry, because in close hand-to-hand combat the chances were even. If the horde decided to continue its journey through the southern steppe in the direction of modern European countries, they were met by other counterworks, e.g. the Trojan ramparts built during the Roman Empire. Colossal resources and the will of the state were needed to build such a powerful defense line. Apparently, it paid off, because the threat from the steppe never disappeared.

It is interesting that despite the existential threat from the East, Ukrainian peasants had certain peaceful relations with the local border nomads; Polovtsy khans considered it an honor to give their daughters in marriage to a Russian prince, but never the other way around. However, from time to time new waves of nomads rose from the depths of the Great Steppe, as nomadic peoples considered

war the only form of communication worthy of them. The Ukrainians repelled the attacks. So, according to the old habit, modern Ukrainians began to call Putin's troops, which invaded Ukraine in 2022, a horde. And this is quite close to the truth, as the path of the modern Russian army in the south of Ukraine literally repeated the invasion routes of classic nomadic hordes.

After the Second World War the borders of the Moscow state actually repeated the ones of the Mongol empire, if you compare Stalin's empire, which *de facto* stretched from China to the Balkans and East Germany, with that of Mongols achieved during Baty's campaign in Europe. This is not a simple coincidence, there is a historical logic here. Muscovy and later, Russia were built on the foundation of the Mongolosphere. Subsequently, Moscow fulfilled the mission assigned to it: after the collapse of the Golden Horde, it gathered the former Horde territories, founding a new empire named "Russia" in the 18th century. Moscow did not just mechanically pick up what had fallen, but adopted the spirit of its great ancestors. It has mastered all that makes it a unique bellicose and aggressive international entity. Rashism is not an accident, it is the result of reincarnation, when the consciousness of Muscovites absorbed the Mongol spirit. And it was not a miracle, everything happened in quite a natural way, when the baton is seamlessly passed from generation to generation. The habit of living in a large empire, as well as the traditions and worldview of the old empire were transferred to the new empire and its child civilization.

There is one controversial point in the hypothesis as for the origins of Russian civilization lying in the Mongolosphere: did the Mongols really create a civilization? Skeptics will say that this nation has never risen to the heights of civilization, but I cannot agree with this, because the types of cultures can be different. Since the time of the great division of labor into crop farming and cattle breeding, there has been a hidden competition: each branch of the peoples developed in its own way and had its own achievements. Crop farmers eventually founded the first widely known civilizations in the Bronze Age, achieved success in architecture, crafts, philosophy and art. Nomads also had their achievements in such spheres as state building and military affairs. The Mongol Empire is the pinnacle of the progress of nomads, its significant achievements have been analyzed in

numerous studies [16]. For a certain time, it, figuratively speaking, put her boot on the throat of many peoples belonging to settled civilizations. War reflects the degree of society development; backward nations have never won strategic battles. The Mongols created a unique state-army, developed victorious battle tactics; had their own writing; circulated paper money; conducted statistical calculations; developed a relay communication system that existed in Russia until the 19th century; had a flexible mind and used the technical achievements of other nations, etc. And most importantly, they mastered the technology of management and proved its effectiveness for some time. The Mongols of that time were not backward, at least when we speak about the peoples of the Steppe, and the Finno-Ugric people perceived them as true natural masters. It should not be assumed that they did not have the strength to make a civilizational push. And as for what kind of civilization was born as a result of the act of fertilization, a good or bad one, then it is appropriate to mention the opinion of S. Huntington: *Civilization in the singular, in short, "lost some of its cachet," and a civilization in the plural sense could in fact be quite uncivilized in the singular sense* [16, p. 41].

Let us draw a conclusion as to the moment of creating Russian civilization. Earlier we have seen the following sequence of events:

Rus and Moscow lands (Zalesye) never formed a naturally unified whole, they are distinct geographical regions, have different natural living conditions, individual political histories, completely different local traditions. The population of these regions was ethnically diverse: on the one hand, there were Ukrainians, as an eastern branch of the Slavs, and on the other, Finno-Ugric tribes that had their own language, customs, and way of life, which were not similar to the Ruskiy tradition;

Rus was a part of European civilization from the beginning, several centuries before Moscow and Muscovy appeared. Ukrainians have always remained Europeans by their anthropology, mentality, way of life, specific foreign relations; and this is exactly what they are fighting for in the bloody battle against modern Russia;

Russian civilization originated in the "body" of the Mongolosphere, which spread its state, administrative, and military traditions to the territory to which the Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples were native. Rus, on the other hand, ideologically resisted

its enemies during the Mongol invasion, because it had a sufficient cultural level to offer spiritual resistance and protect its identity.

Moscow became the spiritual and political center of the new child civilization within the Mongolosphere; it was founded by the Mongols (Hordes) who took care of its development. This city saw a synthesis of the cultural traditions of Mongols, Turks, Finno-Ugric peoples and, partly, Slavs (due to the influence of Orthodoxy);

Rashism is the result of the mentioned synthesis and heredity of Horde traditions, it is organically embedded in the foundations of Russian civilization and continuously transmitted throughout the entire period of the existence of the Moscow-Horde civilization;

The falsification of history and the attempt of Russians to place their roots within Rus cannot change the nature of their civilization, which has only one possible political form of existence, the empire, and its ultimate task (defined as far back as the Mongol times) is to reach “the last sea” (the Atlantic ocean), that is, to absorb the European continent.

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2.3. THE SPIRIT OF RASHISM IN THE SYSTEM OF MOSCOW-HORDE CIVILIZATION

In the previous part of the book, it was established that Muscovy was an organic and integral part of the Golden Horde. This does not only apply to politics or economics, as the outlook of Muscovites was filled with the Horde spirit from the very beginning. They perceived information, reasoned and acted in a way that was characteristic of the Horde. And it was collective consciousness that later gave birth to ideologemes, but not the other way around. The thing that is called rashism in the book is genetically related to the Horde, and this connection should come under a more thorough research.

Before I continue discussing the reincarnation of Genghis Khan's spirit in the Muscovites' collective consciousness, it is necessary to examine the essence of the horde as an extremely important phenomenon and a central link in the Mongol system. Almost everything we face today, that is, in the 21st century, in the episteme of Russian consciousness, contains the primary forms of this steppe phenomenon. A horde is a camp of nomads, a large family, an economic unit and a combat unit. This was a society, in which children were born and grew up, later taking up adult roles. The Horde carries all its traditions, rules of existence, and nomadic spirit. This word has different meanings that depend on the context. It is used in the sense of an army, in the sense of a certain state (then it is written with a capital letter), as a metaphor for Asian power and incomprehensible

essence dangerous for Europeans. When Ukrainians call Putin's army a horde, they use the word in a derogatory sense, as something uncivilized, wild, destructive that is not guided by reason, but by irrational motives of malice, revenge, and violence.

Mongolian society, and after it, Muscovy, were based on many ideas and principles of the Horde. This streak continues to this day. Horde is a managed, integrated team that lives a common life and has a unifying destiny. Individuals obey the community; the whole is always in priority in relation to any element; individualism and selfishness are not supported but punished. This was the primary strength of the clan fighting for survival, and survival could only be achieved collectively, together with others, sometimes even at the cost of an individual's sacrifice. Within the social organism, strict discipline, clearly distributed social roles, and social responsibility flourished. For example, it was impossible to imagine a situation when one unit collected and packed tents and household items to move to new pastures, while another ignored or even sabotaged joint actions. It was only possible to achieve common goals together and in agreement. And as we know, modern Russians are distinguished by two characteristics, forced collectivism and the idea of servicing the state.

Our hypothesis is that the idea of collective service to the state, as a modern incarnation of the horde, does not have a temporal gap and demonstrates an absolute historical continuity from the Mongol period to modern times. No other state of mass consciousness has ever existed in Muscovy and Russia. The Russian society of the 20th century had two windows of opportunities to substitute the collective consciousness paradigm. Here, the events of 1917 are meant, and the era of the so-called *perestroika* during the times of M. Gorbachev and B. Yeltsin. However, the new trends affected the elites, active minorities, and the so-called "ulterior people" did not even have any time to realize the essence of the new opportunities. Then the "windows" closed and everything went back to normal.

The qualities that we see in Ukrainians are completely different from that, as Ukrainians have had an agricultural tradition since Neolithic times, and so they preferred to live on *khutors* (farms), where each family developed its own survival strategy, and the state was never considered a value. Ukrainians are spontaneous anarchists, and it is no coincidence that the largest modern insurgent anarchist

movement flourished in the southern regions of Ukraine in 1917-1921 under the leadership of Ataman Nestor Makhno (1888-1934). Tens of thousands of Ukrainian peasants participated in the armed struggle of the “Greens” under the slogan “LIBERTY OR DEATH” symbolized by embroidered silver on black flags showing skull and crossbones. Russians and Ukrainians are representatives of different civilizations, whose foundations originated several thousand years ago. If Putin had known the real history, and not the one made up by the Kremlin, he would have given it a thorough thinking whether he should attack the lands where Makhno’s spirit still lives.

The second and perhaps the main feature of the horde is unity of leadership and authoritarianism. A Khan has absolute authority, his decision is always final, although he could consult with elders or leading commanders when it comes to military actions. But democracy as an institution is not compatible with the principles of the horde. The Great Khan reached unprecedented power and not only demanded obedience and absolute discipline from the hordes, but in certain situations even his subjects’ public humiliation, as they had to demonstrate their loyalty in this way also. The tradition prevailing in Rus was different: Ukrainians had never bowed (both literally and figuratively) before the powerful, they had a unique tool in their hands balancing the distribution of power, *veche* and the *veche* bell, which was used to summon men to the Maidan in case of urgent need. There were cases when townspeople expelled a prince who had lost public trust.

Civilization principles and traditions live despite the change of eras and external circumstances. The last time the church bell from St. Michael’s Cathedral in Kyiv called the citizens to the square was during the Revolution of Dignity, when Berkut fighters stormed the protestors’ camp in the night of December 10-11, 2013 [1]. In December 2013, people in Kyiv and the majority of Ukrainians, in general refused to trust the ruler, who was actually betraying the nation, and he fled to Moscow in early 2014. This is the way it happened a thousand years ago as well, when the prince fled to the east and could turn to the steppe people (horde) for help, and then lead them to Rus. History moves in a spiral mode, e.g. in 2014 the fugitive president V. Yanukovich fled to Russia, which today is the equivalent of the Horde. Muscovy completely followed the Horde

tradition of absolute power; the Grand Duke, tsar or emperor were also sanctified by the church as God's anointed ones, that is, they were sacralized, as if they were persons of not worldly, but divine origin. No person or institution was to contradict the will of the autocrat. The tradition of undivided authority has existed throughout the centuries of Russia's existence and is still alive today.

Putin's power has approximately the same nature as that of the Great Khan in the Horde: it is rooted in tradition and mass consciousness. The spirit of rashism has not evaporated anywhere, moreover, it is winning in the 21st century. The absolute majority of Russians rather agree with absolute power, the main thing is for the autocrat to be powerful, successful and formidable (for internal and external enemies). If these conditions are fulfilled, then the people are ready to forgive everything else, e.g. criminal offenses, corruption, immoral acts, lies, and the results of the anti-corruption investigations of A. Navalny's team can be considered a telling example. *Putin's Palace. History of World's Largest Bribe*, the film focusing on the construction of Putin's palace on the Black Sea shores became the main event in exposing top Russian officials in corruption, the problem A. Navalny's organization specialized in. Experts estimated the cost of its construction at 1.1 billion euros, the area of the estate totaled the territory of 39 Monaco principalities. The authors of the film demonstrated Byzantine luxury, and spoke of secret dealings and criminal schemes to finance the project [2]. The film had more than 100 million video views on YouTube in the first 10 days, 62% falling upon Russian Internet users! [3] Still, the information bomb did not blow up society. People watched it and immediately forgot about it, because according to the views typical for the mass consciousness of Russians, Putin is a tsar, a Great Khan who is entitled to palaces, concubines and a life worthy of an autocrat of a large country. His rating has not wavered. There only exists one thing Russians will never forgive: defeat, either in politics or in war. This was just the case in the past, when life of a tsar or emperor was shortened after unsuccessful wars, unless the propaganda managed to support the loser's image and pass off defeat as victory.

The Horde is a social, political, and military organization at the same time, or rather, the principles on which they are grounded. Genghis Khan understood this, so his state ingeniously integrated the

Horde principle into its structures and institutions. To other peoples, the Horde seemed like a solid wild mass approaching the doomed cities like a black cloud. As for the black cloud, it is used in the literal sense here, because tens of thousands of horses raised a smoky cloud “to the sky” (it should also be noted here that each warrior in the campaign had several horses). But still, the army was structured, had a better organization than feudal units, i.e. the knightly cavalry of Europe at that time. The Mongols introduced a decimal system to organize and manage the army, dividing its personnel into tens, hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands (*tma*, or darkness). Linear internal structure, clear military discipline, and good communication between commanders gave Mongols an advantage on the battlefield, even when they did not have numerical superiority. But due to skillful tactics, strict discipline, psychological pressure, active and fruitful work with the “fifth column” in the midst of the enemy, they always won. As a result, the Mongols created an empire that still holds the record for its area, 33 million square kilometres (12741371.232 square miles) [4, p. 499].

As we can see, Muscovites had someone to learn from. According to the laws of the empire, they were also recruited into the army of the Great Khan. They went under training and adopted the military traditions and philosophy of the victorious Mongols, although they could not repeat the tactics of their teachers, because they did not lead a nomadic lifestyle. Still, they tried to compensate for this with several techniques that are still helpful today: 1) large scale, 2) insensitivity to military losses; 3) terror against civilians; 4) returning again and again, even if the previous campaigns were not successful. As for the Tatar cavalry, it was invariably part of the Russian armies and was recruited among the Volga and Caucasian peoples; in the First World War it had the informal title, “wild divisions”.

I suggest that the Russian civilization, also called “Ruskaya”, “Orthodox”, or “Eurasian” by Russians themselves, be referred to as “Moscow-Horde civilization”. This is a more accurate and not direct name. Moscow is the heart of this civilization, it is the city where it was born, it is the political center of the empire (and this civilization has only one possible form of political existence, namely, the empire). The Horde is a set of internal principles on which it is built; it is also an indication of its genesis, its mother civilization that

passed the spirit of Genghis Khan on the daughter civilization. The spirit of rashism was born as a result of passing the Horde principles and ideas further, breeding them with some local traditions.

If you look attentively at the psychological features of Russians, you will notice their increased aggressiveness, which is manifested both in international politics and in domestic and family relations. This feature corresponds to the psychological guidelines of steppe nomads. The latter were warriors and hunters, and these occupations require an aggressive attitude towards their victims. Over many generations, the struggle for survival has contributed to selecting the most militant individuals. Nomads cannot stay in the same place for a long time, their livestock destroys the grass layer, they are doomed to migrate and conflict with other hordes for better pastures; that is why military skirmishes are a common state of affairs in the steppe. Agrarians are different by nature, they are tied to their soil, have an idea of the boundary and respect the principle of the border. Nomads simply lack that feature, as their space of existence can be endlessly increased so that there is grass under the horses' hooves and the livestock they graze reproduce. Aggressiveness, as the Freudians argued, is a natural human instinct, but it manifests itself differently depending on the type of economy and way of survival. The agrarians' energy is sublimated through production work and protection of property, while nomads directly unleash their inner aggressiveness in battles or hunting.

The state created by Genghis Khan was a development of the so-called "people-army" phenomenon, and the Mongols well understood its essence: to unite all clans and tribes for greater power and war. What could be a greater goal for nomads than continuous expansion of their own space of existence? Therefore, the state is an instrument of war and the way of realizing the ulterior goals of the nomadic people. Besides, nomads conducted wars for an economic purpose, because they never fully provided themselves with what was necessary for consumption and leading a military lifestyle, especially in the age of iron and more modern weapons. And this meant either robbing settled peoples, or creating a state system that would exist at the expense of regular taxes. The Mongols rose to the level of an empire based on universal laws and rules. It was the collection of taxes that was the cornerstone of their state system,

and they were anxious about replenishing their budget and did not forgive those who tried to avoid this burden.

Muscovy, while existing in the body of the Horde during the life of 10 generations (if we take the life time of one generation as 25 years), absorbed all the “molecules” of the imperial tradition like a child absorbs all the nutrients from its mother’s milk. On the one hand, aggressiveness passed to the Muscovites together with the genes of steppe nomads who became subjects of the new state (it should be stated that Mongols constituted a small minority here, and the majority belonged to Turkic nomadic peoples); on the other hand, it was continuously stimulated by militant politics and the militarization of society. Genghis Khan, his sons and grandsons, and the highest military commanders had the goal of conquering the whole Eurasian continent, which in their imagination was the universe under the Eternal Blue Sky (Tengre), the object of their worship. They certainly used maps of Eurasia that were perhaps given to them by the Chinese or Arabs, and fully understood the great scale of the task. From a military point of view, the top management developed a strategy of conquests in a quite rational and competent way, and planned the next offensive actions; their detachments operated in many directions simultaneously and almost always achieved success. Reaching “the last sea” is what they saw as the strategic meaning of their wars. But the scale of the campaign changed after the empire collapsed into separate uluses, although each of them was an empire in itself.

Muscovy rulers knew the history of the empire and sought to achieve the power it had at the times of its founder; they tried to include the countries that used to be part of it into a single state. And they gained success, although they had to act in other historical epochs, with new weapons and organize the army in a different way. But the militarization of the country, its preparation for wars and waging aggressive wars were constant trends throughout seven centuries. They did not only adopt aggressiveness characteristic for the Mongols, but also a sense of the limitlessness of their possessions: Russians feel cramped in any legally established borders. That is why their rulers always find a reason to move the borders further and enslave peoples who have the misfortune of being their neighbors. The archetypes of war and the eternal

campaign are deeply embedded in the Russians' consciousness, so one of the main criteria they use to evaluate their ruler is to see how much s/he expanded the empire. Putin wants to go down in history as someone who "collected lands". The operation "Crimea is ours" wildly increased his popularity. It should be specified here that it is not correct to consider aggressiveness as a trait of the elite; rather, it is a basic attitude of the broad masses in Russia. In this respect, the upper classes and the lower classes form a monolithic unity.

Aggressiveness of Russians is a household trait, as well. A conflict-ridden life lies in the nature of Russians, no matter what gender they belong to. Russian women quite often either incite men to aggressive actions and fights or take matters into their own hands. This is facilitated by the high level of alcoholism in the country, as alcohol loosens tongues and hands, removes fuses, and facilitates the commission of violent crimes. According to the Russian Regional and Federal Alcohol Markets Studies Center (RRFAMSC), each Russian consumed 12 liters of pure alcohol (equivalent to a 95-degree column) in 2021, which is 3.5 times as much consuming as the data in developed countries showed; 76% of the adult population consumes alcohol every other day; about 400,000 people dies from alcohol abuse per year [5]. Criminal statistics in Russia shows numbers which are among the highest in the world. The crime rate for intentional homicides is 4-5 times as high as the rates in leading European countries, and 70.5% of these crimes are committed in the state of alcohol intoxication [6]. External aggression is quite often accompanied by self-injurious behavior, that is, causing harm to one's own life and health. According to the WHO, Russia is the leader among the European countries in terms of the suicide rate [7].

The origins of aggression lie in instincts and the realm of the unconscious, it is an emotion that can have different functions. If we are talking about self-defense, then aggression becomes benign, but the aggression of Russians, as a rule, acts as a substitute for the ability to peaceful communications. The emotion of aggression in the minds of modern rapists is rationalized as an allegedly beneficial manner of behavior that is useful for achieving one's own goals. Such persons cannot build a strategy of positive collaboration, do not know how to communicate on a mutually beneficial basis, consider it unnecessary for themselves to follow general rules, unless, of

course, they are forced to do so by acute circumstances. Russians believe that it is better to take a dominant position in a dialogue, to speak from the position of strength, to humiliate one's partner and to dictate one's terms. Manifestations of Russian aggression are diverse; in recent years, under the banner of preserving traditional values, homophobia, sexism, and aggressive nationalism have become widespread. This is considered patriotic and good behavior.

Is aggressive behavior a rational strategy? Russians think that it certainly is: let everyone be afraid of us, because we are not like others, and therefore we have the right to attack and scare. However, times have changed. Aggression in the civilized world means rejecting legal norms and holding to deviant behavior patterns, in the international arena as well. This is a crime of aggression, and it surely entails punishment.

Now, let us examine another psychological component of rashism, namely, the idea of a tsar and serfdom (slavery), which co-exist as two sides of a coin. These issues are deeply rooted in the mass consciousness and have a long-lasting effect throughout the existence of the Muscovite-Horde civilization. Muscovites traditionally do not want any other form of government than autocracy, they are ready to put their shoulders to the ruler, and their backs for the whip, because that is what the tsar is for, to reward or punish according to his own will. The "ulterior people" were overtaken by surprise and hidden horror when observing the events taking place in the country during the time of Gorbachev and Yeltsin (the so-called "rampant democracy period"), and immediately calmed down as soon as they understood that Putin would play the role of the tsar they were used to. Now they could feel no fear, and sit on the sofa in front of the TV, and watch the news. It cannot be said that Russia is homogeneous, though, as from 10 to 15 percent of the population think differently. But the "ulterior people" in the 21st century does not differ from the Hordes, who sincerely believed that the khan, the autocrat, should be at the head of the horde. The idea of a formidable and powerful ruler that has survived for seven centuries is rooted in the consciousness of Russians, and it is the main ground for rashism ideology. Russians, led by experienced full-time propagandists, were angry to see the events of the Ukrainian democratic revolutions, which were directed against the usurpation of power in the country (2004-2005,

2013-2014). How dare you rebel against higher authority? And the propagandists literally bathed in their narratives about stability in Russia thanks to their leader, using the example of chaos in Ukraine, where people do not respect the existing government and are in great trouble because of it.

“Tyranophilia” is a fact of mass consciousness in Russia, and the return of popular love for Stalin is its indicator. No exposure of the horrors during Stalin’s rule, of millions of innocent compatriots either repressed or killed will change public opinion no matter how much comprehensive information on the issue may exist. The attitude can be formulated as follows: “return Stalin to us”. This is confirmed by mass polls conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center regarding great figures of all times; each time, and the monitoring has been conducted since 2001, the Russians put the name of Stalin first. In 2021, an international survey was conducted in Russia and Ukraine, where respondents were asked the same question: “Do you agree with the opinion that Stalin was a great leader?”. The data varies significantly by country. In Russia, 56% of respondents generally agreed with the statement, 14% held the opposite point of view (others were undecided or indifferent); in Ukraine the numbers were 16% and 40%, respectively [8]. Love for tyrants also has a reverse side, namely, willingness to tolerate tyranny, to be in a state of slavery *a priori*, not to wish for freedom. Russians (most of them) are generally satisfied with this state of affairs.

If we continue with the logics of the previous paragraphs, two more components of the rashist consciousness emerge, the roots of which are immersed in the Mongolosphere, which are state greatness and a great mission. A large empire, outstanding victories, and the most powerful ruler in the world (according to the version of his compatriots) naturally gave rise to a feeling of grandeur, involvement in this greatness, even if you were a speck of dust somewhere in the far north. Later, this was facilitated by Kremlin propaganda, which was carried out in certain forms and by certain means even when the term “propaganda” itself did not exist. Muscovites were saturated with a sense of grandeur, it became part of their collective consciousness. And indeed, the country grew as if on yeast, and it was precisely in this that people saw the object and indicator of their greatness. Throw a rope around the neck of others, make turn your

enemies into slaves; if you cannot destroy them, then digest them in such a way as to make the captured turn Ruskiye — that was the program for all the years of the empire's existence. To understand this peculiarity, let's ask such a question: What did the average Muscovite feel during the time of the Golden Horde? He lived in the empire, which spread over 2 million miles, which is 12 territories of modern France. Borders were never delineated and fixed, colonial wars were constantly fought, Sarai was the personification of power and greatness. This model of existence was adopted and reproduced by Moscow after gaining independence.

The Mongols did not have a religious or any other purely ideological mission, Genghis Khan ordered to respect all religions equally; the super goal of the Mongols was to conquer the world, to become a dominant nation for all time. Muscovy had a similar goal, but it was adjusted according to real opportunities and the current historical period. Moscow's "imperial dream" included the following goals, namely:

- 1) to "collect Ruskiye lands", and this automatically entailed military conflicts with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine, and this history continues to this day;
- 2) to reach the shores of the Baltic Sea and establish control over the northern region;
- 3) to break through to the "warm seas", master the straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles) and dominate the Mediterranean;
- 4) to subjugate Europe in one way or another or bring it under its control;
- 5) to ignite a world revolution (during the times of the USSR), to create a new communist world with the center Moscow;
- 6) to establish a foothold in the Far East and supplant Japan and China, etc.

All these goals are cannibalistic, because they required endless wars and significant resources that were drained from the economy, and prevented civil society from developing. Not only resources and finances were thrown into the realization of these goals, but millions of people who carried out the will of the autocrat, fought, administered, colonized the so-called national outskirts, etc. passed through the millstones of imperial tasks. They caught the imperial

aggressive fever, were infected with the spirit of rashism based on the priority of state interests, the struggle for greatness and the achievement of imperial goals.

The spirit of rashism also includes a moment of eternal frustration, because the stated goals were not always achieved at the first attempt, the imperial progress ran into the opposition of neighboring nations and the negative reaction of developed countries. The main opponent has always been Europe, it was on its destruction or weakening that the Russian rulers have focused during the last centuries. This situation is determined by geography itself. The northern part of Eurasia, up to the great mountain range in the south, is divided into two civilizations: European and Muscovite-Horde. The latter chose the main enemy to lie in the west. This is what the “ulterior people” in Russia believe, although Europeans have a different opinion about Russia. At the same time, Muscovites in their relations with Europe have always suffered and continue to suffer from feelings of backwardness and humiliation. This is strangely combined with their haughtiness and arrogance in relation to other peoples. There is a cognitive dissonance in the attitude of the average Russian towards Europeans, a specific resentment. A modern rashist can be ultra-patriotic, verbally humiliate Europeans, wear a t-shirt with chauvinistic inscriptions, but if he has money, he will buy a German car, his wife will dress from head to toe in branded items of Western origin, together they will go on a tour about Europe, vacations they will spend in Spain, and their children will go to a British university. Split consciousness has a long history, relations with Europe are of a fundamental and masochistic nature for Russians, though the same cannot be said about Europeans, who are indifferent to Russia as long as it does not pose a threat to them.

The issue of Russia’s confrontation with Europe and with the United States has an interesting psychological context. Russians constantly need to reflect on what is being thought, said, and written about them in the West. For Russian self-awareness and propaganda, this is an extremely important issue, and for Europeans, however strange it may seem, Russia is not interesting at all. Russians want to be constantly noticed, evaluated, and God forbid not ignored. In order to raise their own

self-esteem, they traditionally use individual representatives of the Western world who must publicly demonstrate their love for Russia. According to the script, the propagandists create an informational event that certifies another Russian victory with the implication that another star has understood what country is actually better, more spiritual, or something else in that sense. Such tricks were also done by J. Stalin, who invited left-wing intellectuals to the country (and spared no expense), such as the following Frenchmen: Henri Barbusse, Paul Vaillant-Couturier, Romain Rolland, Albert Mathiez, who made complimentary statements about the USSR. After visiting the USSR in the 1930s, British left-wing intellectuals from the Fabian Society (Herbert Wells, Bernard Shaw, Sydney and Beatrice Webb, and Harold Lasky) claimed that there was no famine in the USSR, and that the inhabitants of the first socialist country lived a happy life [9]. In modern times, V. Putin took another trend, he invites popular film actors and athletes; this cohort included Steven Seagal, Gérard Depardieu, Natalia Oreiro, Roy Jones Jr., etc. [10]. They meet V. Putin in person, receive Russian passports (this is an important propaganda action) and free apartments, their stay is paid for, etc. S. Segal, for example, was actively used for propaganda purposes during the Russian-Ukrainian war; for this, he made a trip to occupied Donetsk in August 2022. After he agreed to become a citizen of Russia, G. Depardieu was presented with two apartments [11]. Such acts warm the soul and pocket of artists or sportsmen who have already lost popularity at home, and for Russians it is an act of symbolic revenge against the West and confirmation of the thesis of the state greatness. But this scheme does not appear to be something new. At one time, it was used by the Russian emperor Nicholas I, who graciously received the French intellectual Marquis de Custine, the latter wishing to collect material for his book about Russia. But the foreigner turned out to be ungrateful, he wrote his famous book [12], where he presented Russia as a totalitarian backward country, a prison, the keys to which are held by the emperor. Nicholas I was furious, and the book was forever banned from being published or imported into the country. G. Depardieu did not treat his new homeland politely either, selling the donated

apartments and leaving for the West; he also answered the question on his possible nostalgia for Russia in the following way: he said he could always spend the night in an old barn and restore memories of the new “motherland”.

Russians clearly have a collective inferiority complex in relation to the successful Western civilization. This quality does not come from the Mongols, who did not have this complex, because they considered themselves to be natural winners. So, when was this complex born?

At the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, a competition between the two civilizational systems began: Europe entered the period of early modernism, the Reformation took place, the Age of Discovery began, book printing appeared, and a general rise in the economy and cultural life was felt against the background of the market relations development and the initial accumulation of capital. Europeans became world leaders, leaving behind earlier centers of civilization: the Arab East, India, and China. European countries started expansion through annexing colonies and creating a system of international division of labor. In the West, everything was moving, changing; progress was accelerating all the time. But what was Muscovy doing at this time? It was on the way of territorial acquisitions, it increased in size and developed extensively. The state did not allow business or farming to exist freely, as the feudal-serf system remained until the second half of the 19th century. The new bourgeois class (merchants, entrepreneurs, breeders) had no political rights and was completely dependent on the government and bureaucracy. Due to continuous wars and expansion of borders, Russia became the owner of unique natural resources, but could not use them efficiently. The country's budget was spent on financing the army and bureaucracy. The result was a fatal state of doomed backwardness that continues to this day. Russians look at the West with envy and hatred and cannot understand why they live much worse than Europeans do. Fantastic theories arise that the “yoke” is to be blamed for everything, because it allegedly delayed the country's development for as many as 300 years; the nature of the Russian pious person does not favor business affairs; climatic conditions are not favorable, and other frank delusion.

The empire, which is cut according to the patterns of the horde, is poorly adapted to the spirit of modernism. Rashism as a system of views, a worldview, and an ideology completely negates progress. Traditional values of which modern Russians are proud do not support social changes, and so, the socio-cultural matrix of their civilization remains unchanged. Russia is late in its development and is forced to copy Western countries every time. This is how Peter I understood the task: to take technical models and institutes in Holland, Sweden, and the German principalities and transfer them to the Russian soil. It did not turn out very well, because the civilizational foundations of society were not subject to revision.

Thus, the phenomenon of psychological inferiority of Russians in relation to the West was born as a result of the former's chronic backwardness and unsuccessful copying the latter. This was also facilitated by limited contacts, and as a result, Russians did not have an accurate idea of Europeans. The Kremlin autocrats pursued a "closed door" policy, when both leaving and entering the country was difficult and required complex bureaucratic procedures, and moreover, very often it was the monarch himself who personally decided these issues. Let's remember another very important fact, that travelling was something only possible for nobility and merchants, because the bulk of the peasants could not even dream of mobility. Due to the closedness of Muscovy and Russia, a foreigner became the object of increased attention and something like an object at an exhibition that everyone present wants to see. An average European, who by some miracle got into the country, could be perceived as an alien.

The "Westernphobia" of Russians was caused by their unequal position in relations with Europe, over which they were extremely emotional. However, they drove themselves into this dead end, because they did not have the opportunity to compete on an equal footing and were forced, figuratively speaking, to look into the mouth of Europeans. Frustration on this matter never left the Russians and, according to A. Herzen, it gave birth to "Slavanism", or "Russianism". He dwelled on the issue in the essay titled *On Westerners and Slavophiles*, which is included in the *My Past and Thoughts* collection: *Slavanism, or Russianism, not as a theory*,

not ns a doctrine, but as a wounded national feeling, as an obscure memory and a true instinct, as antagonism to an exclusively foreign influence, had existed ever since Peter I cut off the first Russian beard. [13].

I do not believe that the offended feelings of the Russian people (for which they themselves are guilty) were the source of rashism, but they fed it all the time. Modern Russian propaganda tries to correct the outdated feeling of humiliation and backwardness. It advertises dubious national achievements, especially in the field of sports, and the world championships and the Olympic Games are presented in the media as military battles, where courageous athletes fight against unjust Russophobic judges and prove the country's greatness. The lack of real achievements is compensated by false criticism of the so-called collective West, outright fakes are used, and real problems are made great play of. The average Russian, who has never been abroad in his life, gets the impression that life is very bad for people everywhere, and that Russia is the best country in the world.

The inferiority complex had deeper roots than comparing oneself with more successful Europeans. Russian society is a slave system, the majority of the population for the first 500 years of its own history was in the state of serfs, they had an owner who could freely sell and buy people like cattle. Serfs were gamed away at cards, children and parents were separated, and corporal punishment was widely practiced. The total price of a person has always been small, it is a consumable for private business and the state. That is why the Russian generals invented, from their point of view, an effective tactical technique, to overwhelm the enemy with the corpses of their own soldiers. This is how G. Zhukov fought in the Second World War, so that the rate of the killed Germans to the killed Russians was one to seven. The marshal sent the infantry ahead of the tanks to protect the equipment in the minefields, and his famous saying was the following: "Women will bring other soldiers to life". This approach was not subject to criticism: in Russia, G. Zhukov is considered almost a saint, because he is "the marshal of victory". This is what is eternal, victory and state greatness are above everything. Nobody cares for the price. During the time of the Moscow tsar, a father had

the right to sell his own child (then buy it back and sell it again). Throughout history, the police enjoyed the right to control and punish citizens beyond any judicial institutions, if the issue concerned “ordinary people”. The sheer illiteracy of the masses is a separate issue for discussion. Did these people have any idea of personal dignity or civil rights? Of course, they did not. Hence the general psychological inferiority, which was compensated in various ways: through domestic acts of aggression, family tyranny of men in relation to women and children, epic drunkenness, readiness to literally drink off the last shirt or commit some heart-breaking demonstrative act. Isn’t this the point where the legend of “the mysterious Russian soul” was born?

The feeling of being offended and humiliated leads Russians to think about the general prevalence of these conditions, so they hate those who have dignity and do not want to share their common fate with them. This is the root cause of the conflict with Ukrainians, who are fighting for their own right to freedom and dignity, have always fought for freedom against dictatorships, and do not want to live in a common state with the Russians. Putin has called Ukraine “anti-Russia” and assured that he would not put up with it [14]. Russians cannot accept the idea that Ukrainians have remained different, despite the long stay of their territories within the Russian Empire. But what is the fundamental difference between these two nations? The Muscovite-Horde civilization is a hierarchy where only one person has complete freedom, and at the lower levels there is complete darkness with respect to human rights. Many Russians sincerely believe that this is their historical advantage, and the idea of freedom is the vice that comes from the West. Hatred of Ukrainians and Ukraine is in the genes of Russians, because any change in this feeling will mean the death of their civilizational foundations. If they change from within, their civilization will be destroyed, and the country will be reformatted on other grounds. Ukrainians reject slave ideas and narratives, and this, from the rashism standpoint, is their main fault; therefore, they are “anti-Russia”.

Deeply rooted in the consciousness of Russians is the metaphor that they supposedly live in a fortress under siege, because everyone around them is against them. In the 19th century Philoso-

pher Vladimir Solovyov drew attention to this circumstance. He reproached the intelligentsia, which did not want to understand the real state of affairs, but invented non-existent dangers. Such Russians sincerely believe that everyone around them has conspired against them and does not want to pay tribute to the greatness of Russia [15]. In recent years, the thesis about Russophobia, which for some unknown reason haunts their country and people, has been actively promoted in Russia. The explanation of Russophobia has a propagandist character in the context of the rashist ideology: “we are a big country, and others don’t like it”, “we don’t kneel before the USA because we have our own dignity”, or even worse, “everyone wants to capture us because they are jealous of our natural riches”. Still, a simpler and more logical explanation never comes to the minds of Russians, though it is found in a Russian proverb with the sense that curses like chickens come home to roost. The conclusion they should make but somehow don’t, is the following: do not threaten others, do not violate the norms of international law and human rules of friendly relations; live peacefully, be tolerant, and you will be treated kindly.

Let’s touch on two more notable features of the Russian mentality: their inclination to lie and ingrained cruelty. **Inclination to lie** is a civilizational trait, it is a feature of communications in Russia. This peculiarity was also noticed by those who belonged to Russian nationalists. For example, the famous Slavophile Ivan Kireyevsky wrote the following: *Unfortunately, it is easy for a Russian person to lie. He regards lying as a generally accepted sin, inevitable, almost not shameful, some kind of external sin arising from the necessity of external relations, which he looks at as some unreasonable force. Then, without thinking, he is ready to give his life for his conviction, endure all the hardships in order not to stain his conscience, and at the same time he lies for a penny, he lies for a glass of wine, he lies out of fear, he lies out of benefit, he lies without benefit. This is how surprisingly ego concepts have developed in the last century and a half. He does not value his external word at all. His word is not his, it is his thing, which he owns by the right of Roman property, that is, he can use it and destroy it without answering to anyone. He does not value even his oath* [16]. Many Russian folk proverbs glorify or justify lies, e.g.: “You will not be full

with the truth”, “What is a lie, if you live well”, “A truthful person is no less harmful than a fool”.

What is a lie in the Russian version? This is a constant testing by the communicator of his dialogue partner, he allegedly checks the object for its adequacy to the Russian communication system. If he believes a lie, then he is a weak and unwise person, if he does not believe it, then one must take him more seriously and look for other methods of deception. In Russia, a person who achieved what he wanted by deception is considered a hero and a cunning winner. Lying, indeed, is an often thing among people, in general; various theories explain its essence, functions and varieties [17]. But the development of European civilization was based on a different principle: it is morally and beneficial not to lie, the truth is better than a lie. Business relations are based on this postulate. Capitalism has proven the effectiveness of transparent relationships and trust as symbolic capital that can be transformed eventually into finance. For example, a verbal contract in the Protestant environment was equivalent to a written agreement and was generally enforced without question. This saved time and money, because it was possible to conclude a reliable verbal agreement. In Russia, everything is different, you can never take Russians' word for anything, under any circumstances, especially in the perspective of long-term relationships and projects. A new party to the relationship may not accept the contracts signed by his predecessor. Such a fate befell Ukrainians, who gave their nuclear weapons to Russians literally just for their kind words regarding respect for sovereignty, inviolability of borders, eternal friendship, etc. The Budapest memorandum of 1994 turned out to be nothing more than a piece of paper. V. Putin says that he did not sign anything of the kind, and he is not going to fulfill the obligations assigned to the country to guarantee the security of Ukraine. And here Ukrainians were reminded of the catchphrase of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815-1895): “Agreements with Russia are not worth the paper they are written on”.

The history of wars between Ukraine and Russia provides striking facts of lies that had sinister consequences. In August 2014, the Ukrainian battalions liberating the Donetsk region were encircled by regular Russian troops who secretly (without any insignia)

crossed the state border and began to play on the separatists' side. The situation became critical, field commanders began to negotiate with Russian officers to exit through the so-called "green corridor". V. Putin, for his part, publicly promised to facilitate this, imitating the independence of the separatist group, over which he supposedly had a purely moral influence. The route and time of the Ukrainian convoy's exit from the encirclement was determined. The Russians allegedly gave guarantees on "the officer's word", but they had raised their firearms in advance and cold-bloodedly shot the column on the march from all sides; the total loss of the personnel exceeded 1,000 soldiers. The Ilovai tragedy is directly related to the issue we are considering. Without a doubt, V. Putin himself gave the order to open fire, and this is the case when lies are a tool to achieve the goal. A methodological mistake was made on the Ukrainian side, because Russians can never be trusted under any circumstances. The moral here is, the honor of an officer is not a category within Russian consciousness. This understanding of the enemy should become part of the communications with Russia, be treated as fundamental truth, it should be explained to cadets at military institutions from the very first day of training.

Putin lies constantly, his every speech is an IPSO (informational and psychological special operation) and lies are an integral part of such operations.

It can be assumed that the constant lying that Putin uses in his statements and writings is a consequence (or part) of a personality disorder. Signs of paranoid consciousness, cluster "A" psychopathy are quite discernable with V. Putin. Robert D. Hare, a specialist in the problem of personality disorders, believes that lying, treachery, and manipulation are the natural talents of psychopaths. They remain indifferent to the prospect of their lie being exposed and being caught red-handed. The American scientist writes: *Many observers have the feeling that psychopaths are not always aware of their lies. Words seem to start a life of their own - a life free from the shackles of knowledge, which is related to the competence of the listener. The psychopath's indifference to the prospect of being caught in a lie is striking: it makes you wonder if they are sane. And yet quite often the listener takes a lie for the truth* [18, p. 68]. We will adhere to the point of view that V. Putin has a sick psyche,

but the point is not his disease, but the reaction of the environment and the masses, as they support the leader's lying discourse as a sign of his unsurpassed cunning and winning strategy. This, in our opinion, corresponds to the socio-psychological foundations of the Moscow-Horde civilization.

The principle of inversion, that is, turning the meaning in the opposite direction, can well be applied to the content of Putin's statements. If he claimed on the night of February 24, 2022, that the goal of launching a special military operation was not in to occupy and annex Ukrainian territories, then one should have understood that this was exactly what he meant, and that capture and annexations were ahead. If he said that civilians would not suffer, then he was ready to completely destroy cities and villages using the tactics of urbocide, like he did during the storming of Aleppo or Grozny. And so it happened. Earlier, V. Putin convinced journalists that "our troops are not on the territory of Ukraine" (2014). Maybe he himself was beginning to believe in Russian propaganda and his own lies? However, a year later he did admit that the success of the operation to seize Crimea was ensured by the armed forces of the Russian Federation. Do the Russians understand that he is lying? Yes, they are not so stupid, as not to understand it. In Europe, such an outright lie by the country's leader would have caused a tsunami of criticism and he would have lost his position, but not in Russia. Every Russian in Putin's place would have done the same thing: if lying leads to victory, then it is righteous. Their leader, according to ordinary Russians, is a real hero, because he can run a game on anyone. This is exactly what we see in all Russian folk tales, where the hero defeats his enemies by using trickery and deception. The lies of public figures and society's reaction to falsehood can be considered one of the criteria of civilization, and here we see the fundamental difference between the Moscow-Horde civilization and the European cultural tradition. We do not know the exact origin of this mental tradition, but here, rather, an Asian trace can be seen. In the East, lies and deception are mostly not considered a crime, but are used as a strategy to achieve success.

Cruelty, in the first place, comes partly from the nomads, and they, indeed, did not know what mercy was; secondly, it is a

derivative product of an endless series of wars that dehumanize society, accustom people to violence, death, mutilation, etc. Maxim Gorky, who was considered a proletarian writer in the USSR, though he himself tried to speak from the standpoint of humanism in his books, was so much impressed by the unheard-of brutalization of the masses during the civil war (1917-1920), that he wrote the essay titled *On the Russian Peasantry* (1922), which was never published in his homeland. He tried to understand the origins of Russian cruelty and came to the conclusion that there was no evolution in Russian cruelty, its forms remain unchanged. He said, *I think that the Russian people are uniquely ... characterized by a special sense of cruelty, cold-blooded and, as it were, testing the limits of human tolerance for pain... In Russian cruelty, you can feel devilish sophistication, there is something subtle, refined in it* [19 with. 17]. This journalistic work was later published in exile under the title *Russian Cruelty*, and it is better not to read it at night, so as not to lose sleep.

Cruelty in Russia is not mitigated by the official religion, which is formally a branch of Christianity, but is actually closer to a militant version of Islam. During the war against Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed himself in the spirit of Islam: everyone who died in the Ukrainian war will go to heaven [20]. Why atone or not atone for sins, if the hierarch made a grand promise? I wonder if he previously agreed his thesis with Saint Peter, who, as everyone knows, holds the keys to heaven and weighs the sins and righteous deeds of every soul?

It was in Ukraine that the dark sides of the Russian soul manifested themselves with full force. The cruelty observed in domestic relations turned into horrors in the occupied Ukrainian communities. Ukrainians were tortured, raped, and shot mainly as a manifestation of the internal aggression of Russian soldiers, and not because of instrumental necessity. The Russians' cruelty was manifested in all the wars they fought throughout history, without exception. During war, social and individual safeguards fall, hidden instincts and emotions burst forth. Maybe, in the Middle Ages, cruelty was the general rule, although even then the stories about the deeds of the Mongols, and then the Muscovites, were impressive. But in modern times human relations continued to be humanized,

and what Russian soldiers did during the storming of Warsaw (1794) caused a shock in Western Europe, so that the episode went down in history as the Massacre of Praga (a suburb of Warsaw). Observers compare it with what the Russians did in Bucha, Kyiv region. More than two hundred years have passed, and still morals and habits have not improved? A. Suvorov, who led Russian punitive forces in Poland, is one of V. Putin's idols [21]. The circle is closed, "eternal rashism" dominates.

To summarize, I would like to say that I have found arguments, which seem convincing to me, to prove the origin of the Moscow-Horde civilization from the Mongolosphere. Rashism as a set of mental traits and facts of mass consciousness was generally inherited from the old civilizational system; in this way, to the "starter package" of rashism we include the following: aggressiveness as a system-creating instruction of individual and collective consciousness; the idea of authoritarianism; euphoria over state greatness; confidence that Russia has its own mission in the world. At the same time, there was a mix with the mentality of local ethnic groups, the result of which are such "cultural" traits as lying in business and lack of trust-based relationships; reclusiveness and fear of foreigners (primarily this applies to Latins, Catholics, Ukrainians, and Europeans, in general); cruelty, as a manifestation of the dark side of consciousness typical for the Hordes and modern Russians; an inferiority complex in relation to Europeans, which is compensated by aggressive or brutal behavior. Rashism existed for a long time as a mental component of Muscovites, later it acquired conceptualization and found its own theoreticians who are still trying to rationalize things firmly immersed in the world of emotions, instincts, and social stereotypes. Rashism is an effective basis of a military-type society, but it is slipping in the context of modernization, it is interfering with Russia's peaceful and productive development.

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CHAPTER 3

THE SPACE OF RASHISM

The *glasnost* specific for the Mikhail Gorbachev epoch lifted the strict censorship restrictions on any ideological manifestations outside the boundaries of official communist doctrine, which were characteristic of the previous Soviet period. This was enough for rashism to start rising from the social underground as a multitude of various ideas, programs, philosophical and religious trends, propaganda and educational practices, etc. Rashism, as it was shown in the previous two chapters, is a natural element of the Moscow-Horde civilization, which has not disappeared, and its socio-cultural core continues to exist. For a long time, both under the Russian emperors and during the Soviet period, aggressive manifestations of rashism had been artificially restrained. Finally, the obstacles disappeared, and the spiritual and physical models of the Russian quasi-religion were revealed to the world. Various spheres of modern Russian life are permeated with rashist ideas, although a coherent canonical ideology has not been fully created yet. This fact makes it necessary to consider individual social areas, or clusters, where rashist ideas are gaining strength in modern Russia.

3.1. THE RISE OF THE IDEOLOGY OF RASHISM WITHIN THE RIGHT-WING RADICAL MOVEMENTS

Right-wing radicals, nationalists, neo-fascists, and neo-Nazis were the first to pick up the eternal postulates of rashism and bring them into the broad public discourse. The new era of open society made it possible for them to exist legally. At first, right-wing radicals actively borrowed foreign forms, paraphernalia, and slogans, but

little by little rashism replaced foreign elements and acquired its own national style. It turns out that eternal fascism and eternal rashism have much in common.

Fascism and Nazism were not born in Russia, but they turned out to be quite close to the mentality of Russians in terms of authoritarianism, xenophobia, imperial greatness, and mass violence. Russian fascism has its own history. More than a million Russians joined the ranks of collaborationists during World War II; Nazi ideology was very popular in Russian units that fought on Hitler's side. To prove the fact that fascism was naturally absorbed by the Russian mentality, let's give the example of "Lokot self-government" (its center was the workers' settlement of Lokot), which encompassed parts of the territories of the Kursk, Bryansk, and Oryol oblasts and was as large as Belgium. In 1941-1953 the territory was successfully governed by Russian collaborators led by Konstantin Voskoboynik and Bronislav Kaminsky. They had their own army (up to 20,000 bayonets), which fought against Soviet partisans. The population as a whole had a positive attitude to the activities of Nazi collaborators [1].

Outside the USSR, separate fascist organizations existed among Russian emigrants in the 1920s and 1940s, the most famous of which was the Russian Fascist Party (RFP), whose leader (RFP Secretary General) was Konstantin Rodzaevsky (1907-1946). He is the author of the well-known book in fascist circles titled *Contemporary Judaisation of the World or the Jewish Question in the 20th Century* (Harbin, 1943), which was published in Russia in 2001 in a collection titled *The Last Will of a Russian Fascist* [2]. In Manchuria, the RFP was popular in emigrant circles. According to K. Rodzaevsky, the number of fascism supporters in Manchuria reached 20,000 in 1935. The party also had affiliates in 26 countries, and the total number of members at the peak of its activity was 30,000. The party published magazines and newspapers, and created special youth and women's units. Russian fascists chose a black military uniform with black belts.

The finale of K. Rodzaevsky's life was quite predictable: after Germany was defeated, he decided to atone for his sins against the USSR, starting negotiations with the NKVD representatives, and wrote the article titled *The Week That Changed the Soul*

in order to publicly renounce his views and assure the Soviet authorities of his loyalty. The RFP leader saw the revival of the rashism spirit in the actions of the Soviet government: he recognized Stalin as a continuation of the monarchical tradition, compared him with Ivan Kalita, interpreted the USSR victory as a revival of Russia's power, in general, and its military traditions, in particular, e.g. he was impressed by the actual return of the old military uniform [3]. K.Rodzaevsky was promised the role of a propagandist in the event of his return to the USSR, and he turned to the Soviet embassy in Beijing; from there, under the guise of a Soviet officer, he was transported to the USSR border, where he was arrested, brought to Lubyanka and later executed by a Moscow court order.

In Moscow during M. Gorbachev's perestroika (reconstruction), the idea of fascism was picked up by the Memory National Patriotic Front. It grew out of a little-known cultural organization called "Memory", which at the beginning of its existence was supposed to care for preserving historical monuments in Russia. However, after 1986, the activity of the "memory" group changed ideologically, and it started receiving more members. The new idea was to create a nationalist platform focusing on fascist ideas; the Jewish threat was chosen as its central issue. The participants believed in the existence of a world Jewish conspiracy against Russia, glorified Stalin and hoped for a quick restoration of the monarchy. In 1987, a number of public actions were held, one of which taking place in Manezhnaya Square in Moscow, got into the columns of newspapers and into television programs. Dmitry Vasilyev became its leader. He dressed in a black uniform reminiscent of SS uniforms, but denied the Nazi origins of his own style; openly positioned himself as a fascist, but denied attachment to Nazism. He also denied anti-Semitism, considering Zionism to be the main enemy. In public, he tried to play the role of a fascist leader, behaved accordingly, spoke slogans in order to create an appropriate aura around him, which did not work very well for several reasons. In the late 1980s, the time of the far right had not yet arrived, because then democratic movements and narratives were popular. D. Vasilyev's character looked quite caricatured, in real life he was a little-known actor of the Moscow Art Theater; he just played his role as a leader, apparently, the way

his teachers told him to behave on stage in front of the audience. D. Vasilyev did not have the external texture to pass himself off as the leader of the Russian people, as he lacked charisma, suitable looks, and demonic appearance. There is a version that the KGB of the USSR was behind the emergence of the NPF “Memory” aiming at discrediting M. Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *democracy*. “Memory” quickly lost popularity, split into several factions, and its leader left the television screens. However, he did not change his views. In 2001, two years before his death, he appealed to V. Putin to build a memorial to the “Jewish-Bolshevik genocide” in Moscow [4].

It was the Memory platform that became a ground for openly discussing rashist ideas combined with fascist and Nazi styles: the idea of abandoning democracy and returning to the monarchical form of government familiar to Russians; the idea of humiliation of Russians within the USSR and the need to revive Great Russia; Russia’s special spiritual mission; the presence of an enemy (global Zionism) to fight against, etc. Many people who took up the banner of Russian fascism and Nazism in the 1990s and following years passed through the ranks and activities of the “Memory”. A prominent place here is taken by Alexander Barkashov, who was an activist of the Memory Party until 1990, and then founded the Russian National Unity movement (RNU), a militarized informal nationalist organization (this movement failed to obtain the state registration).

A. Barkashov and his group are not a theatrical performance for television, here we see all the signs of an extremist right-wing radical organization that aims at seizing power in the country: 1) an attempt to develop its own ideology, 2) an attempt to create a mass disciplined organization that obeys the leader’s will, 3) the desire to have a power bloc and conduct military training of its members, 4) participation in armed conflicts, 5) active contacts with the authorities, special services, the desire to reserve a seat in big politics. A. Barkashov touted the organization by taking part in the events of 1993 in Moscow, when an RNU detachment was among the defenders of the White House, and the media reported a lot about this episode. The RNU members did not hush up their presence in the ranks of Boris Yeltsin’s enemies, they periodically appeared at the entrance and lined up for the cameras of TV operators, chanted, and demonstrated unity and discipline.

At the end of the 1990s, when a socio-political crisis was brewing in Russia, the organization's heyday came. The group grew in numbers, and its members believed to be preparing for an important mission, either a revolution or a coup d'état. The organization had about 1,000 affiliates in 64 regions of Russia, they published propaganda leaflets and newspapers in millions of copies. Their slogan was formulated as follows: "Ruskiy order for Russia". They captured the public demand for order in the country, which was exactly what ordinary citizens wanted in the conditions of default, crime surge and arbitrariness of officials. But then the popularity of RNE, like other neo-fascist and neo-Nazi organizations, fell, because the ideas of rashism were picked up by public politicians and the central government, headed by V. Putin. Internal corruption also played its role, the organization began to earn a lot of money from security services, performing commissioned force actions, arranging provocations during elections, etc. And where money appears together with its unjust distribution, the sense of brotherhood among ordinary party members disappears. However, after the splits, A. Barkashov continued to maintain a certain part of the organization, conducted military and sports schools, e.g., he trained part of the "Donbas rebels", and then the members of the organization took an active part in the events of 2014 in the East of Ukraine. A. Barkashov paid a lot of attention to ideology and claims that he is preparing a new elite for Russia.

A. Barkashov expressed his ideas in a series of articles that he published in the *Ruskiy porjadok* (*Russian Order*) newspaper, and then published a separate collection called "Azbuka russkogo natsionalista" (ABC of a Russian Nationalist) [5]. Although his followers had the external attributes of a fascist organization (a black uniform, a distinctive emblem – a swastika combined with the Star of Bethlehem, – marching in columns with the Russian Empire flags, they tried not to take on the stigma of fascists, let alone Nazis. As true imperialists, they thought about the future of Great Russia, which would absorb various ethnic groups, therefore, radical nationalism could repel non-indigenous and small peoples. They rejected democracy, Western liberalism and European values; state power was seen as "national dictatorship", and obviously, Alexander Barkashov himself would not refuse to take on the burden of a dictator at a

difficult moment in the country's history. A. Barkashov formulated the essence of his movement as Orthodox Russian nationalism, or a special mission of the Russian people before God. The participants of the movement saw modern Russia as a temporarily occupied land – first by communists, and later by liberals.

Right-wing radical ideologies are characterized by mythological discourse, whose main theses more or less coincide in their different branches. The national myth consists in the existence of a real, authentic, and fair Russia in pre-Peter's times. Peter I, according to the Russian nationalists' conclusion, spoiled the idyll that had allegedly existed earlier by welcoming foreigners, poisoning the people with vodka, forcing them to smoke tobacco and forget the good old traditions. Hence the task for the future as seen by nationalists was to save Russia, to make it great and happy again, to defeat the forces of evil (foreigners, in general, or Europeans and Jews, in particular) bringing their foreign orders and values with them. But the mission of Russia was even seen as having higher goals, namely, to save the whole world from spiritlessness, automatism, and atheism. Therefore, such ideologies do not have anything in the that would go beyond the "Third Rome" concept. The same ideas are being discussed in different ways, just as they have been discussed for several hundred years in a row, the only difference lying in the fact that now uch ideas can be expressed freely.

Along with party organizations aiming for power, street informal youth subcultures of an aggressive nature are represented in the cluster of radical nationalism. This movement includes skinheads, football fans, the AUE youth criminal subculture and others providing space for endogenous aggression and the manifestation of immanent cruelty. It can be assumed that ideology itself is not the root cause of street violence, as ideology only expresses ideas that have existed in the Russian collective consciousness for centuries, and the era of freedom that rained upon the Russians only opened the floodgates for transgression. Besides, youth fashion also plays its part here due to similar movements existing in some Western countries, e.g. in Britain, which are taken as an example by teenagers. Still, speaking of the territory of the former USSR, it was only Russia that saw the skinhead movement gain wide popularity and turn into a significant social phenomenon. And this was not by accident, just

as it is not by accident that out of three main branches within the international movement (Nazi skins, Red skins and Trads) it is the first category that has spread in Russia. Russian skinheads are a separate social phenomenon and have received attention from the academic community [6].

So, these are brown, Nazi groups of young people who have declared themselves the cleaners of the city streets. They have a specific appearance – they go along shaven-headed, and wear clothes and shoes best suited for skirmishes and pugilism. Their victims are Roma, or labor migrants from from Central Asia or Caucasus, as well as African and Asian students, etc. Attacks have been reported at young people belonging to other subcultures, e.g. anarchists, or “the greens”. Generally, metal rods are used as weapons, but sometimes even firearms shootings take place. In the early 1990s, “skinnies” attacked individual representatives from the category of “non-white people”, and later cases of organized *pogroms* became more frequent: attacks at hostels where foreigners lived; *pogroms* at the markets where “black” and “narrow-eyed” people traded; raids on metro train carriages (e.g., the “white carriage” mission, when all non-Slavic people were beaten in a row); street *pogroms* at places where outdoor stalls of “foreigners” are located, etc. During such raids, the participation of up to three hundred “skins” was recorded at the same time. Sometimes the raids culminated in murders, although the attackers were focused on beating and maiming their victims. In general, the tactics and activities of the “skins” should be classified as manifestations of terrorism. Anti-Semitism was not inherent in the movement at first, but under the influence of the general atmosphere in the ultra-right environment, “skins” began to carry out actions against synagogues and commit hooliganism at Jewish cemeteries.

The peak of the movement was in the late 1990s – early 2000s, when Russian had several tens of thousands of skinheads: about 5 thousand acted in Moscow, and about 3 thousand acted in St. Petersburg. The movement did not have a unified, vertically organized structure, but existed as dozens and hundreds of separate organizations and groups with their own names and abbreviations. The activity of “skins” can be traced through the statistics of their victims. At the beginning of 2002, all diplomatic missions in

Moscow submitted a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation with reference to threats by skinheads to foreign citizens. In 2001, 17 diplomats and their family members suffered from attacks that were clearly motivated by racism. From 30 to 40 attacks against Africans, students among them, were registered every month [7]. Then a negative trend was observed. According to Alexander Verkhovsky, director of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, *In 2008-2009, when we saw the peak [of skinhead violence], the total number of injured exceeded five hundred people, it was seven hundred or so. In 2014, there were 170 injured. In 2015, we know about 80 injured, so this is actually an incredible decrease, it is not even easy to comprehend* [8]. The war against Ukraine divided the Russian far-right into different camps, some taking part in voluntary formations on the side of the separatists in the South and East. This, obviously, was the reason for the temporary decrease in statistical indicators, as V. Putin's wars certainly absorb such social material.

Ideology is an important component of the skinhead movement, and either its leaders or representatives of other right-wing radical groups wishing to spread their influence on street fighters are trying to implement it. Let's turn to the pamphlet titled *ABC of Slavic Skinheads* written by the apparently legendized author called Salazar. It proclaims an "all-Russian skin ideology" grounded on racism and Nazism, its core lying in defining the enemy: *Skinheads do not like foreigners, moreover, skinheads hate and despise them. This hatred is mainly determined by their racial and national characteristics. But first and foremost, skinheads don't like colored foreigners* [9]. Regarding the methods used by "skins", the following is noted: *Skinheads have many good treatment methods for foreigners and the colored, the best one being STREET TERROR. Conclusion: Race is our religion. And everything that interferes with the development of the GREAT WHITE EUROPEAN RACE must be mercilessly eliminated.* Ideology teaches "skins" to be aggressive: *At any opportunity, a real skinhead must show aggression in relation to a colored foreigner. The degree of aggressive treatment can be different, from street terror to an intelligible explanation to the Untermensch, who he is compared to a white man* [10].

Aleksandr Ivanov-Sukharevsky, leader of the People's National Party (NNP) planned to take the Russian skinheads under his wing. He had an opportunity to communicate closely with the leader of the "Russian Goal" skin group Semyon Tokmakov in 1999, when both were serving a term in prison. A. Ivanov-Sukharevsky preached his own invention to the Skins leader, the invention being Russism (a mix of conspiracy theory, mysticism and fantasy on the alleged spiritual closeness between Hitler and Nicholas II). They bonded and still in prison, wrote a joint letter published in the PNP newspaper *Ya Russkiy (I am Russkiy)* [11]. In ideological terms, from that time on, Russian "skins" started drifting towards Russian historical stylistics, and now they use the symbols of Slavic neo-paganism, e.g. "Slavic runes" and "kolovrat" (an eight-beam rectangular swastika), and carry the black-yellow-white flags of the Russian Empire at public events.

It is not by chance that street wars have declined in recent years. For a long time, the police actually facilitated the actions of the skinheads, because both the former and the latter were struggling for a common cause. If there were no fatalities, the *pogroms* participants were usually released from responsibility. During V. Putin's time, the rules began to change, and repressions against "skins" became more frequent. Another reason is that Russian society no longer considers migrants as competitors for jobs, but as a necessary workforce. But most importantly, the government has opened new areas for transgression, as V. Putin's wars are absorbing the most aggressive elements inside Russia.

In Russia, dozens of nationalist right-wing radical organizations are undergoing splitting or uniting. Their leaders do not seem to understand one important truth: rashist ideology is in demand in the country, but these organizations will continue to be marginal groups and part of the social underground, because the place of Nazi No. 1 in Russia is occupied by V. Putin, and it is only in the government agencies that a person can put into practice their ideas and enjoy life, in general. Those who comprehend this truth can trade their nationalist fervor for big money and an interesting and long life in politics. Many examples of such luck can be given from real life, but it is enough to give just two of them here.

Dmitry Rogozin is a person of Nazi views, and there were times when he did not hide it. In the 1990s, he was a member of various nationalist groups and fought in Transnistria, and in the 2000s, he was among the organizers of the Russian March (which takes place over Russia on November 4 and gathers representatives of dozens of nationalist organizations); gave inspiring speeches and did the Hitler salute at ultra-patriots rallies protesting against the renaming of a Moscow street in honor of the fallen governor of Chechnya Akhmat Kadyrov, etc. But then D. Rogozin thoroughly studied the course of events and realized that to fulfill his ideological potential, he should join a government agency, and in some time, he was elected to the State Duma. Still, to gain such a position is not the ultimate dream for an ambitious nationalist in Russia. V. Putin needs such people; the president naturally trusts nationalists, but only if they agree to work in his team. This is the basic reason why D. Rogozin started receiving various government positions. To begin with, in 2002, he was appointed special representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Kaliningrad region; in 2008, he became representative of the Russian Federation in NATO; in 2011, he took up the post of Deputy Head of Government (Vice Prime Minister); and finally, in 2018, the peak of his career began, when V. Putin appointed D. Rogozin Head of the Roscosmos. D. Rogozin has a PhD in Humanities, but during his work in the government he unexpectedly defended a post-doctoral thesis in engineering. For ordinary mortals, this sounds strange, but on the powerful Olympus, everything is possible. So, though D. Rogozin did not have much special knowledge of technology and cosmonautics, it did not prevent him from gaining the position in Roscocmos, just because V. Putin did not value him for his knowledge: ideological orientation and personal devotion to the leader outweighed D. Rogozin's professional disadvantages.

D. Rogozin was one of those who prepared a hybrid war against Ukraine, because he had connections with the Russian fifth column through the International Congress of Russian Communities (ICRO), which he created back in the first half of the 1990s. In July 2022 Mr. Rogozin was removed from the position of the Head of Roscosmos, but soon found another seat due to

his stable and consistent Nazism. In June 2022, he tweeted the following: *In general, what has grown in Ukraine is an existential threat to the Russian people, Russian history, Russian language and Russian civilization. If we do not put an end to Ukrainians, as our grandfathers should have done but, unfortunately, failed, then our grandchildren will have to die, but put an end to it at an even greater cost. So, let's better get this over with. Once and for all. For the sake of our grandchildren.* The Twitter administration demanded the post to be removed, but D. Rogozin went through the roof and called Twitter “a garbage dump”. He was partially blocked from using the resource, but nonetheless wrote that he did not consider his post to be false [12].

Rashism is a good launching pad to join the powerful. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (1946-2022), who was a member of the Russian State Duma of all convocations until his death (i.e., for 8 terms in a row), was quick to understand it and thus headed the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). During the heyday of democracy in M. Gorbachev's time, in May 1988 he participated in the constituent assembly of the Democratic Union party founded and chaired by Valeriya Novodvorskaya. As a result, he was elected to the Central Coordination Council. However, having a unique political intuition, he understood a fundamental thing: in Russia, it is impossible to make a political career if you promote liberal Western ideas. That is why V. Zhirinovskiy left the Novodvorskaya organization and created the LDPR in 1989. The uniqueness of the party lied in the fact that its name had absolutely nothing in common with its essence, as it is a leader's party based on national populism as a kind of radical nationalism, and so, it is not a democratic one. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was a bright fascist populist, who openly proclaimed ultra-nationalist slogans that other political leaders, including V. Putin himself, could have shared but were afraid to voice in public. But V. Zhirinovskiy was not shy about his outrageous statements and slogans, he tested various radical ideas in the public space, e.g. the restoration of the USSR, accusations against the neighboring states, or his desire “to wash the boots of a Russian soldier in the waters of the Indian Ocean” – nothing was banned for him. Sometimes he was looked upon as a court jester, and sometimes this was quite true to the

fact, as he understood the advantages of his role and actively used the benefits of his position as a gas-bag politician close to the ruling Olympus. In fact, he preached the entire menu of rashism, from the monarchy ideas to the special mission Russia carries out in the world, and from the great empire to the rigidly patriarchal way of life. And the “ulterior people” liked him, supported his party at the elections, so that regularly participated in presidential races and did not leave the TV screens. The pinnacle in his political career probably came in 1993, when the LDPR received 23 percent of votes boasting the best result in voting by party lists. However, the result achieved in 2016 did not look bad either, the LDPR receiving about 13% of votes and ranking third. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s experience proves the fact that rashism is in demand. And though now it is V. Putin and his United Russia party that are the main rashists, national populism still pays dividends in the country where people’s consciousness is permeated with rashist ideology.

The figures of two far-right politicians discussed here are examples of a general pattern: under V. Putin’s rule, marginal rashist ideas and proteges rise from the underground and reach the top in Russia.

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3.2. “INTELLECTUAL” RASHISM

Russia needs its own competitive ideology, and this brings it closer to the USSR and the Third Reich, which could not imagine themselves living independently of ideology. Russia has its own national ideological project, which, as it has been proven earlier in the book, is hundreds of years old. The ideology of rashism in practice is a mixture of various imperial and nationalist ideologies, while the absence of a coherent canonical theory is not an obstacle to the conceptualization of individual ideological positions belonging to the range of “eternal rashism”. Under Putin, the basic ideas of rashism have turned into mainstream ones within the pseudo-intellectual activity in Russia. The state actively supports and finances the development of rashist ideology, so that a leading cluster performing the relevant work has appeared in the Russian socio-humanitarian discourse. It encompasses several dozen analytical centers and academic organizations; conferences, symposia, round tables are held regularly; the activities of intel-

lectual clubs and discussion platforms trying to develop the state Russian ideology are supported. A significant part of the country's historians, political scientists, and sociologists joined the governmental project for opportunistic or personal motives and due to their ideological beliefs.

The leading ideologue in Russia is Putin himself, and it is he who leads the pseudo-intellectual movement in defense of the empire, and Russia's right to dictate its terms to the world and to despise other nations. Russia's history has already seen several periods when the role of leading ideologues was played by autocrats. The emperors did not engage themselves in such issues, but both Lenin and Stalin had the corresponding ambition. Their theoretical works were declared the "immortal" heritage of Marxism and studied at all levels of education; they played the role of guideposts for the Soviet people due to being the grounds for the policy carried out by the ruling party. The USSR leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev did not engage in ideological issues, because the former was essentially an undereducated person and did not know well enough how to express his own thoughts on paper; and the latter was quite realistic as for his intellectual capabilities and therefore let the task be done by professionals, i.e., by staff ideologues. When the top figures of both the party and the state needed to give public speeches, they were written by special groups of experienced speechwriters working for the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Vladimir Putin has allegedly brought back the tradition established by Lenin and Stalin who could themselves write an article and publish it in the *Pravda* newspaper, understanding its ideological effect on the readers. Whether it is V. Putin himself who writes such texts or not (rather, it is done by a group of speechwriters), he does set the direction of the narratives, and they do reflect his domestic and foreign policy.

V. Putin works, first of all, on the historical front of the hybrid war, because, in his opinion, history should explain the logic of current events. He occasionally turns to the young audience on television with his ideas about historical events. In front of a small group of schoolchildren or young people, the Kremlin dictator teaches them the rashist doctrine of Russian history, guided by the well-known thesis: who interprets history, controls the present

and the future. To use historical knowledge or to conceptualize the past facts and events is a rather difficult task, but V. Putin is never bothered by this: he vulgarizes history, emasculates factual material and distorts contexts, draws illogical conclusions, irrevocably replaces concepts in order to prove Russia's right to be a great empire and take a special place in the world. But why does he copy Lenin and Stalin? V. Putin, besides wanting to rise to their level, well understands the magic of the leader's text, and comprehends the fact that the strength of an ideological text does not lie at the scientific level or logical argumentation, but rather in the author's status. If three-quarters of the population believe in Putin's guiding light, then the text will be perceived uncritically by the majority of the audience, and full-time propagandists will additionally lay out and convey his theses to the mass audience.

In January 2012, V. Putin published a rather broad conceptual article on the national question in Russia. In it, the author followed the Stalinist tradition, because "the leader of all the proletariats in the world" was considered to be a profound theoretician in the national question by other party members, so it was not by accident that after the October coup Lenin instructed him to take care of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs. As for V. Putin reasons to start theorizing, they were of quite a practical nature: his election campaign for a third (illegal) presidential term was approaching, so he decided to present his vision of building an imperial nation. The text of the article presented a great number of innovations, which had been obviously worked out during the four years of his premiership: 1) the concept of a "historical state", 2) Russia as a multi-ethnic civilization, 3) a state-civilization, 4) the Russian people as a state-maker. He had to demonstrate Russia's citizens an attractive model of the internal structure of the empire, which would suit the vast majority of the population, including representatives of the titular ethnic group, the population of national republics, ethnic diasporas, etc. He opposed the Russkiy national state, because in this case the imperial project would be called into question; therefore, he suggested a balance to his voters: Russkiye are the leading ethnic group, others just have civil rights: *We need to build such a model of the state, a civilized community with such a structure, which would be absolutely*

equally attractive and harmonious for everyone who considers Russia to be their Motherland [1]. The article does not say a single word about Russia's relations with Ukraine, but the concept of the "historical Russia", which the president is supposed to build, contains an alarming note, because within V. Putin's meaning, it is not limited by the borders of the modern state, but also includes those lands that Russia seized at the end of the 18th century, including the majority of the territories of modern Ukraine.

What theories make up the basis for the concept of "historical Russia" and the state-civilization? In part, this can be seen in the text itself: the author, for example, quotes his favorite émigré philosopher Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954), to whose works he refers in many of his speeches. Why Ilyin? The philosopher was a supporter of fascism and an uncompromising monarchist, interpreting the monarchy as the eternal form of existence of the Russian state; substantiated the concept of an authoritarian Orthodox state; raised the Ruskiy soldier on the shield of virtue, saying that soldiers were forced to do evil in order to establish good; and criticized Tolstoyism and any republican or democratic manifestations. Why was he annoyed by the peace-making ideas of Count Leo Tolstoy? Ivan Ilyin was against the philosophy of forgiveness, being a supporter of using violence for the triumph of good (he understood the latter as the victory of "holy Russia"). He, as befits a true rashist, privatized God, saying that He *a priori* took sides with "the God-bearer nation" [2]. But why did he like fascists? Let us read his text attentively: *During the onset of leftist chaos and leftist totalitarianism, this was a healthy, necessary and inevitable phenomenon. Such concentration will be carried out in the future as well, even in the most democratic states: in times of national danger, the healthy forces of the people will always be concentrated in the protective-dictatorial direction. It was like this in ancient Rome, it happened like this in new Europe, and it will be like this in the future* [3]. Today, a real cult of the philosopher has arisen in Russia: monuments are erected to him, complete collections of his works are published, he is cited and studied at schools and universities, his books are considered mandatory reading in the first circles [4]. We are witnessing the process when ideologues of aggressive rashism move from the margins and turn into leaders of public opinion

(such examples are numerous). I. Ilyin's works have everything that V. Putin needs to assert his own dictatorship and plan aggressive wars under the guise of the Great Russia idea and supposedly natural Ruskiye's imperial rights. This is the secret of the name and works of the forgotten philosopher coming out of the darkness and into the world.

Beyond Putin's text on the national question, one iconic figure is left unmentioned, namely, Aleksandr Dugin, who is assigned the role of Rasputin in the modern system of Russian power. All the civilizational references in V. Putin's text are the ideas of Dugin himself, but as he has not earned a very good reputation in Russia, he is not often quoted directly, though the geopolitical and civilizational narratives of this scandalous ideologue are used, V. Putin being no exception here. A. Dugin is a representative of the rashism ideology and the exponent of far-right social sentiments. He is Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences, was a professor at Moscow State University (until 2015), and finally, is gifted with a sharp mind, and as such, he represents the scientific and pseudo-intellectual wing of rashism. In 1988, he appeared in public as a member of the already mentioned Memory Society, and later participated in various nationalist projects; together with the writer Eduard Limonov, he founded the National Bolshevik Party (NBP), mixing ultra-right and ultra-left ideas; eventually, he initiated his own project, the Eurasian movement. In 1997, he published his book titled *Fundamentals of Geopolitics* [5], in which the world is presented as an arena of struggle between land and sea civilizations, that is, the Eurasian world, led by Russia, and the Atlantic world, led by the United States. These worlds have fundamental differences in the worldview and ideology: in mainland Eurasian states, the government is usually authoritarian, and the public system is collective; democracy, individualism and entrepreneurship are characteristic of the Atlantic world. Speaking of independent Ukraine, A. Dugin states that it creates a big problem for Russia: *The sovereignty of Ukraine represents such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that, basically, it can easily provoke a military conflict* [5, p. 199]. A. Dugin is fond of esotericism, conspiracies, and racial ideas, writes about the struggle of white peoples against "Semites, Jews, and Saracens", thus gener-

ally corresponding to the Kremlin worldview; he is popular among security forces, imperialists, and right-wing politicians [6]. His connections with the authorities remain in the shadows, but the degree of his influence on the Kremlin expansionist policy is still widely discussed [7].

A. Dugin's ideas about Ukrainians and Ukraine are absolutely radical: he demands that the former should be killed, and the latter should be destroyed and annexed by Russia. Not long ago, this was considered utmost extremism even by Russian standards (namely, A. Dugin was expelled from Moscow State University for calling to murder Ukrainians), until V. Putin began to put ominous slogans into practice. In 2014, A. Dugin actively participated in the propaganda of "Novorossiia", called for the seizure of Ukrainian territories. In 2016-2017, he worked as the editor-in-chief at the Tsargrad TV channel owned by the "Orthodox businessman" Konstantin Malofeev, who financed separatist movements in the Donbas. As part of the International Eurasian Movement, A. Dugin and his supporters dwelled on the issue of network warfare. They announced their readiness to create a Eurasian social network that could play a key role in a hybrid war to capture the territories of the former USSR [8]. A. Dugin also developed another important idea appearing in V. Putin's texts: Russia is a separate state-civilization; therefore, it does not belong to the Western world, but must develop on the basis of its own values and traditions. It has already been noted that civilizationism in Russia has turned into the equivalent of Marxism-Leninism, and not least due to A. Dugin's work and propaganda of his views. His ideas are actively used by right-wing radical and nationalist figures. Thus, V. Zhirinovskiy initiated the creation of the Institute of World Civilizations in Moscow; in 2022, it was renamed the University of World Civilizations named after V. V. Zhirinovskiy. The idea of a Eurasian civilization represented by the Russian state has organically entered the socio-humanitarian discourse of modern Russia. All this originated from the writings of the flamboyant professor, who raised the ideology of rashism to a new pseudoscientific level. However, I can agree with the idea of Russia being a separate civilization with the only exception that Ukraine does not belong to this cultural space.

In July 2022, V. Putin's article *On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians* was published, which can be considered as a historical and theoretical justification for waging an aggressive war against Ukraine. The main conclusion the article made was that Ukraine has no historical right to exist outside the borders of Great Russia, because allegedly, Ukraine was artificially formed on the territory of the so-called "historical Russia" by the evil intention of the Bolsheviks, in general, and V. Lenin, in particular, and this mistake should be corrected. However, this idea can only be observed implicitly, while a typical pseudo-intellectual discourse remains on the surface. V. Putin makes a retrospective journey into distant history using the anti-historical scheme suggested by Nikolay Karamzin, where Kyiv is the cradle of the "eternal" Russia. It is not worth wasting time to refute the outright delusion and falsification of historical facts carried out from the position of imperialist discrimination. V. Putin sees the main tragedy of "historical Russia" in the events of 1922, when the USSR was formed as a federal country, where all republics had equal constitutional rights and were entitled to withdraw as soon as they wish: *Thus, in the foundation of our statehood, the most dangerous slow-acting mine was laid. It exploded as soon as the safety mechanism disappeared, i.e. the leading role of the CPSU, which itself ultimately collapsed from within* [9]. V. Putin believes that Russia was robbed because historical Russian lands were given to the republics. In fact, he goes back a hundred years, when the peoples' right to self-determination was actively discussed, and tries to refute the ideas advocated by Woodrow Wilson, Vladimir Lenin, and many other renowned politicians. Under the banner of the peoples' right to self-determination decolonization took place in the 20th century giving birth to more than a hundred countries that are now the UN member states. The UN General Assembly published resolution 61/295 on September 13, 2007 on the issue guaranteeing this right to indigenous peoples, but the situation as it is very much dissatisfies V. Putin, causing him to write the following: let them (peoples) leave but only carrying what they came with. Which means, if the peoples did not have a state before, then they are not entitled to have one, now. V. Putin's attitude proves him to be an imperialist unwilling to respect the peoples' desire to be independent; the

Kremlin tyrant clings to the archaic traditions of the colonial era, which has already faded into oblivion.

In the article, V. Putin tried to substantiate his thesis that Russians and Ukrainians are one people. He begins his text with such a dogmatic statement, and then tries to build an evidence base by arbitrarily selecting historical facts. He used to dwell on “fraternal nations” before 2022, but on the eve of invading Ukraine, he decided that the thesis of a common people would give him more rights to expand Russia territory. His perverted logics is as follows: if we are one people, then Kremlin is entitled to punish the smaller part of the state wishing to lead its own independent life, and the world should not interfere in “intrafamilial affairs”. Obviously, V. Putin has not read the works by Joseph Stalin, his great predecessor in matters of national relations, who, a hundred years ago, spoke quite unambiguously in favour of the existence of the Ukrainian people, even regardless of the existence or absence of the Ukrainian state. He argued with party members as for the criteria determining a nation (i.e. an ethnos, a people) and did not consider the presence of a separate state to be necessary to speak of a nation. Stalin cited the existence of the Ukrainian ethnic group as an example supporting his position in the issue and reproached his opponents: *Under your scheme, it would have to be argued that <...> Ukrainians were not a nation when Ukraine was part of Tsarist Russia, they only became a nation after the separation from Soviet Russia under the Central Council and Hetman Skoropadsky, but they again ceased to be a nation after uniting the Ukrainian Soviet Republic with other Soviet republics into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* [10, p. 334]. That is, for Joseph Stalin, the existence of the Ukrainian people is a self-evident circumstance, and he does not connect it in any way with any other people existing nearby, but a hundred years later, his alleged follower Vladimir Putin decided to deny this position.

In fact, according to T. Snyder, V. Putin uses genocidal vocabulary because he denies Ukrainians the very right to exist. This position can be seen in the fact that V. Putin prepared a whole set of various accusations against Ukrainian leadership, the main being Nazism he manages to find in Ukraine (although Russian propaganda failed to specify this thesis and has given zero real examples

of Nazism), and the main “fault” of Ukraine lying in the fact that Kyiv cooperates with the USA and NATO, thus developing “the anti-Russia project”. The conclusion contained an undisguised threat implemented six months later: *And we will never allow our historical territories and people who living there and are close to us to be used against Russia. And I want to say to those who will make such an attempt, that in this way they will destroy their own country.*

Vladislav Surkov has long been Kremlin’s intellectual force. He held various high government positions, and in recent years was entrusted with the supervision of the “Ukrainian direction”, that is, he developed plans for hybrid aggression. Georgy Pocheptsov gives a lengthy and eloquent description of this person: *Surkov is recognized by everyone as the main designer of the hybrid war against Ukraine. He is not only well-educated, but is educated in the modern way, that is, he is familiar with the most modern theories, and not only social and political ones, but also those developed in natural sciences, especially in the part where they form a synthesis with the social sciences and, as a whole, with the humanitarian complex of sciences. I speak about a science which does not even have an established name. It is called differently in different countries and schools of thought, e.g.: American scholars know it under the names of “nonlinear dynamics”, “chaos theory”, or “complexity theory”; Ilya Prigogine calls it “the theory of dissipative structures”; H. Haken and J. Kelso call it “synergetics”; Niklas Luhmann calls it “a systems theory”; Alvin Toffler calls it “the third wave”, etc. V. Surkov writes his artistic texts under the pseudonym N. Dubovitsky. It was in the literary text that he used the term “the first non-linear war” as one of the designations of the hybrid war. V. Surkov likes to quote new postmodernist terms that have just been rendered into Russian: “narrative collapse”, “the impossibility of truth”, “simulacra”, etc. But in the very next moment he would dwell on his despise towards relativism and love for conservatism, and then recite Allen Ginsberg’s “Sunflower Sutra” by heart in English [11]. This characteristic gives an idea of why V. Putin was benignant to him for a long time (due to the failure of the hybrid war against Ukraine and financial abuses, Surkov lost the position of*

assistant to the president in 2020). V. Putin gravitates towards pseudo-intellectualism, he himself is an undereducated person with limited intelligence, and as often happens, he sees some magic in complex theories, perhaps something akin to the tambourine of Siberian shamans, to whom he also has a fondness. V. Surkov has enriched the intellectual space of rashism with several phrases that are well-known nowadays, including such concepts as “sovereign democracy”, “Putin’s long rule”, “chaos unpacking”, “contact geopolitics” (meaning “war”), etc. He considered Ukrainism a “disorder of consciousness” and advocated “forcing Ukrainians to fraternal relations”. V. Surkov knew exactly what V. Putin wanted and what he liked, and tried to satisfy the Chief’s tastes.

One of Surkov’s main ideas is the theory of controlled chaos. The basis of the discourse is made up by physical and mathematical theories created by the famous Nobel laureates Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932), Ilya Prigogine (1917-2003), and Murray Gell-Mann (1929-2019) within the framework of thermodynamics, chaos theory, and nonlinear dynamics. A real alarm happened in Russian intellectual circles after one publication by the American diplomat and political scientist Steven Mann, who examined social change through a moment of critical complexity, when a new social order is born out of temporary chaos. S. Mann recommended exploiting the critical complexity in such emergency situations, as the one present in Iraq at the time of the fall of the Hussein regime [12]. Perhaps, the American political scientist could not expect to become the most quoted author (on the subject of chaos) in Russia, and his texts to be perceived as revelations at the level no lower than the head of the Pentagon or the CIA. In Moscow, the idea arose that the USA was preparing a new weapon of mass destruction, and gave it the name of “controlled chaos”. Among the Russian political scientists involved in security issues, literally everyone made comments on this topic [13]. V. Surkov apparently managed to convince V. Putin that there was something very important and magical there, and gradually the latter started quite often using the word “chaos” in various contexts; accordingly, other Kremlin figures followed the suit and started using the “fashionable word”.

Let us examine the statistics on the use of the word “chaos” on the Kremlin official portal www.kremlin.ru. The search

has given the following result: 249 mentions of the word as of 15 January 2022. On doing the same search on Sozd.duma.gov.ru, the official website for the State Duma containing discussions of draft laws, I have received 331 mentions of the word “chaos”. According to the results of the content analysis of the narratives published on the www.kremlin.ru website, V. Putin has only used the word “chaos” 48 times when giving official speeches and interviews to journalists over the years of his long reign. Besides, certain patterns are observed: during his the first term it happened only twice, and V. Putin did not try to generalize or conceptualize it, but in his second term there were five cases of using the word, then there came silence on the topic as Dmitry Medvedev became president; during 2012-2018 V. Putin used the word 27 times and, finally, since the beginning of the current term, he has used it 14 times.

All cases of V. Putin using the word “chaos” can be divided into several semantic clusters:

- Cases when it is necessary to emphasize the fact that it was V. Putin who ended the chaos of the 1990s and put the country back on the straight and narrow path; also cases of his intimidating the people with the possible chaos, which can return to the country if the political regime changes, or the government does not restrain the insidious actions of the collective West.
- To characterize the situation in the countries of the world where protest movements have started, civil conflicts have arisen and the big players are struggling to re-divide the spheres of influence (North Africa, Libya, Syria, Iraq, the Middle East, Ukraine).
- In the context of anti-American propaganda, because the chaos is allegedly caused by the intervention of the United States and its attempts to block the “peacemaking process” carried out by Russia.
- Chaos as a world phenomenon, the concept of controlled chaos.
- In cases where V. Putin transparently hints: let’s negotiate, let’s share the spheres of influence, and then Russia will quickly restore order in its own area of responsibility.

Already after being dismissed from his official position and becoming a little loose in his statements, Surkov himself published

the article *Where has the chaos gone? Unpacking stability*. In it, he expressed his anxiety about the situation in Russia, when after the purges and imprisonment of oppositionists, peace finally reigned in the country: *the Russian system of power stopped the avalanche of social chaos...*, but low rankers hid in their shells, moved to some parallel dimensions, found their loopholes, and their *silence became an alternative ideology*. So, what was the problem? Surkov argued his anxiety with theses of a scientific-like nature: according to the second law of thermodynamics, chaos does not disappear anywhere but accumulates, therefore, finishing the author's chain of logics, later it may shake so much that it will demolish the roof and walls of the empire. Coming to such a conclusion, Putin's former adviser, looking into the future and wanting to prevent an internal crisis, points to a "rational" way out, i.e., to sow chaos around the perimeter of Russia in such a way that the surplus of energy and that of internal chaos spills out. He also dwells on an alternative, it being an attempt to open the closed system: *The fact that, in theory, entropy has the property of increasing precisely in closed systems, seems to suggest a simple solution to the problem: to open the system, "let the steam off", and then chaos will retreat*. However, he denies this alternative for Russia, because it can be extremely costly to do experiments with liberalization. That is why the traditional imperial way remains the best one: *Band together your people + divide others = you will rule both. Discharge of internal tension ... through external expansion. The Romans did it. All empires do this. Over the centuries, the Russian state ... has been preserved exclusively due to the relentless pursuit beyond its own borders. It has long since unlearned, and most likely, it has never really known how, to survive in other ways. For Russia, constant expansion is not just one of the ideas, but a genuine existential aspect of our historical existence [14]*. Once again, here an ideological technique is used, when the truth is not the result of a search, but quite the opposite: discourse is needed in order to fix the main thesis. And the main thesis here is grounded on the fact that Surkov was informed about the oncoming start of the war against Ukraine, and all this talk about "unpacking the chaos" was only an attempt to justify V. Putin's criminal intentions. So,

V. Surkov ends the article with an ominous pseudo-intellectual conclusion: Russia will expand, because this is physics.

Even the involvement of fashionable research concepts or real scientific theories does not bring any modernity to the ideology of rashism, because it cannot, in principle, go beyond the boundaries of the vicious circle established hundreds of years ago. A person can live in a totalitarian system, reject Western values and principles of international law, worship a tyrant and curse the West and Ukraine, but no one has yet succeeded, and will not ever succeed, in scientifically proving the justice of these provisions. Ideology remains an illusory form of consciousness, and it differs from scientific research in the fact that the answers to questions posed by ideology are already implicitly present in tasks. The freedom of activity here only consists in finding one more proof of what already exists in the collective consciousness, or to bring the ideologeme under some truly scientific theory by using a cunning intellectual trick. Therefore, science does not befriend ideology, and pseudo-intellectualism is a sufficient information base for the needs of mass propaganda in a country that lives on stereotypes typical for the Middle Ages.

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3.3. THE VALUE DISCOURSE OF RASHISM

Examining the “intellectual” lacuna of rashism in the axiological aspect, it is apparent that each ideology fights against competing systems in the field of values, because values are the core of a worldview and, even more broadly, of culture. Ideological struggle

is fundamentally a struggle for values, each ideology is doomed to defend its inherent value positions against other ideological systems representing alternative meanings. Rashism existed within the framework of irrelevant ideological systems for a long time, and it was only in Putin's epoch that it began to "breathe freely" without internal contradictions, shedding the shell of worldview systems not inherent in the Moscow-Horde civilization.

In totalitarian societies, significant differences exist between two sets of values: the first one is established by the dominant ideology and supported by the ruling elite (at least, on paper, officially), and the second one is the "popular version" (values hewed to by the "ulterior people"). The first type refers to normative, or ascribed values, while the second type refers to social values, which vary depending on the social group, education of its members, religion, or occupation. The assigned values are formed by ideologues proclaiming utopian guidelines that must be implemented in a certain model of the social system. The first-row values can be spelled out in party programs and government documents, social values are usually born from the practical experience of broader population, and thus correspond to living conditions in the country and its people's traditional worldview benchmarks. They are not normally recorded in formal documents, unless sociologists measure their real prevalence in society and reveal it in their papers. In a totalitarian society, the propaganda function of values becomes a noticeable phenomenon designed to carry normative model values into the realm of public opinion, the main goal of the process being to change the mass consciousness in accordance with the meanings set by the ideology. The effectiveness of such practices used in different periods and in different countries has varied in a wide range of values.

History is replete with examples of very fast changes in the axiomatics of society, for example, after Hitler came to power in Germany. People in Europe quite sincerely (in the vast majority of cases) accepted Nazi racial values after just some years of intensive propaganda by the apparatus headed by Goebbels. Obviously, internal reasons for this process also existed, because German nationalism and anti-Semitism had been known even before the Nazi came to power. In the USSR, the ideals of

communism were planted for an even longer period, compared to the time of the Nazism propaganda; an attempt was made to develop and promote the so-called “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism”; and propaganda of Soviet patriotism was carried out, but the end of totalitarianism was still marked by a devastating value crisis. Did the reason for this crisis lie in the fact that the peoples of the USSR had not been ready to accept the axiomatics of communism? Or perhaps the reason was that not a single representative of the elite comprehended what the “ulterior people” really wanted? Somehow, after the collapse of the USSR, it turned out that the Russians had completely different ideological guidelines if compared to other peoples. Russians cling to their ideal of an empire, while dozens of other peoples created a new ideal, that of national states and independent.

For a short historical period, ideological differences were reconciled by the promotion of European values. Even at the end of the communist epoch, the phrase “universal values” began to circulate in the official Soviet discourse. In fact, it was a euphemism for Western values, which after the Second World War began their victorious march and finally won a landslide victory after the end of the Cold War. The central value position within the framework of “universal values” was declared to be human life and welfare, as well as other humanistic values. To a certain extent, it competed with the communist axiological system, bringing to the top such value as collectivism, its theoretical ground, i.e. Marxism-Leninism philosophy, and such key notions as the state with the dictatorship of the proletariat (later, the words “of all the people” were added to this title), the Communist Party, Soviet patriotism, communist symbolism, etc. Universal values in a certain way softened (humanized) the official ideological doctrine. At the same time, a significant gap between the normative and social value discourses continued to exist and was constantly increasing, and at the end of the 1980s it finally reached a critical value.

Consumer fever gripped the population of the USSR in the last years of its existence. The masses sought to consume and fought heroically against the so-called “scarcity” in the field of consumer goods; the people sought to be entertained and looked with envy at the West; young people preferred to keep up with

world fashion, listen to Western music, look through the cracks of the “iron curtain”. These were not the values that the ruling party tried to inculcate through the system of ideological work, propaganda, and activities of controlled youth organizations. Cognitive dissonance grew in the heads of the Soviet people, and when suddenly everything was resolved due to the collapse of the communist system.

European values promoted by the new elites had an important new feature in them: they were based on the ideas of liberalism and did not have the imperative force of totalitarian guidelines, that is, they did not significantly affect the consciousness of the “ulterior people”, who continued to live their usual lives without analysing any axiomatic changes. Survival values were the ones spreading among the masses, because the colossal economic crisis forced the population to look for resources to adapt to market conditions. However, a new historical epoch was approaching and carrying with it a new array of ideological norms.

The turn Russia made to the ideology of rashism, the country’s fascization enlarged the political agenda to include the issue of reformatting the axiological discourse. The ideological turnaround was personally led by V. Putin, and the first thing he started with was to challenge the West in the traditional imperial manner. His speech given at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 had several hints on the beginning of a new Cold War. V. Putin was formally the second person in the state for four years (2008-2012), although he held the threads of major politics in his hands, so it should not be doubted that it was he who directed the aggression against Georgia in August 2008. Finally, in 2012, once again becoming the Kremlin full master, he began to shape the ideological agenda using the site of the “Valdai club”, i.e., the most representative gathering of Russian intellectuals close to the Russian establishment, prominent politicians, and scientific experts loyal to the Kremlin. The club is a large-scale project positioned as an international discussion club, since 2004 holding annual sessions in various cities of the Russian Federation (most often in Sochi and Moscow), and initiating various regional projects under its auspices. It is declared that the Club is a public initiative, but there is no doubt that it was created for political

reasons and is financed from the state's pocket. Putin regularly uses this platform to announce program ideas.

In 2013, which was the last “peaceful” year, V. Putin exclusively dedicated his speech to ideological topics with an emphasis on the values and identity of Russia and its citizens. He suddenly claimed the world to become tougher, not only facing economic and informational competition, but also intensifying military and political situation (obviously, he already knew something that others did not understand). The stability of society would depend on finding and strengthening national identity, which had always been fundamental for Russia, he said. V. Putin pointed out that the expectations for of the birth of a new ideology after 1991 did not justify themselves, while the state and the intellectual elite were even afraid to touch this topic, considering the negative experience of the previous times. Therefore, the leader personally took up the formulation of the new Russian ideology. It should be noted that it took Mussolini 10 years to accomplish such a task: Duce wrote that the fascist movement began without any formalized ideas, and only in 1932 did the “Doctrine of Fascism” see the light of day as a detailed ideological document [1]. Now it was V. Putin's turn to reveal his secret thoughts. So, the Russian autocrat said that Russia had always sought ideological sovereignty, he criticized the West for its departure from old principles and for the decline of morality: *Many Euro-Atlantic countries have actually gone down the path of abandoning their roots, including the Christian values that form the basis of Western civilization. Moral principles and any traditional identity are denied: national, cultural, religious or even sexual ones. A policy is being pursued that puts a large family and a same-sex partnership, belief in God and belief in Satan, on the same level* [2]. The country's leader criticized the policy of multiculturalism, the aggressive imposition of Western ideology, and the attempt to solve important problems without inviting Russia to participate. He reminded the listeners that during the Vienna Congress of 1815 and the Yalta Agreements of 1945, Russia had been present at the negotiating table, and this had ensured a lasting peace based on nobility and justice, but the Treaty of Versailles had taken place without Russia, and therefore peace in Europe had collapsed.

All this information suggests a conclusion: Russia was breaking with the valuable tradition of Western civilization, which had gone down a dangerous path. *We need to return to Russian traditions*, V. Putin insisted, referring to a conservative philosopher of the 19th century, Konstantin Leontyev, who proclaimed Russia a state-civilisation united by the Ruskiy people, Ruskiy language, Ruskiy culture, and the Russian Orthodox Church. According to V. Putin, identity should not be built fragmentarily, but based on the experience of the entire history of Russia, restoring the “integrity of the historical fabric”, which words immediately resemble Mussolini’s approach: the continuity of the nation in history, starting with the Ancient Roman Empire. V. Putin emphasizes Russia’s need of a social construction that would unite all peoples, social strata, Slavophiles and Westerners together. Mussolini called it a corporate state that cares equally for its loyal citizens, while Putin calls it a state-civilization that ensures diversity in unity, but with the leading role of Ruskiy people. He enumerated the following values which he thought to be important: patriotism, civic responsibility, solidarity, respect for the law, belonging to the fate of the Motherland.

The new trend of breaking with European values and returning to the traditional Russian historical cultural code (Putin himself has often used the term *code* in the sense of “basic values”) was picked up by the top of Putin’s Russia. Nikolay Patrushev, the second person in the hierarchy, unexpectedly appeared in the press with a theoretical article on axiological issues with the telling title: *Does Russia need “universal values”?* It is worth mentioning here that Mr Patrushev is the Secretary of the Security Council of Russia, and before that he used to hold the position of the former head of the FSB, or Federal Security Service, and was Putin’s colleague at the KGB. Speaking of the question given above, it turns out Russia does not need these values at all, because Europe has fallen morally, and Russia has its own, traditional values: *In particular, they include the priority of the spiritual over the material; protection of human life, rights and freedoms; family, creative work, service to the Fatherland, norms of morality and ethics, humanism, mercy, justice, mutual aid, collectivism, historical unity of the peoples of Russia, succession in the history*

of our homeland [3]. When Russia's authorities try to publicly formulate their own values, they resort to outright populism and lies, as half of the positions in N. Patrushev's formula are such as to cover the other half. The values of humanism and spirituality are of little interest to the Russian establishment, the price of a person in Russia is very low, and human rights and freedoms only exist on paper. The ruling elite are hedonists and state criminals who, through criminal means, have amassed billions of dollars in wealth, drowned in corruption, and are not accountable to society. They seek to isolate themselves from the civilized world, claiming that Russian society traditionally has its own values. It may be so, but these values are in fact different from the ones declared by the representatives of the authorities.

Prominent Russian philosophers and political scientists, hearing the call from the Kremlin, became fascinated by the process of searching for traditional Russian values, and political institutions have been fixing relevant results in the leading state documents. For example, they can be found in the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation approved by V. Putin's decree dated July 2, 2021: *Traditional Russian spiritual and moral values include, first of all, life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, a strong family, creative work, the priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and the succession of generations, and unity among the peoples of Russia* [4]. It is the same contradictory set of values given in the abovementioned article by N. Patrushev. In 2022, the government of the Russian Federation took the initiative to prepare a separate presidential decree on the preservation of traditional Russian values. The document was approved at a government meeting and made public to undergo broader discussion. In this text, an attempt was made to define the very concept of "traditional values": *Traditional values are moral orientations of a person, handed down and cultivated from generation to generation, which form a person's worldview, goals and ways of life, and create the basis of the civilizational identity of Russia...* [5].

Opposition liberal observers and bloggers have accepted the idea of traditional values with skepticism and try to ridicule Russian particularism. Let's give a typical wording of their opinion: *Throughout history, mankind has had quite diverse traditional values, e.g., values belonging to australopithecines, values of slavery, values of open homosexuality (by the way, Moscow during the time of Ivan the Terrible saw rampant homosexuality among all social strata, and this fact then very much surprised foreigners), serfdom, collective farms, Gulag. Please give us a list of "traditional values", put there 15-20 points at least, so that we could understand what we are talking about. And give us an explanation, why you take these very values but not others, typical for a different period of time. A person may want to live according to the traditions of his cave ancestor, with a harem of females, with his own territory, without paying any taxes and generally without paying any attention to the state he lives in (because in those prehistoric times, there was no state or even a church). While another person wants to live by the values of a landowner, with hundreds of serfs and in the conditions of plantation economy [6].* However, Kremlin officials understand what they really mean, and their value relationship to society, the state and people should be searched for in the places in Russia where money is directed to, and in the tasks the propaganda and education systems receive from the authorities. The historical basis, which has not devalued during the last 500-700 years, is made up by the Horde values, because they express the main meanings of the Russian imperial order. In my opinion, they can be divided in four groups:

1. etatistic values, including patriotism understood as service to the state;
2. authoritarian values: the autocrat's self-esteem and unlimited power, as well as his subjects' discipline before the threatening eyes of the rulers;
3. militarist values: the high status of the army and power structures, the value of weapons, military victories, and the military way of life, in general;
4. church values: not religious values as such, but the value of the church as a state institution that "pastors" the Russian people, performing the ideological function.

Are these values relevant to social values? They may, but surely not to the full extent, because ordinary people, in addition to priests and rulers, also love money, vodka, carnal material pleasures and ordinary family joys. But in principle, Horde values are understood by the majority of Russians as self-evident benefits that are part of the Moscow-Horde civilization. It should be stated that the “soup”, where Horde values are presented, is closer to the heart of the average Russian than the European values, as they are quite abstract from the Russian viewpoint.

The ideology of Putinism has evolved in the direction of increasingly opposing “spiritual” Russia to the “immoral” West. The final point was put in 2021, when V. Putin once again gave a speech at the Valdai club meeting. Half of it was dedicated to his criticism of Western values and practices, to mocking the failures made by Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan. He once again repeated the mantra of sovereignty in the field of value choice and freedom from those values that “someone called “universal” pursuing their own goals”. He introduced a new thesis of “reverse discrimination”, meaning a situation when the majority is discriminated for the interests of the minority. V. Putin reinforced the motives of traditionalism, complaining that age-old values, faith, and relationships between people were being destroyed, that the very idea of the family was almost completely abandoned, all of which, according to his speech, could be only observed in the West. Special emphasis in his critical discourse was placed on non-traditional families arising due to same-sex marriages in Western countries. Having provided a long and devastating criticism of Western values, V. Putin finally formulated the essence of Russian ideology: *in creating our own approaches, we will be guided by the ideology of healthy conservatism*. He repeatedly emphasized the need for *healthy, moderate, prudent conservatism*, which turned out to be the position of optimists. The appeal to the Western “partners” runs like a golden thread, e.g.: *We only ask that you don't intrude into our homes. We have a different point of view, in any case, the overwhelming majority of Russian society does ... we believe that we should rely on our spiritual values, on the historical tradition, on the culture of our multinational people* [7]. When Vladimir Putin was giv-

ing that speech, there were only four months left before Russia committed a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, and it was in those days that the US was publicly warning Ukraine for the first time that Russia was readiness to attack it. And though V. Putin did not mention the Ukrainian topic, still he considered it necessary to delve into ideological issues and declare a conservative turn, which he explained as relying on a time-tested tradition.

The Putin-Patrushev line was picked up by Russian officials, church leaders, and propagandists. Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church plays a special role in the ideological campaigns carried out by the Kremlin. The Russian Orthodox Church has always served the government: its independence was suppressed by autocrats as early as the times of Ivan the Terrible and Peter I. In modern history, after the state officially abandoned the policy of atheism, the Russian Orthodox Church received substantial support from the government and business, and quickly grew into an extensive network headed by the patriarch. He is quite an important political figure, and though he does not belong to the first circle of power, he still plays a role similar to the one played by Secretary General of the Central Committee of the CPSU in building Soviet ideology. The patriarch broadcasts to the congregation topical messages created at the “ideological kitchen” of the Kremlin, while the topic of the values remains within his responsibility. A certain regularity can be traced in the patriarch’s narratives: e.g., at first, he tried to formulate politically neutral values lying within the Christian spirit, which should unite as many Russian believers and, generally, citizens as possible. Before the start of the presidential ideological campaign, Kirill published the following list of normative values: diligence, self-restraint, honesty, national traditions, peace, sacrifice, family, unity. This list was approved at the meeting of the World Ruskiy People’s Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow in 2011. Patriarch Kirill also gave an explanation to not including such an important value as “faith” in the normative series, namely, the church being reluctant to alienate atheists [8]. But those were still quite vegetarian times, and when Putin created a new trend in an anti-Western and rashist spirit, the patriarch’s position began evolving. He joined the President in the latter’s criticism of West for

its gender approach and emphasis made on traditional values: *Given the current situation in global politics, the preservation of traditional values is called to become the strategic course of the Russian Federation* [9]. After the start of the full-scale war against Ukraine, the patriarch mentioned sacrifice as a traditional value: *Russia's history and prosperity are built, among other things, on sacrifices made by the previous generations* [10]. The cult of the dead is a characteristic feature of the fascist state. The Patriarch supported the war against Ukraine (he could not act otherwise), although among the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church there were some dissidents who signed a letter in support of peace. Moreover, the patriarch claimed that the war had acquired a metaphysical character [11], and V. Putin, in a speech during the procedure for the annexation of some Ukrainian territories taking place in the Kremlin on September 11, 2022, admitted that the war was being waged against Satan himself, so a conclusion can be made that the Kremlin elite believed the war to be acquiring a religious nature.

A whole cluster of new ideologues has emerged in Russia, with a clear tendency to professionalize this type of activity. The most radical part of the ultra-patriots and traditionalists concentrated on the platform of the Izbork club, created in 2012. Valdai is the area around Lake Valdai in the Novgorod region, and Izborsk is a city in the Pskov region near the Estonian border. The club's activity structure and financing system (it is funded by the state) resemble the Valdai club, but it lacks the intellectual luster and international format of club No. 1. The Izbork platform is aimed at creating an imperial front that should support V. Putin and fight the imaginary fifth column. V. Putin has not appeared here, but the Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky and some governors have. The club supports the war against Ukraine by organizing events on temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories, including the Crimea and Donetsk region.

The club is headed by the writer Alexander Prokhanov, a rather odious personality even by Russian standards: he is a Stalinist, rashist, imperialist, and anti-Semite, and has been actively promoting conservative views for many years. Thus, it is not surprising that he stands on the positions of the civilizationist discourse and claims

that an epic battle between the Anglo-Saxon and Russian civilizations is taking place. A. Prokhanov does not think in analytical categories, but in literary and poetic images, in mythologems. He depicts the Anglo-Saxon civilization as a fortress on a hill, which shoots cannonballs in all directions, and the Ruskiy civilization as a church on a mountain, “reaching the heavenly glaze” with its domes and crosses, along which God’s grace “flows down” to the earth. The ideal Ruskiy society invented by the power of the writer’s imagination is reigned by harmony, love, and beauty, and every essence finds its place here: both wolves and sheep. The leader of the club believes that the soul of a Ruskiy person is not obscured and reaches for the Kingdom of Heaven. He idolizes the empire, sees it as a flower bed where the harmony of different flowers reigns — this image reminds a corporate state, doesn’t it? A. Prokhanov considers the President a hero who created the fifth Ruskiy empire and, of course, supports all his wars and crimes, because the superior purpose justifies the tools for its implementation [12].

A. Prokhanov has invented the existence of spiritual codes of the Ruskiy person, which under normal circumstances are in a dormant state, but can be awakened by a common misfortune. In his ulterior soul, a Ruskiy person longs for victory, is ready to work for victory, believes in victory and can create a “Ruskiy miracle”, wants to unite for the sake of joint work for victory. The Ruskiy people is an Easter people, because it seeks revival and has a defensive awareness of its enemies. It is the discovery of spiritual codes permeating the entire Russian history that the writer expects to result from the war for Ukrainian lands (he considers them to be Ruskiy lands). According to A. Prokhanov, Stalin understood these codes and knew how to awaken them, which is why he won the war. For A. Prokhanov, Stalin is a suprapersonal sacred phenomenon, and every great Russian ruler supposedly had Stalin in his soul. When you hear Prokhanov’s sermons, given at a wide platform and influencing the mass consciousness, you can better understand the term “schizofascism”. The writer has an absolutely split consciousness: he comes up with a non-existent utopian picture of “the holy Rus” and is ready to bless the leader to kill an immeasurable number of people in order to fulfill the imperial dream. Some Orthodox fascist, this writer is. Russian traditionalism and conservatism receive a special sound

in the souls of the club members, like the sound of a crescendo does in a symphony.

Another club can be mentioned here, e.g., the more recent Zinoviev Club created by conservative philosophers and obviously, and obviously also enjoying the trust of the state, because it has all the means necessary to function and tries to copy more well-known intellectual platforms. Academic philosophers have also contributed to the development of the ideology of rashism and are trying to justify high credibility they enjoy. When the war started, they proclaimed a “philosophical front” in order to prove Russia’s rightness in the face of the global evil and accomplish it at the level of metaphysical discourse [13]. It looks quite possible that in the near future, philosophers at Russian universities can switch to teaching the ideology of rashism, therefore, the approaches acquired in heated debates during the club’s panels will be widely used. The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation has developed a project providing for the introduction of an ideological subject into the core part of educational programs, so that it should be studied by all students in the country during the academic year; humanitarians should study it for several years, while historians and political scientists should study it through the entire university course [14].

The epic turn to traditionalism and conservative ideology clearly shows the signs of A. Dugin’s influence, as he was the first to begin promoting traditionalism and conservatism as intellectual trends: he gave the corresponding cycle of lectures and published it [15], as well as organized the Russian congress of traditionalists. As A. Dugin himself notes, Russian traditionalism is based on the works by the French philosopher René Guénon (1986-1951), the Italian Julius Evola (1898-1975), and on Plato’s tradition of radical idealism. According to A. Dugin’s works, modern capitalist world mechanized by the West is the Diavopolis rejected by the traditionalists. “If Russia wants to survive spiritually,” concludes A. Dugin, “then it should stand under other banners, i.e., under the banners of Tradition, radical conservatism, and Orthodox faith...” [16]. V. Putin, being the main ideologist of Russia and the spiritual leader of its people, closely follows thus advice, except that he does not mention A. Dugin’s name.

In November 2019, during the Kharkiv International Security Forum, I conducted an expert survey on the topic *Values of the Eu-*

ropean Union, Russia, and Ukraine. A total of 50 experts participating in the forum were interviewed. The methodology was to have respondents evaluate the weight of values in three locations on a seven-point scale. The list of values included thirty items. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Hierarchy of values in three locations

Rank	EU countries	Russia	Ukraine
1	Rule of law	Victory in World War II	Money
2	Human rights	National leader	Freedom
3	Private property	Army	Army
4	Democracy	State	Children
5	Man as man	Vodka / Horilka	Peaceful existence
6	Peaceful existence	Social hierarchy	Family
7	Economic efficiency	Ideology	Land
8	Self (Me)	Money	Democracy
9	Freedom	Church	Church
10	Civil society	Violence	State
11	Social responsibility	Closedness	Victory in the Second World War
12	Nature, environment	Children	Education
13	Education	Family	Private property
14	Openness	Education	Civil society
15	Children	Private property	Vodka / Horilka
16	Land	Economic efficiency	Man as man
17	Cognition	Land	Openness
18	Money	Cognition	Economic efficiency
19	Same-sex marriages	Nature, environment	Cognition
20	Family	Openness	Human rights
21	State	Self (Me)	National leader
22	Army	Peaceful existence	Self (Me)
23	Church	Social responsibility	Rule of law
24	Victory in the Second World War	Human rights	Nature, environment
25	National leader	Man as man	Social hierarchy
26	Ideology	Civil society	Social responsibility
27	Social hierarchy	Freedom	Ideology
28	Vodka / Horilka	Rule of law	Violence
29	Violence	Democracy	Closedness
30	Closedness	Same-sex marriages	Same-sex marriages

The conclusion is quite eloquent: Ukrainian experts see a significant value gap between the European Union and Russia, as dissimilar civilizational spaces. The priority positions (the first ten values) in the first and second columns do not have any meaningful coincidence. Ukraine occupies an intermediate position: some of the priority value positions coincide with the “EU” column, others are close to Russian society. More detailed results of the experiment have been published in [17]. Before Russia started a full-scale war, Ukraine had been at the crossroads between two worlds, but the bloody events have significantly influenced the mass consciousness and brought the idea of distancing Ukraine from Russia.

The modern Russian value discourse comes down to two fundamental points: on the one hand, it rejects “universal”, or Western, values; on the other hand, it promotes the so-called traditional values, which are fully integrated into the socio-cultural matrix of rashism. The new Russian ideology reflects the already familiar centuries-old ideas of rashism bound to serve the policy of expanding the empire, conducting a war, and clashing with other civilizations, while the array of prescriptive values becomes the basis for propaganda, education, and official discourse. I am compelled to admit that to a large extent these values coincide with the socio-political ideas of the “ulterior people”, thus making the ideologeme of traditionalism an important component of the general field of rashist ideology.

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3.4. RASHISM AND THE CONCEPT OF “RUSSKIY MIR” (“RUSSIAN WORLD”)

The concept of the “Russkiy mir” (RM) has become almost the most visible phenomenon in the ideology, politics, and propaganda of the Putin-era Kremlin born during the search for the so-called Russian national idea. V. Surkov was one of those involved in the creation of the RM doctrine and later claimed that the phrase had been borrowed from the works of a political scientist and immediately appealed to Kremlin strategists because of its meaningful potential. V. Surkov must have meant the publication by P. Shchedrovitsky in the *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper dated February 11, 2000, titled *Russkiy mir. Possible goals of self-determination*. The author based his idea on the fact that emigration flows and the collapse of the empire had left millions of ethnic Rusскиye outside Russia, and connections between them appeared in a network way rather than through the vertical state power: *Also, during the 20th century under the influence of tectonic historical shifts, world wars and revolutions on the planet the Russkiy mir was formed — a network structure of large and small communities that think and speak in Russian* [1].

In the 2000s, V. Surkov had a great advantage in that he could meet with the president and “pour” various new ideas and meanings directly into the latter’s ears. Later, the RM idea was promoted by V. Putin himself, who understood all the advantages that the concept opened up: first of all, for foreign policy, then for propaganda and expansion. He first spoke publicly about the RM at the end of 2006 during a speech in St. Petersburg at a meeting with the creative intelligentsia. In that speech, V. Putin said the following: *The Russian world can and must unite all those who value the Russian word and Russian culture, wherever they live, in Russia or abroad. Use this phrase, Russian world, as often as possible* [2]. The following events developed quite rapidly: on June 21, 2007, V. Putin signed Decree No. 796 On the creation of the Russkiy Mir Foundation. It is registered as a civic organization funded by the state, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation are its founders. The permanent head of the fund is Vyacheslav

Nikonov, a political figure of an extreme conservative orientation, a member of the State Duma, grandson of V. Molotov, the odious People's Commissar of the Stalin epoch. For the first two years, 1 billion rubles were allocated to the fund from the budget of the Russian Federation, but judging by the scope of its activities, the real amounts are much larger. The official tasks of the Foundation initially consisted in propaganda, and spreading Russian language and Russkiy culture in various countries of the world. Over time, the range of tasks has increased, e.g., creating public opinion favorable to Russia, supporting Russian-language mass media abroad, promoting the export of Russian educational services, interacting with diasporas, and much more [3]. The Foundation holds the "Russkiy Mir" Assemblies in the first days of November, the event being tied to the Day of National Unity, as well as the "Russkiy Mir" Pedagogical Forum, both happening annually. A whole network of the "Russkiy Mir" Centers and Offices is deployed around the world. In 2020, 119 Russian Centers worked in 52 countries, and 139 "Russkiy Mir" Offices worked in 58 countries, according to the report on the activities of the Foundation. Large sums of money are pumped through the Fund, in particular, by providing grants for the implementation of various projects [4].

Something similar is implemented by the organization called "Rossotrudnichestvo" ("Russian cooperation"). This is a state body of executive power organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; its full name is "Federal Agency for the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, compatriots living abroad, and for international humanitarian cooperation". Today, "Rossotrudnichestvo" is represented by 98 offices in 81 country in the world [5].

Thus, Russia operates two networks abroad under the coverage of humanitarian projects, the difference between them being that the RM project immediately acquired an ideological coloring. The Kremlin planners obviously relied on the similar experience of large empires creating their own worlds, and took up such models as Pax Romana (the Roman world) and, by analogy, Pax Britannica, Pax Americana, and Pax Sovietica. However, the parallels between the "Russkiy mir" and the "Roman world" are quite conditional. First, the Romans asserted a certain social order in the territories they controlled, brought there a higher civilization, and transmitted

their own culture. The cultural influences of the Pax Romana were still felt in Europe and the Mediterranean for hundreds of years after the Roman epoch came to an end. The meaning of the RM is different, as its concept is considered by the Kremlin to be one of the tools to restore the empire in the “soft power” format targeting the Russkiy diaspora. V. Putin has repeatedly emphasized the fact that 25 million ethnic Russkiy people remained outside the borders of the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR, which fact he believes to be a great tragedy is a great tragedy. However, the Kremlin dictator does not look at the numerous diasporas from the angle of humanistic feelings, but perceives the human masses as an instrument of his own expansion. The correctness of such an interpretation of his attitude can be proved by Russia’s barbaric and genocidal military policy in the East and South of Ukraine, the places where the Russkiy diaspora was concentrated. Attacks on cities, critical civilian infrastructure, and cultural and educational facilities, as well as mass killing of civilians and blowing up the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant in the territory that V. Putin declared to be part of the Russian Federation, show his true attitude towards the so-called “compatriots”.

The RM concept has received considerable resonance among the experts, both in Russia itself and abroad. The new phenomenon is analyzed in the works by numerous scientists, who can be divided into conditional protagonists, antagonists and those who try to take a neutral position. Protagonists supporting the RM concept are, above all, Russian conservative figures and academic circles representing state institutions. They accepted V. Putin’s innovation with enthusiasm and began to deepen it, expand its conceptual boundaries, and raise it to the level of the main Russian ideology [6]. Members of the Izbor club, for example, are developing the RM doctrine. They see the very concept of the RM as the natural foundation of “historical Russia” [7]. The war against Ukraine has only intensified this “scientific research”, because *without ideology, one cannot die on the territory of a foreign state. Without ideology, it is not clear, for what reason we should fight against a “brotherly” people* [8].

Antagonists from among Russian liberals accepted the new ideology skeptically and critically. *Now the “Russkiy mir” is an*

ideological construct aimed at ensuring the dominance of the Putin regime in the post-Soviet space and in the modern world, as a whole. This is an imperial and aggressive construct, and I do not support it, says the leader of the Russian European movement Daniil Konstantinov [9]. But it is worth adding that today it is not every Russian citizen who would dare criticize the Kremlin official ideology; Daniil Konstantinov himself emigrated after standing criminal prosecution, torture in prison, and accusations of murder; for that period of time he was recognized as a political prisoner, and now he lives in Vilnius.

Practically all researchers specializing in history or policy and studying modern Russia have in one way or another analyzed the “Russkiy mir” in their writings. Scientists outside the borders of the Russian Federation are trying to look at the Russian ideology in a more balanced way [10]. In Ukraine, the RM concept was met with criticism as a manifestation of imperial consciousness and an attempt to create a “fifth column” in the territories of foreign countries [11]. Ukrainian MPs O. Dunda and O. Oleksiichuk prepared a draft law equating the RM ideology with those of communists and Nazis, and suggested to make appropriate changes in Art. 436-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, which prohibits spreading the symbols and propaganda of these ideologies in Ukraine, adding “Russkiy mir” through a comma [12]. Finally, in an article for the British newspaper *The Telegraph*, the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki expressed himself more than definitely saying that the “Russkiy mir” must be destroyed like a cancerous tumor [13].

At the IV Kharkiv International Security Forum in November 2021, General Serhii Savchenko revealed data proving that even before the active phase of the hybrid war started, 671 RM offices worked in Ukraine, receiving funds from Moscow along the lines of the RM Foundation, the Institute of the CIS countries, “Rossotrudnichestvo”, and the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund. “Russkiy mir” means war, destruction, occupation and the establishment of a police regime – this is the most common opinion among Ukrainian citizens based on the experience of the long-term Russian-Ukrainian war. Or, if put in other words, first Russian cinema, music, and literature, and then

tanks, guns, and missiles. This is the sequence when “soft power” is transformed into “hard power” by the decision of a few people in the Kremlin, that is, a humanitarian (initially) project easily turns into a bloody and merciless symphony. The history of the Russian-Ukrainian war shows that after the arrival of Russian troops, RM activists quickly turn into collaborators, and invaders purposefully involve them in the occupation administrations, propaganda, and police forces.

The RM concept is vague, but this seems to be perfectly fine with the Kremlin’s ideologues, as it can be easily adapted to current political tasks. In an interview given in 2016, A. Prokhanov, the Izborov club leader, gave it a poetic definition: *The Russian world is, in essence, everything. It even includes the stars in the sky that emit light in the Russian night. The Russian world is all that surrounds us: it is Russian empires, the growth and decline of these empires; it is Russian catastrophes and the series of Russian leaders; it is real politics and a Russian dream* [14]. And what does the initiator of the RM project, Putin’s gray cardinal, V. Surkov, think about this? In an informal conversation with Serhii Pegov, Russian propagandist and founder of a YouTube channel, V. Surkov (at the time when he had formally retired from public affairs) gave it a broad and pretentious definition: *This is everywhere where people speak and think in Russian. This is where, perhaps, they don’t speak and think in Russian, but where they really respect Russian culture. Where they see the Russian model of national development as an alternative to what they have at home. Where people are afraid of Russian weapons, this is also the Russian world. Where they respect our scientists, our writers, our art; where our Putin is respected, this is also all the Russian world...* [15]. V. Surkov’s tirade reflects the typical position of Kremlin officials: “they” must fear “us”; if the shadow of fear lies on people, then it is also “Russkiy mir”. And what does the main ideologist of rashism say about this? V. Putin, speaking at the IV World Congress of Compatriots in 2018, resorted to the following maxim: *...The forum has gathered more than 700 citizens from various countries... At the same time, you all together represent a huge community of Russian compatriots, you represent one big, huge Russian world, which*

was never built exclusively... on ethnic, national or religious grounds. It... united everyone who is spiritually connected with Russia, who feels a spiritual connection with our Motherland, who considers himself to be the bearer of the Russian language, culture, and Russian history... [16]. Therefore, V. Putin resorts to the widest possible interpretation: no one is forbidden to enter the “Russkiy mir”, because “spiritual connection with Russia” is enough to do this.

The aim of citing here three long quotes from the Russkiy mir adepts is to prove the fact that the ideologues of modern Russian nationalism, the imperialists, or rashists firmly grasp to the “Russkiy mir” phrase, turning it into a slogan, an ideologem, and even the core of Russian foreign policy, thus giving a signal to the diasporas all over the world, saying that they should follow the course paved for them by Moscow. In general, “Russkiy mir” has several target groups at which the ideology of rashism is directed. The first one encompasses Russkiye living in national republics and autonomies on the territory of the Russian Federation. For them, the ideologeme holds the following message: you are the core, system-creating people of the Russian state, so fulfill your mission proudly, as leaders and the ruling class. The second target group includes ethnic Russkiye and the so-called “Soviet people” in countries and regions that used to belong to “historical Russia” or the USSR. They are given the following idea: do not assimilate under any circumstances, always focus on Moscow and wait for “liberation”. The third target group is made up by diasporas around the world, and they are offered the following thesis: do not forget our language, watch and listen to our news (propaganda), and you will still be able to serve the historical homeland during the great geopolitical game.

How do biased Russian experts from among the “patriots” imagine the geographical boundaries of the Russkiy mir? The RUXPERT portal, which positions itself as a “patriot’s guide”, has published the view of an unknown patriot expert on how to classify the countries all over the world according to the degree of their incorporation into the Russkiy mir. The expert takes 55 countries, including the Russian Federation, and divides them in nine groups. Ukraine is part of a group of four countries (together with Estonia,

Latvia, and Georgia) classified under the following heading: *Countries with leadership that is generally negative towards the Russkiy mir, but with a significant part of the population clearly belonging to it [17].*

In my opinion, the RM concept has several dimensions. It is used in the following contexts and is at the same time the following:

- an ideologeme naturally complementing the ideology of rashism and carrying the idea of integrating all Russian powers on the platform of aggressive Putinism, criticism of the West, and Russian traditionalism;
- a sociological doctrine, according to which the concept of Russianness expands infinitely and means a large social group with free entry for everyone who considers Russia their homeland, admires Russkiy culture, is a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, or maintains a spiritual connection with Russia, etc.;
- a geopolitical doctrine according to which Moscow allegedly has the historical right to control the entire space of the Muscovite-Horde civilization (in the way the Kremlin interprets their civilizational borders), so that the Kremlin (at least in its diplomatic disputes with Western “partners”) is ready to defend its zones of influence going beyond the official borders of Russia, as it treats them all as the “Russkiy mir”;
- Moscow Kulturtraegerism, whose essence is spreading the language and samples of Russkiy culture, influencing the media and public opinion, and doing it, in fact, throughout the world within the framework of Pax Rossica;
- the national imperial idea, whose essence lies in collecting “Russkiy lands”, restoring “historical Russia”, etc.
- a social network including Russkiy mir offices financed by Moscow through the S. Nikonov Foundation that can be used, for example, by the intelligence service of the Russian Federation, for the purposes of carrying out reconnaissance and hybrid warfare.

V. Putin has engaged the Russian Orthodox Church and Patriarch Kirill himself to propagate the Russkiy mir. As a result, Illarion, the Metropolitan of Volokam, and a number of other hierarchs within the Russian Orthodox Church are actively

fulfilling the task, which is quite logical: firstly, the ROC already has a ready-made network of parishes covering the countries – former USSR republics; besides, the ROC has a number of branches in other countries: Ukraine alone had about 12 thousand parishes at the beginning of the great war with Russia, and more than 15 thousand priests, monks, and nuns [18], who mainly lived and worked in or close to the theater of military operations. Secondly, ideology and propaganda are just what the priests normally do, and now they are given the mission to work for the “Russkiy mir” idea. V. Yanukovych’s coming to power in Kyiv in 2010 opened wide the door to Moscow church propaganda, so that the Patriarch himself made several pastoral visits to Ukraine, fulfilling V. Putin’s instructions to inculcate the Russkiy mir ideology in believers’ minds. In the numerous speeches given by Patriarch Kirill on the Russkiy mir, several ideas can be traced: 1) the literal identification of the Russkiy mir concept with the category of “Russkiy civilization”; 2) expanded interpretation of the territory covered by the Russkiy mir which had to include Ukraine and Belarus; 3) rejection of legal restrictions resulting from the delineation of state borders, because the Russkiy mir is the spiritual bond of all “compatriots”; 4) an aggressive attitude towards the West, nationalists, and church dissidents preventing the integration of the lands and people in the Russkiy Mir under the auspices of Moscow. Speaking at the IV Assembly of the Russkiy Mir in 2014, Patriarch Kirill used the concept of “Russkiy civilization” for 25 times in various contexts but in connection with the RM issue, considering the latter as a special civilizational entity in which the Russian Orthodox Church does its pastoral work [19]. Besides, Patriarch Kirill has published several books on the “Russkiy Mir” issue, which included his public speeches and sermons [20].

Though A. Dugin’s idea of Russia as a special civilization opposed to the West was widely reflected in Kirill’s pastoral sermons, the latter synthesizes it with the Russkiy Mir ideologeme and the ideological struggle on this ground: *But if we talk about civilization, then Russia belongs to a broader civilization than the Russian Federation. We call this civilization the Russkiy Mir. This concept alone – the Russkiy Mir – enrages our opponents,*

including those nationalist-minded forces in Ukraine who try to see Russia as an enemy, and the Russkiy Mir as a terrible political doctrine aimed at limiting the sovereignty of Ukraine, enslaving Ukraine by Russia [21].

The ideological mission of Moscow churchmen to spread the Russkiy Mir ideologeme suffered a powerful blow from Ukraine in 2018, when Ukrainian church branches alternative to the Russian Orthodox Church united and, receiving support from President P. Poroshenko, founded the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), which received the canonical status through being granted Tomos by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (Tomos is a church document certifying the autocephalous status of a new local church). This caused shock and panic not only in church circles, but also in the Kremlin, because it complicated the main task: to break the will of Ukrainians for independence and to join Ukraine to Russia by any means.

The Russkiy Mir ideologeme is absolutely hostile to the peoples who are “lucky” to live in the same geographical space with ethnic Russkiye, because it does not take into account their natural interests and aspirations for independence, dignity, and safe existence. Aggression against Ukraine was launched under the slogans of “Russkiy Mir” back in 2014, when the Crimea was seized and annexed, and the Donbas was attacked. Russian propaganda then, using all the media, including foreign ones, was trying to prove that Ukraine was overtaken by “the Russian Spring”, all the people at once realized their belonging to the Russkiy Mir and sought to unite with their co-religionists. Thus, the Russian leadership allegedly had no other choice than to satisfy the request of ethnic Russkiye (in fact, they are an ethnic minority in the Donbass) to protect them from evil Ukrainians, nationalists, and Kyiv Nazis. The Kremlin created a myth about the civil war in Ukraine, spreading it until the beginning of 2022. According to Moscow mythology, the population in the Donbas is fighting for the Russkiy Mir values. This is an example of how an initially “peaceful” ideologeme, due to the evil will of the empire rulers, becomes a mighty hybrid weapon.

Lies pervade all the ideas within the Russkiy Mir, because they are based on distorted history, falsification of facts, and silencing

of what does not fit into the invented concept. The level of social cynicism in the ideology of rashism goes beyond all imaginable limits. On November 4, 2022 (which is a national holiday), V. Putin once again gathered his ideological activists – representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church headed by Kirill, and historians. On the ninth month of the full-scale invasion, having committed genocide and urbocide, destroyed civilian infrastructure by mass rocket launches, after all the deaths and injuries, he cynically declared: *We have always treated the Ukrainian people with respect and warmth. It has been so, and it remains so now, despite today's tragic confrontation* [22]. Perhaps, this is an example of schizo-fascism, that is, a split, painful, and aggressive consciousness that does not reflect reality, but relies on myths and ideological guidelines.

Has the Russkiy Mir concept enriched the “eternal rashism”? On the one hand, a certain expansion of the categorical apparatus has taken place, a kind of highlight complementing the ideology of Putinism, but on the other hand, all this is nothing more than repetition of old mantras about the greatness of Russia and the infinity of its spaces going far beyond the borders of the empire; about a divided people that should be finally returned to the bosom of the empire in order to fulfill its the great mission; and about the supertask of the state policy for the years to come. How does the RM concept differ from the “Third Rome” one? In fact, it has nothing significantly new on the conceptual side, it only repeats the old theses. The course on traditionalism taken in Russia involves the revival of old ideas and theses, rather than the search for something new. That is why everything new that the Russkiy Mir concept claims to have brought to the ideology of rashism can easily be found in the “Third Rome” concept, in the programmes of the Slavophiles and narodniki, in the odious speeches given by the “Black Hundred”, even in the narratives of the communist epoch. However, the Russkiy Mir ideologeme currently is of an instrumental value for the Kremlin, because it can be used as a technology to work with diasporas, to penetrate the political kitchen of other countries, and to prepare the mass consciousness of Russians for waging colonial wars under the “Russkuy Mir” banner.

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3.5. RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AS A TRANSLATOR OF THE RASHISM IDEOLOGY

Ideology and propaganda are like sisters that cannot exist without each other for a single day, and ideology takes over the role of the elder sister who directs propaganda – this is how totalitarian societies are organized. Russian propaganda (or, Rospropaganda) is a separate, original phenomenon arising recently, right after the ideological turn in Russia. In Putin's Russia, it is an important state institution absorbing a certain part of the state budget, and not a small one. The Kremlin leadership sees it as an assault force against both internal and external enemies, an instrument of influence on mass consciousness, a driving mechanism connecting the rashist ideologemes with mass consciousness. Rospropaganda has already attracted the attention of experts and researchers analyzing the situation in Russia and technologies of hybrid warfare [1]. In a certain sense, it has no analogues in the modern world, if to consider the scale of the phenomenon and the speed with which the system was built during the years of V. Putin's rule.

Propaganda became a noticeable social phenomenon during the First World War, and it was on the experience of wartime propaganda that Harold Lasswell (1902-1978) and Edward Bernays (1891-1995) created the first propaganda theories [2]. After the Great War, propaganda became in demand by the political leadership in the fascist and Nazi countries: Lenin, Mussolini, and Hitler very well understood its importance and widely used its effect on their way to power. The main theorist of Nazi propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, explained his subordinates that the value of propaganda did not lie in the truth at all, moreover, it could be based on myths and big lies, but in the effect it had on public opinion. If the manipulator achieves the planned result, then a propaganda effect appears. Propagandists should strive for it and use all resources available to obtain the final effect.

The emergence of Rospropaganda corresponds to the following chronology: 1) at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the old communist propaganda system was destroyed, thousands of professionals working at the public outreach apparatus lost their

jobs and were forced to change colors and claim to be “democrats”, to look for jobs in new market conditions, to sell their services to the new bourgeois class; 2) during the 1990s, the illusion arose that ideology as a social phenomenon was finally dead, freedom of speech reigned in the Russian society, everyone was fed up with ideological stereotypes, and communists were looked at as “forever outdated” (at that time authorities did not yet trust nationalists without question); 3) at the beginning of the 2000s, V. Putin came to power and step by step began to revive the ideological apparatus, so propaganda was slowly becoming a sought-after and first-rate social institution.

To revive propaganda in the 2.0 format, V. Putin needed to solve an important strategic task, i.e., to crush freedom of speech and independent media. In the first few months of his reign, he coped with this task under the guise of fighting the oligarchs who controlled the media. Civil society reacted, there were attempts to organize peaceful mass protests in Moscow, but the “ulterior people” did not support the initiative, and the intelligentsia and businessmen were “dealt with” through not so clever police techniques. Freedom of speech had been won very easily in Russia, in fact the last Secretary General M. Gorbachev had wanted it to come, but as a result, the freedom was lost obscenely quickly, when the next ruler denied the country this privilege. The “ulterior people,” as usual, longed for just two things: “bread and circus”. The wind of fate began to “blow in Putin’s sails”: the price for oil rocketed, and he was able to conclude a contract with the main mass of his subjects: increase in the standard of living in exchange for freedom. The people accepted the generous offer almost unanimously. Thus finished the democratic epoch, and television and cinema began to frankly entertain and tickle the nerves of the audience with thrillers dedicated to the lawless 1990s, which propaganda started calling “wild”. V. Putin was depicted as the savior of the motherland, who overcame a period of chaos. So, these events can suggest an important conclusion: propaganda and freedom of speech are incompatible. Propaganda always loses to honest journalism, and to prevent this from happening, autocrats destroy independent media.

The gap of 10-15 years between the two ideological epochs is not so great, as many old ideological staff members quickly made a U-turn once again and began their own story of cheering patriots, conservatives, nationalists, and fighters “for Great Russia”. V. Putin graciously gave them a place under the sun. V. Nikonov’s career is absolutely typical in this sense. In his youth, he was an ideological Komsomol member from the family of Stalin’s associate Vyacheslav Molotov, then changed his colours to become a fighter for perestroika and democracy (during M. Gorbachev’s time), and finally, evolved into a profound conservative and nationalist, which fact resulting in V. Putin giving him an important section of the ideological front in the vineyards of the Russkiy Mir Foundation. The same evolution befell Yevgeny Primakov, whose grandfather was Prime Minister during B. Yeltsin’s time. In the 1990s, he was a journalist for various democratic progressive media, and then, having grasped the general political trend, he began to openly work for the Kremlin ideology; and finally, in June 2020 V. Putin entrusted him with “Rossotrudnichestvo”, a huge machine to exercise influence abroad and create the fifth column. All these “grandchildren” are very well-educated and supposedly modern people from elite families, well-versed in history, politics, and art, and quite often visit other countries, but have easily sold their souls to the devil and diligently earn special trust in the field of propaganda. They simultaneously create and repeat propaganda nonsense, reimbursing V. Putin for their appointments and fees. On February 24, 2022, just a few hours after the attack on Ukraine, Yevgeny Primakov issued a statement of full support for the SVO (special military operation), although he hypocritically added it was a real “nightmare” to fight against Ukrainians; he reproduced the fake about the Nazis allegedly taking over Ukraine; he did not agree with those who demanded the war to be stopped, because, *as a result of this military operation, Ukraine will be freed from gangs of armed Nazis, and the security of our borders will be ensured in the hope that Ukrainians will wake up from bedevilment* [3].

The place of propaganda in the system of rashism can be depicted in a diagram showing the institutional connections in the vineyards of propaganda in a simplified form (see Fig. 1).

I – state ideology (in modern Russia, it lists a number of rashist ideologemes)

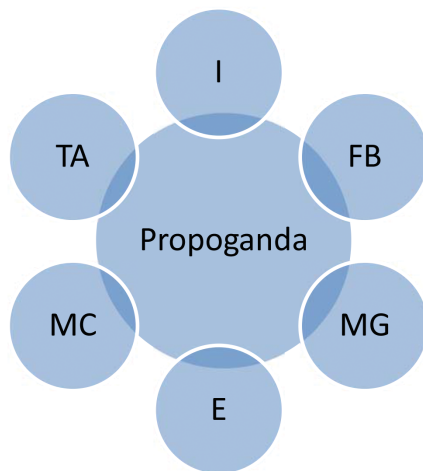
FB – force block (the army, intelligence service, police etc.)

MG – the machine of government (civil servants, government staff)

E – education

MC – mass consciousness as the sum of the facts of the collective consciousness

TA – totalitarian art totalitarian art: literature, music, cinema, all of which are financed and guided by the state.



Within this model there are established connections. Thus, ideology determines propaganda narratives, and forced consumers of propaganda products are both state institutes and masses of citizens. Education and art are seen as propaganda tools, but art is an additional source for the agenda of propagandists, who pick up and spread images, memes, and aesthetic models generated by court artists to the good of the state.

In the USSR, the following triad was used: ideology – propaganda – campaigning. The structure of ideological work was built and civil servants were grouped according to the demands of the triad components.

The ideology was supposedly fixed forever and was Marxism-Leninism; however, this did not exclude the need to interpret dogmas, make relevant accents, add some narratives to the “treasury” of the immortal teachings, and most importantly, adapt Marxist theses to current political tasks. Stalin was the only Soviet leader to able to independently formulate one or another key idea, and the next Secretaries General of the Communist Party turned to speechwriters and professional ideologues. The staff of the CPSU Central Committee had specific groups of highly educated employees whose responsibility was to write speeches on current topics for the first political figures; a similar expert function was per-

formed by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and the Academy of Social Sciences under the Central Committee of the CPSU. A certain circle of especially trusted doctors of science, professors, and academicians was involved in ideological work. They enjoyed a significant advantage over all ordinary citizens in the country, having access to the so-called “special archives”, or special departments in several libraries in Moscow, where single copies of books by “bourgeois” authors were kept, as well as banned publications of the murdered communist ideologues. That is, works by Zbigniew Brzezinski or Leon Trotsky could be only read in the original by a few dozen people in a multi-million-strong country, and all the other “ideologues”, propagandists, university lecturers had to trust what the “chosen caste” said in their books, usually titled like *Criticism of the bourgeois (revisionist) concept...*

The ideological system of the USSR had a total character. Practicing ideologues were present at all levels of the country’s territorial and institutional structure thanks to the institute of deputy secretaries of party organizations on ideological work. Every organization – university, military unit, collective farm, etc., – had party representatives, and therefore, the so-called “ideologues”. A practicing ideologue had to organize propaganda work within his competence, and was entitled to involve all specialists and activists capable of this work. Agitators were those who were assigned to work directly with people, conduct oral propaganda, and engage in visual agitation. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens were involved in ideological work in one way or another, the absolute majority did it on an unpaid basis, although there were professional positions of deputy first secretaries for ideological work in the central, regional, city, and district Committees of the Communist Party. This activity was headed by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU for ideological work, who had a considerable staff of employees. During the times of N. Khrushchev and L. Brezhnev, the position of the Secretary of the Central Committee for Ideology was continuously held by the Stalin cadre Mikhail Suslov (1902-1982), who was an outstanding communist orthodox. With his death, the classic times of the Soviet ideological system sank into oblivion.

V. Putin has not managed to build a powerful and extensive propaganda system similar to the one that existed in the USSR,

but his Rospropaganda system also has a pyramidal internal structure. The top of the pyramid is occupied by V. Putin himself, because it is he who tries to formulate the main implications of rashism. The leader has several close associates who are responsible for propaganda in the mass media, the Internet, law enforcement agencies, the education system, and abroad. The relatively middle level of the ideological pyramid is occupied by top propagandists, whose names and images are known to the majority of the population of the Russian Federation, because they are public figures who broadcast from TV screens or articulate their views on the Internet. The propaganda stars are the generals of the information forces, their names are as popular as the images of the most popular movie actors or pop musicians. Their dubious fame has spilled over the borders of Russia and become the subject of studies by experts in the West [4]. At lower levels, there are regional propagandists, private bloggers, military correspondents working within general tasks and trends.

The new ruling party United Russia, according to V. Putin's plan, was to become a substitute for the Communist Party, as it actually controls the bodies of legislative power throughout the country and has the task of performing an ideological function. But it is a rather pale shadow of the CPSU. And although local party cells are given tasks from the center, are told how to carry out ideological work, the matter slips due to the corruption, cynicism and lack of ideas among the party insiders. That is why, V. Putin has made a bet on something else, namely, involving specialized organizations in the creation and distribution of propaganda content: the media, state cinema, publishing houses, and, above all, the propaganda function is assigned to Russian television. Young people and significant layers of the intelligentsia avoid television, they do not watch propaganda programs, preferring to surf the Internet, but this does not bypass Putin, because his electorate, the "ulterior people", is still "chained" to television screens. Rospropaganda as an institute works according to the following principle: we pay you money and define goals, and you create a professional product on a commissioned topic, whose quality criterion is the effect of propaganda. This applies to television projects, commissioned cinematography, and mass public actions with propaganda

purposes. Education institutions obediently follow the line of propaganda, because they have no protection against the state. Heads of universities and schools have to carry out ideological orders, organize propaganda campaigns, not to mention school curriculum, which is increasingly filled with ideological content.

The technological basis of Soviet propaganda and its Russian counterpart do not coincide, because propaganda always uses technological innovations. For example, wire radio absolutely dominated the USSR as a tool of propaganda influence in 1920-1960. It was a brilliant invention that solved several tasks: synchronous distribution of content throughout the vast country, unification of propaganda, Russification of the population in the national republics (broadcasts were carried out in Russian). But its main advantage is the isolation from the world radio space, the impossibility of outsiders (enemy propaganda) to interfere with the broadcast of the signal. The laying of communication lines was considered an important state matter, all settlements were connected to the center, and the norm regarding the mandatory connection of multi-apartment buildings and each individual dwelling to the general network was included in the construction standards of the USSR. As a result, the average Soviet family was given a simple device without electronics, which was usually located in the kitchen and had only one volume control knob. Broadcasts from Moscow were held from six o'clock in the morning until midnight. In fact, J. Goebbels pursued a similar goal in Germany, but he followed a different path technologically, taking into account the country's industrial capabilities. On his initiative, a five-year plan was adopted suggesting to create a nationwide radio service network using modern electronic devices, and already before the Second World War broke out, thanks to the purchase-for-payment program, about 70% of German families had radio receivers, which opened the door to propaganda work "at the place of residence" [5]. However, Goebbels' strategy turned out to be somewhat of a failure, as electronic devices in German homes appeared to be able to receive broadcasts of British radio stations, which deployed targeted war propaganda in Germany after the outbreak of hostilities in 1940. However, listening to British stations in Germany was treated as a criminal offense.

Since broadcast radio developed in the USSR after World War II, and Western countries and propaganda centers tried to reach Soviet radio listeners using short waves, the USSR government faced a difficult task of finding the way to cut off the country from “harmful” content. The problem was solved with the help of the following technology: a network of radio towers was built throughout the country, which were colloquially called “jammers”; they were tuned in to the frequency of enemy radio stations and emitted ambient noise into the air, so that listeners heard a dull hum interfering with broadcasts. The silencing of “radio voices” was stopped by the decision of the Politbureau in 1988 as part of perestroika and glasnost campaign, thus starting the epoch of the freedom of speech in the country. From that time on, the destruction of the Soviet propaganda system became irreversible and fleeting.

Since the 1960s, television has become an absolute priority in the realm of the media, and now television plays the role of a magnet attracting the attention of the masses and absorbing people’s free time. Gradually, propaganda moved from radio airwaves to television studios, although wire radio remained in use until the beginning of the 21st century. The era of television dominance lasted until about the 2010s, and then the Internet began to take over the media space. Nowadays, Rospropaganda is trying to use both the former and the latter. Traditionally, the “ulterior people”, the province, the elderly and people with low educational qualifications continue to use television and trust it as an “instance of truth”. In discussions, trying to prove something such people refer to the television broadcasts using the phrase “yesterday they said on TV...”. State television remains the main proponent of Putinism ideology in Russia, though propaganda activity is increasingly moving towards the Internet, as the advantages of the global network as a means of communication have been quickly understood by both propagandists and representatives of special services. Media platforms are being created on the Internet, where both traditional television programs and press materials are displayed, as well as specifically Internet opportunities are being developed, e.g. propaganda through social networks, publics, messengers, through creating and launching viral content, etc. [6]. Internet resources create ideal opportuni-

ties for propaganda: high speed of spreading information, online mode of use; the possibility of globalizing propaganda, violation of the information sovereignty of states; anonymity of sources, which allows propagandists and special service employees to easily throw fakes into the information space, engage in trolling, multiply information viruses, etc.

The special services of the Russian Federation, which are guides of propaganda projects to a certain extent, assessed new opportunities and headed for mastering Internet technologies. For this purpose, the so-called “18th center” was created within the FSB in 2006, and later, the “Internet Research Agency” (or, informally, “Olgin trolls”) was founded in St. Petersburg under the guidance of Ye. Prigozhin, V. Putin’s confidant. The agency deployed active subversive activities in Internet communications and social networks, using relatively new methods of paid trolling. Trolls leave informal anonymous posts on web-sites and in publics in accordance with the instructions they receive from the management of the organization at the beginning of the work shift.

Rospropaganda has launched a mass information intervention on a global scale. Since 2013 (even before the active phase of the hybrid war against Ukraine was launched), Russia has managed to deploy a network of TV channels supposed to convey Moscow’s assessments of current events to the global world. These “global media” include: *Life News* – a news site and a 24-hour TV channel; *Russia Today* (under V. Putin’s decree dated December 9, 2013) – a multilingual news agency; *Sputnik* (created in 2014) – a news agency in 30 languages controlled by *Russia Today*. In this segment, satellite technologies for broadcasting TV channels were widely used. At the same time, the content is placed on the companies’ own websites. The network of foreign channels worked well during the occupation of the Crimea and the offensive in the Donbass region of Ukraine and managed to misinform the world, though only to some extent, about the events in Ukraine.

In a special report of the US State Department, 5 pillars of Rospropaganda are defined [7]:

- official government communications of the Russian Federation (press services of the Kremlin, government accounts in networks);

- state-funded global messaging – television and radio broadcasts (state-funded mass media, international Russian socio-cultural institutions);
- cultivation of proxy sources (proliferation of Russian narratives, Russian language centers);
- weaponization of social media;
- cyber-enabled disinformation.

Consequently, Rospropaganda has mastered the new technological possibilities associated with the digitization of media and the Internet space and actively exploits democracy in free countries for its own, subversive purposes. Here a problem appears that has not been fully resolved yet: the difference in the basic conditions between totalitarian countries and democracies in the times of collision. Let's explain what is meant here. Totalitarian regimes, whenever possible, close their information spaces, e.g., restrict the use of the Internet. Such rules are established by China, the DPRK, some Muslim countries, and Russia. But at the same time, they try to use freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and inviolability of the media in democratic countries as much as possible in order to spread disinformation and propagandist influence. Russia, in particular, follows this path, trying to interfere in the internal affairs of independent countries, using the “weak points” of democracy.

The tasks and tactics of Rospropaganda change in a certain way depending on the audiences. Internal propaganda is aimed at creating a positive the image of the leader and supporting the president's policy, e.g. advertising military campaigns, praising to the skies Russia's greatness and its various achievements that “have no equals in the world”, as well as criticizing the West, the Western way of life, democratic traditions and European values. Besides, Rospropaganda attributes sacral features to the supreme leader: in the Russian mass media, it is not only forbidden to criticize V. Putin, but also to take his name in vain. With such massive support from the ideological apparatus and inherent tyrannophilia of Russians, V. Putin can rule forever, as befits a great khan.

Outwardly, the Rospropaganda focuses on the contradictions and problems of the Western world. In general, this is what Soviet propaganda did, but there are certain nuances. The methodology of

Rospropaganda has changed, it has acquired greater aggressiveness, cynicism, and immorality. Soviet propaganda had its “red lines”, e.g., it was not allowed to offend people’s national feelings, to call for genocide, to champion nuclear war, and to lie openly and cynically. Rospropaganda, on its part, has no such “red lines”: it has mastered post-truth technologies, when everything is possible and nothing is forbidden; facts can be ignored, and an individual opinion can be turned into an irrefutable fact. A lie is not considered repulsive if it works for the effect of propaganda. Let’s give a vivid example of cynical propaganda lies: Rospropaganda star Olga Skabeyeva made a plot on Russian TV trying to smear the memory of Queen Elizabeth II during the days of mourning for her death in Britain. The approach itself was not acceptable for Soviet times, when the rule was rather: in such situations, of the dead say nothing but what is good; still, Russian TV did not follow the old rule and prepared a fake newsworthy event. The host of the program showed the audience some footage of a black-and-white newsreel, where the young Queen was allegedly throwing food to African children (or, at least, that was what the propagandist commented), and the poor children were grabbing those pieces like hungry dogs. In parallel to the newsreel, Olga Skabeyeva, in a sharp and unappealing tone, was proclaiming that Africans would never forgive England for the colonial era, and would not honor the memory of the Queen. This was, of course, a lie, because the Queen was respected all over the world and, above all, in the British Commonwealth, which covers 54 countries, including a number of African states. Russian propagandists quite often forget to take into account current situation: that the world already lives in an information society, and there are fact-checking technologies, so the switch was quickly revealed: Ms Skabeyeva was showing a film shot in Vietnam almost 30 years before the Queen was born. The old footage showed the wife of the French governor of Indochina; indeed, she was throwing something to the children, but those were coins. The fake here is too thin, because the entrance to the house had clearly visible inscriptions in hieroglyphs, which could not be there had the news been shot in Africa, and the children looked typical Asians, but not Africans.

Technologists in the bowels of propaganda have invented a new effective work format: they hold political talk shows on TV,

hosted by Moscow star propagandists. A feature of such shows is their aggressive, even hysterical character; such performances are also called “the hour of hatred”; sometimes the guests in the studio start fist-fighting; and presenters can, at their own choice, throw someone out of the studio, if these people say something the presenters do not think is right, as if they were some referees at a football match. Such scenarios are carefully staged, their task is to awaken negative emotions in TV viewers, to cause hatred or fear, to consolidate propagandist stereotypes and the stigma imposed on the enemy by emotional reinforcement and viewers’ own experiences. The so-called “experts” invited to the studio do not shy away from genocidal vocabulary, they appeal to instincts, subconsciousness, and collective archetypes of the racist semantic field rather than to facts and reason. It should again be noted here that the Soviet propaganda tradition was different: political comments on TV were prepared by well-educated specialists in international issues, and presenters behaved discreetly and tried to appeal to the facts, focusing on the ratio and logic of the audience. It was believed that communist ideas are powerful enough by themselves, there will always be true arguments in their favor, and thus reality should not be falsified, although, of course, the facts were often falsified by propagandists. However, the style of the Soviet propaganda was supposed to instill optimism in people, rather than charge them with hatred.

The way Russian theoreticians and practitioners of propaganda interpret the era of postmodernism gives them a sense of permissiveness and absolute power over public opinion. This peculiarity of Rospropaganda is most deeply revealed in the writings by Peter Pomerantsev, a British journalist and specialist in Russian propaganda, who was born in Soviet Ukraine and came to the West as a child together with his father (Igor Pomerantsev), a political dissident, and later a BBC journalist. He notes the following: *Russia came to postmodernism through post-Soviet cynicism. It went along its own, strange path and as a result, was grasped by the feeling of complete relativity of everything. This path coincided in time with Western postmodernism, so we can see some parallels between them* [8]. The British specialist in the media space proves that the purpose of Rospropaganda

is to pollute the information space as much as possible, so that the average resident is finally confused and accepts any version or rejects all, or even better, relies on conspiracy theories. In an interview, P. Pomerantsev gives the following idea: *The place of ideology in the worldview is replaced by conspiracy. The whole world is explained through the matryoshka doll of the conspiracy theory. Of course, it is not by chance that Dmitry Kiselev's main favorite phrase is: "Coincidence? I do not think so". This is the main meme of this pseudo-ideology. And of course, you cannot change anything in the world of conspiracy theorists. You don't understand anything. You should stay at home, you need Putin or Trump or Bolsonaro, and they will help you in this complex world that you will never understand* [9]. The American specialist in Rospropaganda Kseniya Kirillova believes that, unlike communist propaganda, the information operations of the Kremlin do not require a specific ideology at all. To support propaganda, a great number of images is used as well as states caused by these images, the latter being so vivid that they affect people more strongly than rational arguments do. Russian propaganda does not create a system of views, it rather creates a feeling, it corresponds directly to emotions, instincts, and reflexes, whose combination gives the Kremlin the results it needs [10]. In general, though I agree with Kseniya Kirillova's opinion, still I believe that ideological discourse does exist in modern Russia. It is the ideology of rashism as a sum of ideologemes created in modern Russia on the basis of eternal rashist ideas and feelings that is behind its external propaganda narratives.

Rospropaganda also carries out direct instructions of the highest military and political leadership, if the latter believes it necessary to prepare the population for immoral and criminal actions. Discussion of genocidal tactics began on Moscow talk shows a month or two before the first attempts to totally destroy the critical civilian infrastructure of Ukrainian cities. The invited "experts" emotionally asked the question: Until when shall we display humanity and spare Ukrainians? The answer was: We must throw them back to the 18th century (!?), deprive them of the benefits of civilization: electricity, light, heating, water supply. Such vicious tirades enjoyed the support of the audience, and public opinion

was monitored. Finally, on October 10, 2022, Russia launched massive missile attacks on power plants, water intakes, and power substations throughout Ukraine. Propaganda managed to have convinced the domestic audience that the genocidal actions were just and expedient. Bombings and blackouts in Ukrainian settlements caused a rise in public sentiment in Russia, because there was no success at the front, and the “ulterior people” was out for Ukrainians’ blood.

The external propaganda strategy is to divide the Western world, to support pro-Russian politicians and radicals who oppose integration associations, to promote general chaos and to increase distrust in democratic institutions. Russian agents working on the Internet supported Brexit, Catalan and Scottish separatists, D. Trump during the election campaign, initiators of mass unrest in the USA due to the murder of George Floyd (2020). The Russian military and political leadership has chosen the USA in general, and American citizens in particular as its strategic enemies and as the main target of propaganda, and to achieve its goals it uses technology of artificially inciting internal conflicts which involves the following steps: 1) a certain civil conflict is chosen no matter the issue (election campaign, use of firearms, attitudes towards immigrants, race relations, etc.), 2) legendary Internet trolls “catch on” to the discussion on a forum and begin to deepen the differences in looks; 3) trolls, following the orders of the overseers, split in two groups and start supporting each of the parties thus increasing the degree of discussion, or are given the task of leaving posts and comments in favor of both parties to the conflict. The main goal of this strategy is to intensify the conflict, and raise the emotion of disputes as high as possible. A study by *The New York Times* shows that Russian trolls worked purposefully with the audience of African Americans so that racial conflicts did not subside [11]. When, for example, another shooting takes place, or a new mass murderer appears, which happens from time to time, the overseer immediately commands the trolls to switch to the latest case and comment in such a way as to inflame the contradiction between the supporters of prohibiting weapons and those who are in favor of the right to possess firearms. Of course, Russian trolls hide behind anonymous nicknames and pretend to be just some concerned American citizens.

The most resonant information operation in the American area is interference in the US presidential elections. No one ever interfered in this purely internal American affair, but thanks to the World Wide Web and the new possibilities of mass communications, such a theoretical possibility has appeared, and a decision was made in Moscow to launch an information attack. The 2016 intervention was carried out in favor of Republican Donald Trump. At the same time, hacker attacks were made against his rival Democrat Hilary Clinton, and a number of official documents were stolen from her computer. Her correspondence was made public, which fact hurt the candidate's chances to become President. In 2020, the story with the interference in the election process repeated. The events became the subject of investigations by the US special services, who finally proved the fact of a special operation carried out by Russia – the evidence is contained in the report of Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III (2019) and the report of the special services of the US Senate [12].

Actually, Rospropaganda is a fairly organic part of Russian society based on the ideas of “eternal rashism”. It articulates what most Russians want to hear and are just waiting for a bright and winning form of presenting the material. Propagandists understand this and skillfully work out their extremely high fees. This also applies to those writers, screenwriters, and directors who consciously work in the field of propaganda.

Cinema occupies a central position in the “artistic” niche of propaganda. At one time, Lenin taught the People's Commissar of Education Anatoly Lunacharsky that of all the arts, cinema was the most important one for the USSR. The leader saw great ideological and propagandistic potential in films, because cinema is the most popular art, accessible even to illiterate workers and peasants. Modern Russian leadership thinks and acts within the framework of the Leninist paradigm, promoting the so-called patriotic cinema.

The propaganda cluster of Russian cinema can be divided in two groups: firstly, commissioned conjunctural pictures, and secondly, creative authorial works reflecting the spirit of rashism, and even more, creating the aesthetics of rashism. The state finances and orders propaganda films from the first cluster, which are mainly historical films to reinforce the Russian version

of the past. Most of the commissioned films, which are created with the support of the Ministry of Defense, are devoted to either the World War II or modern wars waged by Russia. Let's give the titles of some famous films released in recent years: *Brest Fortress* (directed by Alexandr Kott, 2010); *White Tiger* (directed by Karen Shakhnazarov, 2012); *Stalingrad* (directed by Fyodor Bondarchuk, 2013); *Battle for Sevastopol* (directed by Sergey Mokritskiy, 2015); *T-34* (directed by Aleksey Sidorov, 2018); *The Last Frontier* (directed by Vadim Shmelev, 2020); *The Pilot* (directed by Renat Davletyarov, 2021). The bigger is the time gap between today and the World War II, the more films are released on this topic. For directors and producers, such films are a win-win situation, because they satisfy the expectations of both the state and the moviegoer, who is already immersed in the context of rashism. Such a movie is like a drug for some Russians, it only confirms the already formed propagandist stereotypes.

Films are also created on contemporary topics to advertise Russia's participation in various wars. In such films, Russian soldiers are depicted as real knights: open, honest, and reliable; they constantly free or protect someone, they bring peace and justice to people. In fact, films play the role of the apologia of Russian militarism, and as such, they are an important component of military and political education, thus are quite generously financed from the state budget: an ordinary budget is from US\$ 3 to US\$ 10 million. Table 2 shows several examples of such patriotic films depicting modern wars.

Table 2

Customized patriotic films on military topics

Film	Topic (the subject of apologia)
<i>August. Eighth</i> (2012), directed by Dzhanik Fayziev.	War against Georgia in 2008.
<i>Crimea</i> (2017), directed by Aleksey Pimanov.	Russia's invading the Crimea
<i>The Crimean Bridge. Made with Love!</i> (2018), directed by Tigran Keosayan.	Annexation of the Crimea, building of the Crimean bridge.
<i>Russian Character</i> (2014), directed by Aleksandr Yakimchuk.	Justification of the "Russkiy spring"
<i>Sky</i> (2021), directed by Igor Kopylov.	War in Syria

It is necessary to single out films on military topics depicting Ukrainians as traitors, Nazis accomplices and, in general, bad people compared to Russkiye. In general, Russian cinema suggests two stereotypical images of a Ukrainian: 1) a cartoon figure needing external guidance, speaking a distorted language, and all in all, a cunning and narrow-minded character; 2) a killing squad member, Nazi, Hitler's accomplice. If a Russian film has a character speaking Surzhik (pidgin version of Russian and Ukrainian), then this personage will be either the former or the latter. The insidious Ukrainian nationalists, killing squad members from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army appear in the science fiction drama *Paradox Soldiers* (2010, directed by Aleksandr Samokhvalov and Boris Rostov). This xenophobic film was forbidden to be presented in Ukraine, although in 2012 it was broadcast by the ICTV Channel – censored. Ukrainian cinema-goers reacted with shock and disgust to another Russian film on the topic of the World War II, namely *Match* (2012, directed by Andrei Malyukov) dedicated to the famous events of 1942 in Kiev (a series of matches between Ukrainian football players and the invaders' teams). Such a reaction was caused by the same reason, the xenophobic display of Ukrainians. After viewing such films, the idea that killing a Ukrainian is not a serious sin starts forming in the minds of ordinary Russians.

Russian artists are creating artistic aesthetics of aggressive rashism under the slogan *We are Russkiye – we can do anything*. It is necessary to highlight here those authors who are not formally engaged with the authorities, but following their own beliefs, use their talent and actually determine the ideological meanings and artistic forms of rashism. In the writers' circle, the most noticeable works of this kind are those of flamboyant authors such as Eduard Limonov (1943-1920) and Zakhar Prilepin; as for the cinema, the most conspicuous are films by Aleksei Balabanov (1959-2013). Postmodernism, absurdity, leftism, nationalism, and esotericism fit well into the socio-cultural matrix of post-truth used by Putinism ideology. E. Limonov and Z. Prilepin, being leaders of the National Bolshevik Party, were actively engaged in politics and anti-Ukrainian activities. Z. Prilepin was a combatant in the Donbass war, boasted of killing Ukrainians, and raised money for separatists. But the influence of writers, even flamboyant ones, is inferior to the force of a film.

Aleksei Balabanov created the dilogy of *Brother* (1997) and *Brother-2* (2000), which has turned into a cult rashist cinema. The aesthetics of rashism is the manifestation of brutal power, revenge, aggressive national idea, the image of the enemy, as well as the rejection of Western values and contempt for the bourgeois lifestyle. Aleksei Balabanov intuitively grabs those narratives that are win-win in the Russian environment. The protagonist of both films is a simple Russian guy Danila Bagrov (played by Sergei Bodrov), who gets lost in the world of bandits, gangsters, poverty of the 1990s, but is allegedly the carrier of immanent Russkiy truth. In fact, his “truth” is racism, homophobia, anti-feminism, sexism, and, of course, Ukrainophobia.

When a Russian bandit from the film *Brother-2* shoots Ukrainians in an American restaurant shouting: *You will pay for Sevastopol, rascals*, then, according to observers, cinema halls in Russia explode with applause. The author of the film creates the illusion that the Russians’ mission is to correct the world according to their own patterns. The films are built in such a way that it is not always clear whether the author is sincere, or whether it is the grotesque satire on the Russian dream of murdering everyone. But the “ulterior people” perceived the films as truth; during the invasion of Ukraine, Russian soldiers painted tanks and armored vehicles with slogans and memes from *Brother-2*: *strength in truth, Russkiye don’t leave their fellow troops in the war, Russkiye do not give up*, etc. Journalist Sergey Morfinov in the article for *BBC News* depicts current situation in such a way: “*Rashism*” is a strange postmodern mixture including the chauvinist “Great Russian” outlook of the long-dead Russian Empire, nostalgia for the Soviet Union, revanchist sentiments of the post-Soviet military and security forces, pseudo-historic excursions of Vladimir Putin, as well as Orthodoxy with its simultaneous honoring of Nicholas II and Stalin, and to crown it all, quotes from the film “*Brother-2*”, written on the chevrons of the Russian soldiers [13].

Russian propaganda is a sinister cluster of rashism, which is trying to cover with its tentacles the space that is called “Russkiy Mir” by Moscow. Systematic brainwashing gives its poisoned shoots, and neither Putin’s regime nor his bloody wars would be possible without this component of the rashist system.

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3.6. THE *POBIEDOBESIE* (HYPERTROPHIED “VICTORIOUS” HYSTERIA) SPACE

The term “pobedobesie”, or victory frenzy, (the term is a Russian-language word play based on the words meaning “victory”, “to go crazy”, and “demons”) is the ultimate expression of rashism and Putinism, an example of how state propaganda can distort the used-to-be-bright holiday, turn May days into collective hysteria and a great-power orgy.

Throughout the USSR epoch, the victory over Nazism was interpreted and celebrated in different ways. For example, Stalin did not determine the day of victory over Hitler on May 8, as it was done elsewhere in Europe, but rather on May 9, when the act of surrender was re-signed in Berlin at his request. However, the Kremlin dictator did not launch grandiose official celebrations on this occa-

sion, because his previous plans for a world war had only come true partially; in the last years of his life, he prepared the country for a new battle for the dominance of communism on a global scale. In the future, Europe was to come under his control, not partially, but completely.

During Leonid Brezhnev's time, when the ambitious plan to build communism in the USSR had failed, the Communist Party began to change the focus of ideology and propaganda from the future to the past. The country started celebrating numerous "anniversary dates" related to Soviet history. May 9 in 1965 (the 20th anniversary of the victory over Nazism) was declared a non-working public holiday, thus starting a tradition that continues up to this day. From that day on, in Moscow, the milestone dates of the Victory have been celebrated with military parades in the Red Square. However, in those years, large masses of front-line soldiers, witnesses of the terrifying war, were still alive; almost every family had a member lost in the war. The war veterans celebrated in a rather restrained way: they did not boast their great deeds, but laconically remembered the past, wore their combat awards on the day, drank their "100-gram daily ration of vodka", and talked round corners, understanding very well what was true and what was not. For many years in a row, it was only war that they saw in the nightmares: explosions, bombings, comrades-in-arms, images of the dead, the horrors of destruction; the stress received at war haunted them for years and years, so they did want to involve young people, children, and grandchildren in their experience. It was on this day that informal commemoration events took place, when people spontaneously went to military burials with flowers (lilacs or tulips). Informal actions were not welcomed in the USSR, but this day was an exception. And there were definitely no dances on the graves, as the authorities were aware of the bounds of decency.

Since 1995, the Russian Federation has restored the tradition of military parades on May 9, and every year the celebrations were given a larger scale. V. Putin turned the historic event into a sacred date, so that now the celebration has acquired the status of the main public holiday in the year and involves new generations who have no idea about the real war. The generation of the war participants, which was slowly fading into eternity, had such a saying: "The main

thing is that there is no war.” They were ready to put up with the difficulties of the Soviet life, lack of food and consumer goods, because their war experience told them that life could be much worse. The previous generation of Soviet leaders, who went through all the war, also adhered to the philosophy of preserving peace, although they sought imperial adventures. The new generations, on the other hand, perceived the holiday as nothing more than a show, a carnival and an opportunity to drink alcohol, because they did not have such an inoculation.

The tension of the holidays was growing, and the national holiday, which used to be, first of all, a memory of the dead and the price of the victory, started transforming into the collective madness of those who had nothing to do with World War II. The new cultural phenomenon was defined as “pobedobesie” by the Russian Orthodox priest, Archpriest Georgy Mitrofanov (professor at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy). The neologism seemed sharp and successful, as it took root among critics of V. Putin’s policy of exploiting history.

For his part, V. Putin saw the “pobedobesie” as a tool to implement his own imperial plans, and a way to prepare the population for war. First, he privatized the “Great Victory”, declaring that it was Russia that made the main contribution to the victory over Hitler, and it could have done without other countries and peoples quite as well, because “Russkiye are a victorious nation.” Moscow no longer mentions the anti-Hitler coalition, and many young people believe that the USSR and the USA were on different sides of the front. The privatization of the holiday ended in 2021 with the adoption of a law of the Russian Federation, which, in particular, prohibits denying the “decisive role” of the Soviet Union “in defeating Nazi Germany.” This law was drafted as a new article to the already adopted one titled “On the Perpetuation of the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945”.

Second, falsification of history has taken place. The new article No. 61 of the already mentioned law, a topic is touched upon which is very troublesome for Moscow, namely, cooperation with the Hitler regime; now the norm of the law reads as follows: *Prohibition of public identification of the goals, decisions and actions of the USSR leadership, the command, and servicemen of the USSR with the*

goals, decisions and actions of the leadership, command, and servicemen of Nazi Germany and the Axis powers during the World War II, denying the decisive role of the Soviet people in the defeat of Nazi Germany and the humanitarian mission of the USSR during the liberation of the countries of Europe, says the document, with which the Russian authorities want to retouch history [1]. Thus, the undeniable fact that from September 1939 to June 1941 the USSR was a Third Reich ally disappeared from public discourse.

Third, V. Putin tries to downplay the role of Ukrainians in the victory over Nazi Germany. The Russian Federation had the status of one of the 15 Soviet republics that made up the USSR at the time of the victory, and 7 million Ukrainians fought at the fronts of the Second World War against Nazi Germany, but V. Putin is convinced that Russia could have done well without them. Let's turn to a fragment of V. Putin's annual live communication with the citizens of Russia in 2010: *Speaking about our relations with Ukraine. I will take the liberty of disagreeing with you when you say that if we had been separated, we would not have won the war. We would have won anyway, because we are the country of winners [2].* V. Putin mentions this idea constantly. In 2015, when invited to the 60th anniversary of the Auschwitz liberation, V. Putin gave an impassioned speech. In it, ironically, he never mentioned the Jews, or the Holocaust, but all the time glorified "the historic mission" of the liberating Russian soldiers [3].

Fourth, "pobedobesie" has turned into a tool of brainwashing and preparing the population for new wars, the latter being the main task of mass madness in May. Every year, the celebration acquires a more ominous character under the slogan: "be it necessary, we will repeat it again" (referring to the march through the European countries and the storm of Berlin), corresponding to the anti-NATO rhetoric of the Kremlin and contributing to the arousal of traditional rashist anti-Western sentiments.

Gradually, V. Putin began to act as the chief conductor of the annual event. The entire country prepares for the May holiday in advance, the celebration lasts for several days; the "muscles" and the aggressive grin of the "bear" are occasionally demonstrated. The state generously finances various activities, and refusal to participate in them is seen as a sign of disloyalty to the regime.

But if the opposition followed the development of events with increasing anxiety, the “ulterior people” joined the festive actions joyfully and sincerely, and even began to bring some elements of “creativity” to the action. Distaste, absurdity, grotesque and crazy inventions to satisfy the feelings of the great power are welcomed. Men install almost real tank turrets on their cars (often German-made) and paint the car bodies with various provocative slogans, such as “To Berlin!”, or “Berlin Trophy”, etc. If there is no car, then headgears in the form of a tank turrets are constructed of plywood and cardboard, and the face is painted in the colors of the Russian flag. Other typical features of these celebrations are: mass dressing of children and women in the Red Army military uniform in the time of the Second World War; baby strollers, stylized as tanks; production of foods, e.g. chocolate in the form of weapons, medals and military attributes; advertising alcohol, mayonnaise, hygiene products and other goods with holiday logos; advertising nightclubs and striptease clubs in the same manner, etc. It was here, in the display of “pobedobesie” that the true unity of Putin’s goals and the people’s wishes took place, and rashism was finally out in the open like a genie out of a bottle. In fact, the people finally received the opportunity to demonstrate not so much the memory of the far-gone war, which they do not really know, but the traditional intentions of the Russian mass consciousness: a sense of state greatness, an attempt to intimidate others, a claim to a great world mission, and hatred of the Western culture.

“Pobedobesie” was supposed to contribute to the integration of the imperial nation based on emotions of one’s own greatness and pride for the country, that is, to play the role of a “bonds” that connects citizens to each other. “Bond” is an important concept in the ideological system of putinism and an invention of the President’s speechwriters. For the first time, the concept was used in the State of the Federation address on December 12, 2012. The theme of “bonds” is developed by Patriarch Kirill in the context of the search for traditional Russian values. In Russia, spiritual bonds mean higher values, institutions, and traditions that unite the people, e.g. language, culture, traditions. For an imperial nation, this is a crucial moment – to find something that

spiritually unites representatives of different peoples and social classes, who lack solidarity in other respects. Thus, the original meaning of the holiday as a memory of the victory paid for by the incredible sacrifices and sufferings of the people imperceptibly shifted towards dancing on the graves with the aim of raising the prestige of the last empire and inspiring society to prepare for war. Local authorities in national republics, regions, and cities generally welcome both top-down and down-up initiatives, because this means state funding, an opportunity to launder money, show oneself in the best light, earn merit and receive thanks. It is considered common courtesy to show initiative, to do something special not done by the neighbors, to get on the television news. Moreover, the masses enthusiastically take part in the performance. The opposition quietly criticizes the events, but it can run into big trouble, therefore, only those who are abroad are free in voicing their opinions. As a rule, real veterans of the World War II, who no longer have the physical strength and clear understanding of the situation to speak out about the emasculation of the holiday, are left behind the “victory”.

The holiday scenario was improving and technologizing from year to year. Since 2008, the central event has been a military parade in the Red Square, in which samples of heavy weapons and missile systems are demonstrated, which is in fact a traditional demonstration of strength used since Stalin’s time, but then it was used on other public holidays. The parade in Moscow is the benefit of one actor, the leader and ruler of the empire. Such mass actions are a characteristic feature of all totalitarian, fascist, and Nazi systems. During grand parades and demonstrations, qualitative populism (U. Eco’s term) takes place: there is only one person – the leader, to whom everyone’s attention is drawn; he undertakes to represent the masses. To enhance the effect, world leaders are invited to Moscow for the celebration. During Boris Yeltsin’s time, when the tradition of annual military parades was started, more than 50 world leaders and 6 heads of international organizations came to see it. But after the attack on Ukraine in 2014, first Western leaders refused to attend, and eventually even Putin’s Asian and African friends followed the suit. In 2020, the anniversary year – 75 years since the end of the war – only the

leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan were present at the reviewing stand; in 2021, the loneliness of the Kremlin dictator was only shared by the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon [4].

The so-called “St. George ribbon” became the symbol of the “pobedobesie”, and the campaign for its distribution turned into a social technology. The campaign started in 2005 at the initiative of a group of state media journalists and received a warm welcome by the ruling circles. The ribbon is stylized in the colors of the Order of St. George established in 1769 by Russian Empress Catherine II for courage in the battlefield. The ribbon is not considered an award, but is only a reminder of the “great victory” holiday; in fact, it is a box with a double bottom, as it combines (and under false colours, too) two traditions: the imperial and the Soviet ones. For two weeks in May, several million ribbons are distributed for free; they are pinned to clothes or braided in the hair, hung on cars and motorcycles; depicted on billboards, posters, postcards; corresponding images are distributed via the Internet, etc. After the successful launch of the campaign, the authorities and public associations took care to transfer the new tradition to other countries; events simultaneously took place in several dozen countries of the world having Russian diasporas. The technology turned out to be effective, and the idea of the Russian Empire combined with the concept of the Russkiy Mir and the Great Victory created the mixture required by the Kremlin, i.e., the one expressing the greatness of Russia and the breadth of its symbolic borders. This was part of the ideological preparation to restore the Empire, which materialized in 2014, when the Russian “green men” and collaborators used the ribbon as an identification sign, and Ukrainians began to call it “coloradka” due to the similarity of its lines with the coloring of a well-known pest, ferociously fought by every kitchen-garden owner in Ukraine. In 2017, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine banned the ribbon to be used in public by adding a corresponding article to the Administrative Code.

A popular technology that is also exported to other countries is the “Immortal Regiment” promotion. The technology was initiated by Tomsk journalists in 2012 and gained a large scale with the support of the authorities. The idea is to take a large photo portrait of a family member who died in the World War II, fix it

on a wooden stand with a handle and carry it overhead in a column during a special procession. Mass actions are held in many cities of Russia in May; the leaders of the state and V. Putin himself join the columns for a certain time; all this is broadcast by TV channels. However, the local bureaucracy, in order to make its regiment the most numerous one, prepares some photographs and distributes them among the participants, who are recruited from among the so-called “budget employees” and students. This action is a perfect illustration of what U. Eco called the “cult of the dead” as a feature of fascist consciousness [5].

In Russia, the price of life is insignificant, and when an ordinary person is meant, then their soul is not worth anything at all. Instead, myths about fallen heroes are created and cultivated. During the World War II, the bodies of soldiers were hastily buried in the so-called communal graves: a ditch was dug, the bodies were stacked there and covered with earth, because people were considered expendables. Many such graves do not even have the names of the dead lying there. But then, expensive memorials were built at those places, various events were held, and in this way, the “cult of the dead” was springing.

The dead are better than the living, as they do not cause any problems, and any meanings and narratives can be attributed to their images. The story of the “immortal act of heroism of the 28 Panfilov’s men” is a striking example. According to the canonical narrative, they took the battle near Moscow in 1941, destroyed a strong force of German tanks, were killed during the attack, but did not allow the enemy to reach the sacred capital. This was one of the defining myths of the World War II, well known to almost every Soviet person. After the war, the unfortunate circumstances of the heroic act became known: not all of the team died – one fighter remained alive and even worked for the occupation administration, served in the German police, and in 1947 was arrested by the prosecutor’s office of the Kharkiv garrison; later, it turned out that four more participants of the fight had survived, and the fighter who had allegedly announced the details of the fight before his death had died two days before the event. It was a serious blow to propaganda, and Andrey Zhdanov, who was responsible for ideology, personally ordered to investigate the cases. It turned

out that the correspondent of the “Krasnaya Zvezda” newspaper Vasyl Koroteev, who was the first to write about the event, was not present at the front line, but heard about the battle at the regimental headquarters from the political instructor; the lists of the dead to be awarded the Gold Star Medal of Hero of Russia at the request of the military authorities were drawn up hastily and at random, the total number of the company was not even known for sure, and the correspondent actually made up the number of 28 heroes [6]. Back in 1941, military propaganda desperately needed myths that would raise the spirits of soldiers. The dead are the best material, there are no problems with them, you can make any story on their behalf. But in the case of the Panfilov’s men, some of the “dead” turned out to be alive, and that was a bad story for propaganda and myth-making. All the circumstances seem to have been clarified, but the myth began to live a life of its own. The Soviet leadership decided not to cancel anything and not to announce the results of the investigation. Today, the investigation materials have been finally published, but this did not stop the creators of the next military-patriotic blockbuster *Panfilov’s 28 Men* (2016, directed by Kim Druzhinin and Andrey Shalopa), because Russian narratives about the war are created in the style of post-truth. Who cares what happened in reality? The main thing is not the truth, but the propaganda effect.

The main object of militarizing the country, and promoting war (and its victims) are children and young people, and this is a feature of fascist countries, where the new generation is considered by the leaders to be the result of targeted education. In 2016, on the initiative of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu, the “Yunarmiya” (All-Russian children’s and youth military-patriotic public movement) was created, being practically a copy of the famous Hitler Youth. The headquarters of the organization was located in the House of Officers of the Moscow Military District. Children across the country are taught to handle weapons, shoot, and set up summer camps during specially organized outdoor training. Since July 2022, the Yunarmiya movement has been included in the EU sanctions list. However, Russia does not care a bit, the fascist system is developing comprehensively. Children are seen as future soldiers, and

officers in the General Staff are already calculating the country's mobilization potential for, say, 2030 or 2035. However, children are already in demand. On March 15, 2022, Sergei Shoigu issued order No. 132 on assessing the possibility of involving members of the Yunarmiya aged 17-18 in the "special military operation". The mechanism was supposed to be the following: conscripting young people for active military service, and then transferring them to servicing under the contract and deployment to the combat zone [7]. At this point the Yunarmiya function absolutely coincides with that of the Hitler Youth, let's say, in 1945.

The review of the rashism cluster, dedicated to the "pobedobesie", suggests the following considerations: 1) in Russia, the meaning and pathos of celebrating the victory over German Nazism was artificially changed; 2) the new holiday was liked by the "ulterior people" as a bearer of eternal rashism, because it gave them an opportunity to sublimate the ideas of rashism on the outside in a model of ostentatious aggressive behavior; 3) those not participating in the "pobedobesie" become deviants; 4) emotions received from the "pobedobesie" unite the imperial nation in a certain way and strengthen anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian sentiments; 5) the government manipulates the holiday to achieve its own utilitarian goals.

I cannot but mention here Leo Tolstoy's powerful words about instrumental patriotism and practices he actively criticized when observing various authorities' contributions made to the aggravation of the international situation through patriotic actions and attempts to mobilize public opinion against the peaceful existence of other nations for the sake of xenophobia. The classic of literature expressed his opinion as follows: *Patriotism in its simplest, clearest, and most unquestionable significance is for the rulers nothing but a tool for attaining their ambitious and selfish ends, and for the ruled a renunciation of human dignity, reason, conscience, and a slavish submission to those who are in power. Thus is patriotism actually preached, wherever it is preached. Patriotism is slavery.* [8].

In Russia, it was difficult to imagine warmongering as a form of collective madness in the 1990s; it took two decades of brainwashing for the "bonds-bearing people" to receive the news of

invading Ukraine with enthusiasm. Military fervor, generated by war propaganda and “pobedobesie”, had to find its way out, and aggression needed a channel for sublimation. In the context of “pobedobesie”, Ukrainians, the USA, and NATO gradually replaced the enemies of the mid-20th century in the minds of Russians. Today, the average Russian no longer knows that the USA and Great Britain fought together with the USSR and against Nazism. If the population is rallied into an imperial nation by stirring up war hysteria, sooner or later another war must happen. And so, it has happened.

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3.7. THE IDEOLOGY OF RASHISM AND WAR

Russia's attack on Ukraine was not an accident, a coincidence, or simply the result of V. Putin's sick consciousness. Rashism cannot put up with an independent, democratic, and successful Ukraine, because such a Ukraine undermines its foundation refuting a number of ideologies on which rashism is based, namely: historical myths, the thesis of the common people, the narrative of "historical Russia", the imperial right to rule the "Russkiy Mir", etc. Military aggression is the cultural code of the Moscow-Horde civilization as a whole, and from the moment V. Putin lifted restrictions used to be put on rashist thinking, war against Ukraine became inevitable.

All fascist regimes prepare for war, militarize society, and instill elements of chauvinistic hysteria and the inevitableness of war into the mass consciousness, saying that war is to happen soon, but the enemy will be chosen later by the head of the state. For fascists, the ideal society is one living in a military camp or fortress surrounded by enemies, as this way of life gives the authorities a big bonus in terms of mass manipulation. Nothing unites people so much and forces them to cling to the supreme ruler so desperately as an external threat, and thus the need to prepare for a battle with enemies, to solve geopolitical tasks, and to win back lands "rightfully belonging to the empire". The absence of external conflict and disputed territories is not a cause for appeasement, though, because in such a case, ideologues will find certain objects of invasion and depict external enemies. In no way did Ethiopia, Albania, or Greece threaten Italy in the 1930s, but Mussolini needed a heroic war of victory and an opponent who could be easily defeated, in order to turn Italy into an empire, and gain personal fame as a military leader. In his distorted imagination, the Mediterranean was supposed to become the All-Italian space like it used to be in the times of the Roman Empire; therefore, citizens of the fascist state received a valuable idea – a military struggle for a great Italy. In this sense, V. Putin's regime is completely identical to the totalitarian fascist systems of the 20th century.

Fascism implies war at any stage of its existence, as every military victory is a triumph of the evil will and a stepping stone to

new military adventures. If we take the chronological sequence of its development, we will see the emergence of a spiraling ideological strengthen, because each turn allegedly confirms the genius of the leader, the justice of his slogans, the irrefutability of the basic instructions of fascism. This spiral widens until finally, there comes the moment of breakdown and disaster, because no aggressive fascist regime has ensured the proclaimed eternal rule of its system. Hitler promised the Germans a thousand years of Nazism and the Third Reich, but his the lasted for less than thirteen years. A similar spiral can be observed in the history of putinism. Each time, after relatively successful military operations in the Caucasus, Syria, or Ukraine, V. Putin became more powerful in the eyes of Russians. The Ukrainian campaign was supposed to turn into a real triumph of the leader's will and that of the rashist ideology, but Putin's victorious spiral encountered a setback in the form of the heroic resistance of Ukrainians and solidarity of Western countries.

Rashism as an established form of mass consciousness combined with the ideology of putinism was bringing the great European war fatally closer. Evidence exists that the attack on Ukraine was not an impetuous decision, that Russia had been steadily moving in this direction for many years in a row. In 2015, a rather lengthy monograph by two Russian authors appeared online. It was titled *Peace and war in the XXI century: experience in long-term forecasting the development of international relations*. In this book, the authors cite the dates when a full-scale war of the Russian Federation against "Western local civilization" (WLC) should start (the terminology is suggested by the authors of the specified book). The war was supposed to start in 2021-2022. Of course, the authors did not refer to the strategic planning of the Russian military and political leadership, but to their understanding of the plans of Western countries, which were allegedly "certainly known" to them: *thus, it is possible to state that in 2015-2021 the preparatory stage of a global military conflict should be finished, during which the Western LC is supposed to create most favorable conditions for a future war against other LCs* [1, p. 301]. Let's cite another fragment, which more specifically speaks of Russia's war against the West: *The initial stage of this war against Russia is already in full swing, but its apogee will come precisely after*

2021-2022, when a change in the old paradigm of international relations will no longer require a local, but a large-scale use of military force. [1, p. 329] How could civilian political scientists know V. Putin and the military were preparing for a major war? First, such plans were indeed developed in advance, they existed and were implemented on time, as everyone could see in 2022. Second, the explanation is that Aleksei Podberozkin (one of the authors of the book) has been close to the highest political circles, was a member of the State Duma, ran for the presidency of Russia in 2000, and worked as vice-rector of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations until 2015; he heads the Center for Military and Political Research, founded by the Almaz-Antey Corporation (the leading corporation in the military and industrial complex of the Russian Federation). That is, the author has some informal relations with representatives of the military and political leadership, and could learn about the chosen time for a great war firsthand or secondhand. In his books, as it is always done in Russia, he misrepresents information and passes off the Kremlin's aggressive plans as the insidious intentions of the collective West. The main thing for us is that 7 years (perhaps even earlier) before the start of a full-scale war, Moscow had already chosen an approximate date for its large-scale confrontation with the West. So, it was not by chance that Ukraine was chosen as the theater of war (at its first stage). At the same time, war ideologemes were being polished, and the flywheel of war propaganda was spun.

The Russian-Ukrainian war is not only a traditional war of colonial aggression, it is simultaneously an ideological and intercivilizational war. Hence its cruel and implacable character, use of terrorist tactics, and manifestations of genocide. The war was being conceptualized for several years in a row. An ideological core was found, a war under the banner of "DENAZIFICATION OF UKRAINE". This concept was presented to V. Putin, he approved it, and voiced it in his televised address overnight into February 24, 2022. Today, it is difficult to trace the person who was the first to suggest the idea of a Nazi Ukraine that should be de-Nazified. But the memes "Nazis", "fascists", "Benderovites", and "terrorists" has been widely used by Russian propagandists since the Revolution of Dignity (winter 2013-2014). They turned into an integral part of

the information war within the framework of the Russian hybrid invasion, which Moscow transformed from a latent regime into a state of open actions and started invading territories in the South and East of Ukraine in the spring of 2014.

So, the concept of war against Ukraine under the slogan of denazification had been developing in Russia for some time. The first public sign of it was the book by a Moscow journalist, the author of several historical works, Armen Gasparyan: *DeNAZification of Ukraine. The country of unlearned lessons* [2]. The author formulates three theses, which will then be promoted by theorists of “denazification”: 1) “denazification” should not only be applied to the elite and the policy makers, but also refer to the entire Ukrainian people; 2) it is worth using the experience of the denazification of Germans after the World War I (the process was officially completed no sooner than in 1992); 3) Ukrainians themselves are not capable of carrying it out, so Russians will have to work on it. In this context, Russia legitimized the future war against Ukraine.

The broad concept of “denazification” was prepared behind closed doors as a technology for the future war, so when V. Putin defined the goals of the “special military operation” (namely, denazification and demilitarization), he had a fairly clear algorithm of what should be done in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The veil of secrecy over the plans of the Russian Federation was partially lifted by the Moscow political technologist Timofey Sergeytsev, who, in particular, had been previously engaged by Ukrainian oligarchs to organize election campaigns in Ukraine. He is also the author of the script to the scandalous *Match*, where the images of Ukrainians were purposefully distorted. On April 3, 2022, his article *What Russia should do with Ukraine* was published on the website of the state news agency RIA Novosti [3]. The publication, obviously, did not appear by chance and had a significant resonance. It was intended for the domestic consumer, the Russian military, the FSB apparatus, and aimed at revealing the ideological nature of the war with Ukraine and at serving as a certain methodical guide for the occupiers. President V. Zelenskyy mentioned the article saying that its genocidal content would be proof at the future tribunal [4]; the German Bundestag member representing the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Thomas Heilmann, filed a complaint with the Berlin

prosecutor's office against T. Sergeytsev regarding the publication, because, according to the MP, the propaganda article violated the Genocide Convention [5]. In Ukraine, criminal proceedings were opened against A. Gasparyan and T. Sergeytsev.

The article is apparently an excerpt from a larger and more thorough document drafted before the war and approved by V. Putin. The text clearly lays out the plan of the so-called “denazification”, giving no arguments for it but foreseeing the complete destruction of the architecture of the Ukrainian society, carrying out a planned genocide, the destruction of statehood, etc. The content of T. Sergeytsev's article is so important that it should be cut into pieces by points. So, the Russian concept of “denazification” includes the following provisions:

- 1) *We don't need a Nazi, Bandera Ukraine, Russia's enemy and the West's instrument for the destruction of Russia*, begins T. Sergeytsev. A question arises, who is meant by “us”? One can guess that here Putin's Russia is meant, which had begun occupying Ukrainian territories.
- 2) The “denazification” can only be provided if Ukrainian resistance forces are destroyed, and Ukraine is occupied and completely controlled by Russia; the party to the conflict that loses will not have any subjectivity or opportunity to challenge the actions of the occupiers: *In this regard, the de-Nazified country cannot be sovereign. The denazifying state, Russia, cannot proceed from a liberal approach in relation to denazification. The denazifier's ideology cannot be contested by the guilty party subjected to denazification.*
- 3) Active Ukrainian minorities, politicians, patriots, military officers, and public figures are to be destroyed: *The Bandera elite is to be liquidated, as its re-education is impossible.*
- 4) “Denazification” is a policy regarding the main mass of the Ukrainian population: *Denazification is a set of measures in relation to the nationalized mass of the population, which technically cannot be subjected to direct punishment as war criminals.* That is, technically, millions of people cannot be punished at the same time, they must be re-educated in a cruel way. The author of the concept offers a presumption of guilt: a Ukrainian is a potential Nazi who must be broken: a

significant part of the population, who are passive Nazis, and accomplices of Nazism, are guilty. They supported the Nazi regime and encouraged it. A just punishment of this part of the population is only possible in the form of living under inevitable the burden of a just war. The author suggests to avoid supporting the captured territories economically, and to avoid any “Marshall plans” in order to cause more suffering and throw the territories of Ukraine back in time for a century: *The social “swamp”... must survive the hardships of the war and learn the experience as a historical lesson and atonement for its guilt.*

- 5) For the “denazification” to be successful in the occupied territories, special authorized bodies provided with the necessary legal basis are to be created, and complete purge of the population is to be carried out. Identified “Nazi” accomplices should be punished according to the new laws, writes T. Sergeytsev: *Further denazification of this population consists in re-education, which is achieved by ideological repression (suppression) of Nazi attitudes and strict censorship: not only in the political sphere, but necessarily also in the sphere of culture and education.*
- 6) The duration of the “denazification” is at least one generation. During this time, it is necessary to free Ukrainians from European illusions: *the denazification of Ukraine is the inevitable de-Europeanization* and the installation of the Russian information space. So, it was planned to keep Ukrainians in captivity, behind the Iron Curtain, away from Europe.
- 7) Ukraine as a single country was planned to cease to exist, and the term “Ukraine” was to be no longer used. In the East, in the South, and in the Center of its territory, quasi-republics were to be artificially created, where the Russians rule. Speaking of the Western part, the author of the concept graciously allows it to have a territory where repressive de-Ukrainization measures will not be carried out, but which will also be forcibly demilitarized and, perhaps, will receive Russia’s permanent military presence.
- 8) Finally, Russia itself should also change, forever severing its ties with the West. At the end of the opus, the author literally gushes out rashist messianism, which has not been comprehended

by the West, so may it be worse for it: *Russia did everything possible to save the West in the 20th century. It implemented the main Western project, which is an alternative to capitalism, the latter defeating the national states: a socialist, red project. It crushed German Nazism, a monstrous product of the crisis of the Western civilization. The last act of Russian altruism was the hand of friendship extended by Russia, for which Russia received a monstrous blow in the 1990s. Everything that Russia did for the West, it did at its own expense, by making greatest sacrifices. The West, in the end, rejected all these sacrifices, devalued Russia's contribution to solving the Western crisis, decided to take revenge on Russia for the help it selflessly provided. Now, Russia will go its own way, without having any concern for the fate of the West, and relying on the second part of its heritage: leadership in the global process of decolonization.*

It is worth noting that T Sergeytsev was not the first to speak out about the “denazification” of Ukrainians. His previous opus, published exactly one year ago, reveals the essence of the Russian understanding of the Ukrainian Nazism. It is worth quoting in full: *The liquidation of such a Nazi community requires not only cutting off the top of its leadership, but cleansing the Nazified people of Nazi influence and involvement in Nazi ideology and practice. Such is the case with Ukraine, which took a massive Nazi oath due to the allegedly beautiful political vector of “European aspirations”* [6]. Therefore, the fault of the majority of Ukrainians is that they supported the course of rapprochement with Europe rather than with Russia. This automatically makes Ukrainians “Nazis” who must be fought by military means. This is the pathos of the first article, and the second one has turned into the manifesto of occupation.

The time has come when fascists begin calling themselves anti-fascists and attach the label of Nazism to democratic countries and free-loving peoples. Previously, fascists and Nazis did not hide their essence and were proud of their ideological brands. T. Snyder believes that *It's not the first time Ukraine has been the object of fascist war. The conquest of the country was Hitler's main war aim in 1941. Hitler thought that the Soviet Union, which then ruled Ukraine, was a Jewish state: He planned to replace Soviet rule with*

his own and claim Ukraine's fertile agricultural soil. [7]. Hitler explained his war with ideological reasons, the need to destroy the communist state and the center of Jewry, which was dangerous for the Germans. What Russia accuses Ukraine of is also ideological, and T. Sergeytsev openly states this fact.

And if to look even deeper, the prophecy of S. Huntington is coming true, as the war against Ukraine has acquired an intercivilizational character, placing first cultural characteristics, the problem of identity, ideological issues, and the way countries are grouped in the modern world. Ukraine has democratically decided to make its geopolitical choice not favoring Russia, and the offended neighbor found no other way out than to brutally punish those whom the Kremlin calls “brotherly people”, or even “one” people with the Russians. The entire genocidal concept of T. Sergeytsev is literally imbued with the civilizational ideas and the ideological underpinning of the “denazification” policy. Now it is no more sufficient for Russians to colonize Ukraine, they want to break the code of civilization, the cultural foundation of Ukrainians. “Soft power” has failed, so V. Putin has resorted to an essentially genocidal war; “denazification” is a verbal wrapper for a detailed plan to destroy Ukrainian European identity.

The ideological and genocidal nature of the war is confirmed by Russia's politics in the occupied territories. The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in its report for the first six months of the Russian-Ukrainian conventional war, in particular, says that having studied captured documents and real events, the Institute concluded that the aggressors divided the Ukrainians into four categories: 1) those who must be immediately killed; 2) those under suspicion, who should go through filtering camps for their fate to be decided; 3) the bulk of the “neutral” population, who can be used, turned into citizens of the Russian Federation, or relocated to its territory, etc.; 4) collaborators, who are involved in the management of captured territories [8]. In fact, the division coincides with T. Sergeytsev's methodology and confirms the fact the publication of his article was not accidental, and its content is not the delusion of a political technologist.

The occupiers did not wait for the complete capture of Ukraine's territory and the establishment of control over Kyiv in order to start

the implementation of their “denazification” plan. Their first step was to organize the so-called “cellars”, which was taking place in every occupied settlement without any exception. In the large city of Kherson, for example, rashists built four “cellars” at once [9]. As far back as 2014, Ukrainians created a set phrase and a meme “to throw somebody into the cellar”, and it has been familiar to everyone ever since. “The cellar” does not only mean a closed room used to hold hostages and torture citizens; it is a political tool in the occupied territories, and even more so, an institution that had its own sinister practices, which fact quite soon became known to the people. “The cellar” is the informal right of the occupiers to repress anyone at their discretion. No formal norms apply where armed Russians appear, a person with a machine gun becomes the highest authority. And neither the very fact of detaining a person and “throwing them into the cellar”, nor the terms of imprisonment, nor the rules of holding hostages, nor the fate of the prisoners – nothing is determined in advance, but depends on the criminal will of those who carry out such terrorist policies. It is not possible to complain about anything of the mentioned above, just as there is no authority to consider complaints, nor any advocacy institute. This is exactly what the concept of “denazification” envisioned: Ukrainians were left with no rights and were handed over to the denazifiers.

“The cellar” is a technique of terrorizing the population used the occupiers in order to break the people’s will to resist and prevent them from expressing their disagreement with the occupiers’ actions; it is a symbol of the “Russkiy mir” regime. However, the Russians remained true to themselves in this situation, using “the cellar” tool for personal enrichment: in certain cases, the relatives of the unfortunate prisoner started negotiations with the occupiers and finally, received an opportunity to bribe the inquisitors to free their beloved one. A few thousand dollars was the price of a person’s life and freedom, on condition that their name was not mentioned in special execution lists. Thousands of Ukrainian men and women, adults and children, have been to the occupiers’ “cellars”, and their absolute majority was subjected to physical and psychological torture. It is suspected that the occupiers dealing with the prisoners had some sadistic deviations, and it was right on this basis that they were selected to administer the torture rooms.

Who were these tortures? From the first day of the invasion, the Russian convoys were attended by security forces specializing in police functions, e.g. units of the National Guard Forces, units of the FSB and the GRU. The latter had lists of those planned to be executed, repressed, sought out, etc. These lists had been compiled for several years in a row even before the war, and agents on the ground, open sources, and social networks were used to collect information about Ukrainian citizens. The lists were supplemented with data received by Russian special services from local collaborators immediately after capturing populated areas; denunciations were actively used. The lists included veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and/or Joint Forces Operation (JFO), Ukrainian activists, local public and political figures, and their family members.

It was according to this logic that the Ukrainian children's writer Volodymyr Vakulenko, who lived in the village of Kapitolivka near Izyum, was killed. On March 24, 2022, the occupiers took him from his own home, and shot him dead (later, two bullets from a Makarov pistol were found in his body); then they buried Volodymyr Vakulenko in an unmarked grave at number 319 in a well-known forest. After the liberation of Izyum, the writer's remains were identified and reburied in Kharkiv [10]. V. Vakulenko had a disability, so he did not pose any physical threat to the occupiers, but, obviously, his surname was in the 1st category of citizens who were subject to immediate execution. His only fault was that he was Ukrainian, spoke Ukrainian, wrote children's fairy tales in Ukrainian, and never hid his patriotic views. He fit under the group defined by the occupiers as "Bandera activists".

After liberating populated areas, the Ukrainian military began the process of documenting crimes committed by the occupiers, interviewing witnesses and victims, and exhuming the remains of those killed in torture rooms. Ukrainian lawyers, prosecutors, and investigators qualify the occupiers' actions as war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of genocide, the materials on which will be provided to a special tribunal that is supposed to investigate the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war. So, the point of the "denazification" plan designed "to execute "Bandera accomplices", was literally carried out from the very first days of the occupation.

The occupiers used the technology of population rotation familiar to Russians: Ukrainians were evacuated to Russia under various pretexts, and “migrants” were brought from the territory of the Russian Federation to Ukraine. The evacuated Ukrainians were supposed to be brought as far away as possible, relocated to such Russian territories as the Far East, in an attempt to solve demographic problems on the territory of the Russian Federation. This mechanism was well practiced in the Russian Empire at all stages of its existence. It was actively used to control the Crimea: since 2014, about 800,000 Russian citizens have moved there to a permanent place of residence from various regions of the Russian Federation; in return, Crimeans were offered resettlement to mainland Russia under various pretexts (e.g., work in a new place). During several months of occupation, starting from February 2022, the Russians managed to move to the occupied regions numerous managers, specialists, families of military personnel and FSB officers, etc.; especially since many Ukrainians either left for the territory controlled by Ukraine or refused to work in occupation institutions (the latter was rather typical for teachers). Occupation administrations were given a special task of hunting for Ukrainian children, which event has gone down in history as the “DNA hunt.” Children of Slavic origin were supposed to replenish the blood of Russians depleted in recent years, and thus, Ukrainian children were systematically transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation under various humanitarian pretexts. This did not go unnoticed in the world, though. On March 17, 2023, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the President Vladimir Putin, and the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova. They are accused of deporting Ukrainian children from the occupied territories of Ukraine.

The ideological character of the war displayed itself in the occupiers’ attitude towards Ukrainian culture, language, national values, history, etc. The strategy of the intercivilizational war does not only consist in capturing the territory, but rather, in imposing the occupier’s own socio-cultural matrix on those in defense, if to speak figuratively. At the same time, the occupiers had to break the Ukrainian code of civilization, and this is clearly reflected in the tactics of their actions. First, everything that is valuable to Ukrainians

was destroyed: symbols, monuments, museum collections, names of cities and streets (their old, Soviet names were returned). Instead, Russian symbols, colors, and stylistics were planted in a brutal form. For example, the museum of the famous philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda (whose 300th birthday was celebrated in 2022) was destroyed with a high-precision missile. The museum is located in a rural picturesque area in the village of Skovorodynivka near Kharkiv, and there are neither industrial nor military facilities nearby. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Moscow generals determining the goals of the missile launch deliberately destroyed the ancient manor house, where the prominent Ukrainian thinker had spent the last years of his life. Why this act of barbarism? Obviously, such are the laws of an ideological war: all the objects valuable for the enemy (even if the Russians do not understand why the Ukrainians value Skovoroda so much) are considered to be “legitimate” military goals. In fact, Skovoroda definitely does not fit into the concept of the “Ruskiy Mir”, as he was a theoretician of individual human freedom and materialized this doctrine in his personal life of a traveling philosopher, while Russia is organized on the principles of a slave system.

Second, the occupiers immediately tackled the education system through forcibly introducing Russian curricula and bringing textbooks from Russia. The Ukrainian language was banned from school lessons and University lectures. Ukrainian textbooks, books, even fairy tales were confiscated and burned. The occupiers were worried about Ukrainian children in the occupied territories secretly attending online classes given by Ukrainian schools, so they practiced breaking into the private homes of Ukrainian families and checking the children’s gadgets. Before the educational process in the Kherson region was begun, the occupiers had threatened those not wanting to send their children to captured schools and study according to Russian programs with eviction and property confiscation [11].

Third, Russian traditions, holidays, and activities of public organizations were actively transferred to the territory of Ukraine, and accordingly a ban was imposed on everything that was Ukrainian. Russians even made an attempt to start the “Yunarmy” movement at schools [12]. In this regard, the ideological and propaganda

structures of the “DPR” and “LPR”, which had already had seven years of experience in introducing rashism, have advanced far. The so-called “denazification” has actually turned into de-Ukrainization; and this is V. Putin’s real goal: the destruction of Ukrainianism and its replacement by the “Russkiy Mir”. So, it is a war for certain values, people’s consciousness, and cultural codes.

Aggressive rashism lacked the symbols that fascists of all countries value so much, and the war gave birth to them, creating the central rashist symbol, the Russian swastika in the form of the Latin letter Z. It turned out funny, because they have chosen a letter of the enemy’s alphabet, and did not use any “bracing” symbol, for example, the pre-revolutionary letter “yat” or something like that. The process was launched by coincidence: Columns of tanks, cars, and armored vehicles advancing from different directions into Ukraine were marked with certain symbols, including the Z sign used by the military of the Western Military District, V by the Eastern Military District, and the triangular sign was used for the Southern Military District. In the very first days of the invasion, Russian cheer-patriots started putting the Z sign on their private cars, walls of houses, and just various things in order to show their solidarity with the war against Ukrainians. It worked like the first pebble in the mountains that causes a rockfall. The flash mob was picked up by authorities, educational institutions, and now Z is made of St. George’s ribbons (thus, creating a combination of two rashist traditions), stuck on clothes; cars are lined up in the shape of letters, and such installations are filmed by drones; live installations are made of schoolchildren and students; the letter is applied as a logo on various goods and, as it often happens in Russia, people finally went wild and started even painting the letter on women’s underwear [13]. If Russian patriots and propagandists were smarter and read books, they would know that similar symbols had been used by various units of the SS and Wehrmacht during the World War II, in particular, by the 4th SS Division fighting near Leningrad.

Also, Russian troops used the V symbol, which cannot be called Russian, either. In iconic slogans and sayings, the letters of the Russian alphabet were replaced by Z and V to form patriotic hashtags, such as: “ZaPobedu” (for Victory!), “ZaPatsanov” (for our

guys!), “SilaVPravde” (strenght in truth), etc. These slogans show that Russians have not yet forgot the extremely popular *Brother-2* film, which depicted and interesting cultural situation in Russia, when the national idea was combined with criminal slogans and the so-called “thieves’ idea”. The mobilization of criminals from prisons into the ranks of the aggressors only strengthened this rather organic connection. The rashist swastika has turned out to be completely idealess and meaningless, but its instant spread brings me to the conclusion that the “ulterior people” had been waiting for something similar, and finally received it.

In intercivilizational wars, it is always necessary to look for cultural difference and methods of its compensation by the parties. The difference in the general culture is naturally reflected in the military culture, in the morale of the military and the motives for carrying out combat tasks, in weapons, and in tactic combat. Each party tries to use its civilizational advantages. For the Russians, the advantage lies in several socio-psychological phenomena, namely: 1) insensitivity to losses, 2) employment of the personnel en masse and efforts to suppress the enemy due to the number of soldiers, but not the quality of military action, 3) rigid military hierarchy and discipline, which is supposed to help the army work like a machine. A more detailed explanation of the intercivilizational war concept is given in the book titled *War of Civilizations: Anatomy of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict* [14] (published in Ukrainian).

During the 30 years of independence, and especially in the last eight years, Ukraine has evolved significantly, rejecting common Soviet military models and traditions. The principles of NATO are completely different. NATO member states do not fight using great numbers of soldiers, neither do they use untrained fighters, because all this brings great tolls, and thus such an attitude does not exist in the Western war philosophy. Ukraine has also embarked on this path. The principles of waging a war by defense forces are more reminiscent of network practices, where commanders of all echelons can take important decisions based on the specific situation and personal responsibility for the state of affairs in their sectors. Organizing resistance and military actions, Ukrainians show their characteristic civilizational traits: individualism, rationalism, ingenuity, and conscious attitude to reality, which are contrary to

Russian features: collectivism (the philosophy of a common destiny that cannot be changed by an individual person), irrationalism, and the ability to live in an imaginary world where the perceived effects do not match the actual causes.

In the course of hostilities, other signs of cultural difference were revealed, primarily, the attitude towards the living and the dead. Russians showed no interest in the bodies of their own killed soldiers, were not willing to participate in exchange; and as for the wounded, they were left on the battlefield. Even the Ukrainian countrymen felt the huge civilizational difference when encountering great numbers of “orcs”, many of whom had never seen the benefits of civilization, were dirty, hungry, and prone to alcoholism and violence. In this way, the image of a beautiful life in Russia spread by television series of the recent years, which were supposed to perform the function of “soft power”, was destroyed. The war accelerated the civilizational split between Ukraine and Russia, and this is a fundamental consequence that will have strategic significance for the existence of Ukraine for a long period in the future.

The ideological imperial war has caused a crisis in international relations and given birth to a trend towards a war of civilizations. According to the theory suggested by S. Huntington, such wars have a three-level structure. The first level includes those countries that have already entered into combat contact and are fighting at the kinetic level. These are Ukraine and Russia. The second level is made up of countries directly helping each of the parties. Ukraine is physically supported by the countries of Western civilization; the largest aid comes from the USA, the United Kingdom, Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, and half a hundred more states provide support to Ukraine in the Rammstein format. This is generally the way the solidarity of Europeans and those belonging to the Western civilization shows itself. But who supports Russia? Its direct allies are scarce, namely: Belarus, Iran, the DPRK, and Syria. However, the amount of military aid Russia receives is quite limited. At the third level, sympathizing countries are grouped, those that provide political or moral support. Undoubtedly, China is biased on Russia's side, although outwardly it tries to demonstrate neutrality. According to the results of voting held at the UN on the resolution condemning the annexation of four

regions of Ukraine, Ukraine is supported by 143 countries of the world. Four countries voting against the resolution and supporting the Russian Federation were Belarus, North Korea, Nicaragua and Syria [15]. Russia relies on those countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, with which it cooperates within the framework of such international organizations as the SCO, CSTO, and BRICS, but here, the general motives of opposition to the West work here rather than the principle of civilizational kinship.

The ideology of rashism and Russians' beliefs manifested themselves to their utmost during the war. The ideological subtext of the war is to replace the European values and ideals, to which the absolute majority of Ukrainians have leant in recent years, with cultural meanings of the "Russkiy Mir". Actually, this is the "de-Europeanization" mentioned by T. Sergeytsev, and this is what V. Putin has in mind. So, the war is being waged for people's consciousness, and rashists are acting off-handedly, impudently, trying to achieve their goals with repression and terror. I hope that Russian fascism (aggressive rashism) has reached the last turn of the spiral, and thus has no chance to continue.

This war must end with the defeat of rashist ideology, like the ideologies of German Nazism and Italian fascism did. Whether this defeat will change the situation in Russia itself, is doubtful, because, according to the given observations, rashism did not appear by accident. Still, the issue is not closed yet, but Europeans should learn a lesson for themselves, so as not to cherish vain hopes that modern Russia remaining rigid for centuries can miraculously change, and then the united Europe will stretch from Lisbon to Vladivostok. This will not happen, neither in the near future, nor in the long term, and a new iron curtain is a more likely scenario. For Ukrainians, the ultimate task is to stay by the side of freedom and European civilization.

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CONCLUSION

While the book was still in the process of being written, the topic of rashism left the plane of purely scientific interest and turned into an object of attention of respected political institutions. In the statement dated May 2, 2023 and titled “On the use of the ideology of rashism by the political regime of the Russian Federation, and on the condemnation of the foundations and practices of rashism as totalitarian and misanthropic”, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine officially recognized rashism as the state ideology of Russia and called on international organizations and governments of democratic countries to support the condemnation of this policy. In the statement, Ukrainian MPs called on the United Nations, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the governments and parliaments of foreign countries to support the condemnation of the ideology, politics, and practice of rashism. The call of Ukrainian parliamentarians was heard, and the Luxembourg session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly unanimously recognized Russia’s crimes against Ukraine as genocide, and the regime in the Russian Federation as rashism.

Rashism has revealed its long-standing anti-European nature through aggression against Ukraine. Moscow does not hide it and even seems to be glad to have broken its ties with the European civilization. The professor of history Sergey Karaganov, who is the honorary chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy – a public organization uniting influential Russian politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals actively working for Putin – mentioned the end of the “Western yoke” in an interview dated June 2023. Actually, he precisely formulated the ideology of Putinism and the mood prevailing in the expert circle closest to Putin. Prof Karaganov compares Russia to an icebreaker that splits

the five-hundred-year-old ice of the Western domination, and most of the nations of the world are already following Russia towards true independence and freedom. He interprets the war in Ukraine as a battle against the West and does not doubt the victory of Russia and the decline of the Western civilization. S. Karaganov is a rashist, and his ideas are a manifesto of rashism. The arrogance and belief in one's own power inherent in the Russians allow him to draw a dubious conclusion: *Russia is a warrior country that has pulled from under the West the foundations of its dominance in politics, economy, military affairs, and culture* [1]. The facts, nonetheless, show the opposite: Russia has revealed its backwardness and military barbarism, and has suffered a series of defeats on various fronts of the global war with Western civilization. V. Putin has not achieved his goals in Ukraine, its "gas armaments" has failed, Russia has suffered a fiasco in major international organizations as well as a number of legal defeats, and the country's economy is on the verge of collapse due to the sanctions. But why does the country, which for all the 500 years of the so-called "Western yoke" has only been a recipient in relation to European civilization, has borrowed everything it needed from the West: from the kerosene lamp to the atomic bomb, from classical German philosophy to French ballet (later called "Russkiy" by Russians themselves), from classical to rock music, from university traditions to the water closet, – why does it pay back in such an aggressive and ugly manner? This is rashism, and it cannot be cured.

The answer to the riddles of Russian history and the "Russkiy soul" seem to have been found. The mentality of the people, of the so-called "ulterior people", the ground foundations of socio-political organization and the ideology of rashism are not amenable to serious changes, because they make up the socio-cultural basis of the specific Moscow-Horde civilization. All of God's designs remain obscure, but social history includes the presence of social units whose period of existence is measured on average at 1,000 years (perhaps a bit more or less). Throughout the history of each social unit called civilization, a socio-cultural constant, the core of the entire system, is preserved, and it is from the angle of this scientific view that the phenomenon of rashism should be considered. Conservatism and traditionalism are typical features of the Russian civilization. From the very beginning, its socio-cultural core was

made up of Horde values and the Horde worldview, it is a daughter branch of the Mongolosphere, the civilization of the Great Steppe, which was neither historically, nor anthropologically, nor spiritually connected with European civilization. The mass consciousness of the Horde is at the conditionally genetic level immune against the pressure of external influences, which determines the continuance of the Russians' basic ideas and instructions, no matter what new ideas and schools may arise in the world.

The Muscovites themselves, after gaining political independence, did everything possible to erase every mentioning of the Horde from historical memory. They almost succeeded, but no German scientists or Russian educators, whom Catherine II entrusted with writing a new history of the state, were strong enough to change the immanent rashist value system. In the system of rashism, the following values were significant from the very beginning and have remained valid until now: 1) etatist values, the idea of serving the state, autocratic thinking and love for a great one-man ruler, if he is "formidable" and performs the function of expanding the state; 2) the desire for state greatness and vague ideas about a special historical mission that supposedly befell the country and its people, a sense of its exclusiveness in the world as a heavenly will entrusted to Russkiy people to correct others and dictate their own will; 3) inclination to adhere to tradition, patriarchal system, and fear of social changes; 4) aggressiveness and cruelty; 5) xenophobia and westernophobia, the fear that external contacts will destroy the natural state of society. All this together defines the rashist worldview, which is an eternal constant present in the heads of both janitors and academics.

The rashist worldview is a unique national phenomenon that cannot spread throughout the world in the manner of modern religions, the torch of which was carried by preachers and missionaries. However, Muscovites and Russians have always stubbornly tried to expand their socio-cultural space and developed certain technologies for promoting rashism in the world. The first step is military aggression and conquest of territories or establishment of political control through blackmail and external coercion, etc.; the second step is the work of state institutions in the occupied territory, first of all, the colonial activity of the Russian Orthodox Church, educational institutions and administrative bodies, the formation of the fifth column, which contributes to the

colonization of the territory; the third step is the change of identity, the imposition of Russianness. Millions of Eurasian natives have been forced to change their identity and become “Russkiy people”. An obvious regularity is observed: in the regions where local peoples did not initially have a high cultural level and a developed identity, the assimilation process progressed with more confidence. Today, tens of millions of newly converted “Russkiy people” live from the western borders of the former USSR to the Far East and China. Their ancestors had other identities, their own languages, local names. This is the result of the policy of cultural colonialism. Larger and more cohesive ethnic groups still retain their identities, although they suffer from Russification, which is not only imposing the language, but also inoculating the Horde mentality. Efforts to advance the civilization frontiers to the West, to engulf European communities, and to introduce technologies to project a civilizational matrix generated considerable cultural resistance offered by the peoples of Eastern Europe. The war against Ukraine, as numerous facts show, has an obvious civilizational dimension; Russia is trying hard to “finally solve the Ukrainian question”, that is, to break the civilizational code of Ukrainians and “reflash” it in accordance with the mentality of Russians.

Rashism has had its ideologues since the elder Philoteus. Every theologian, philosopher, and historian who tackled the ideological facet of rashism in one way or another repeated his predecessors, went around the same ideas and theses. No one from this line has ever looked towards the ideas of inherent human rights, individual freedom, and democracy, which were advocated by various thinkers of the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Modern eras. According to the ideologues of rashism, all this comes from the Evil one and “Catholic devils”. In this regard, the old theories suggested by the Slavophiles, national loyalists, or Black Hundred members, and more modern Eurasianists, Gumilyov or Dugin only disagree in details. All of them express the spirit of “eternal rashism”. The reason for that does not lie in the heredity of theories, but in the existence of the “ulterior people” as the bearer of the Horde worldview. The Russian masses will always support a Stalin or Putin, but not a Kerensky or Gorbachev. Several times the history of Russia has seen periods when, due to powerful socio-political crises, power was taken by the so-called democrats, that is, groups of politicians who

did not profess rashist values and ideas, but leaned towards Western traditions and innovations. Every time they were met with a quick failure, and Russian society returned to the usual civilizational framework. From the depths of the people Minins and Pozharskis came, who defeated the “democrats” and said: everything will be as before, we will not shave our beards, we will sleep after lunch, we will burn the devil’s Latin books and pray to “Our God” in peace under church bells.

Since the reign of Peter I, rashism has been controlled by the state in one way or another, even repressed to a certain extent. Imitation of Europeanness required the rulers of Russia to restrain internal nationalist movements in their most odious forms of manifestation. The central governments sympathized with the Slavophiles, national loyalists, even the Black Hundreds, but did not officially take their side. A similar picture was observed in the former USSR: Moscow restrained great-power chauvinism and rashist trends, fearing that they would destroy the structure of the Federation. During V. Putin’s time, the deconservation of rashism and its ideology has taken place, perhaps for the first time in the whole Russian history. In fact, V. Putin did not need a complete theory of rashism in order to advance the country on the path of a fascist state. Rashism literally radiated from various clusters of Russian life in the last two decades, so all that remained for Putin was to manage the process of the country’s immersion in an archaic context, remaining at its center.

The work has singled out the ways rashism came into the streets in the form of marginal movements, e.g. far-rights, skinheads, imperialists, and nationalists. At the beginning, they copied European neo-fascists and neo-Nazis by dressing in black uniforms, doing the Hitler salute, distributing relevant literature and musical samples; gradually, the realization came that Russia has its own corresponding tradition. Finally, the “ulterior people” was given Putinism, a real imperial war, and the Z symbol — the Russian swastika. Intellectual rashism was directly led by V. Putin himself. In his opus, which claims to create an ideological system, he relies on conservative ideologues of the past and present, defends the idea of Russia’s independence from Western ideological influences, and sets the goal of returning Russia to its core traditions, values, and “braces”. The concept of “Russkiy Mir” is among the most hyped

ideas put forward during the years of the “long rule”. It is actively promoted by Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Orthodox Church both in Russia and abroad, namely in the territories of countries where Moscow sees any opportunity to strengthen its ideological influence. After the collapse of Marxism-Leninism and the futile search for a national idea, the Kremlin placed certain hopes on the “Russkiy Mir” concept. The general passion of the new ideologues is their search for such traditional Russian values that would not copy Western priorities. However, these values are of a rather nominal and declarative character, and one can only guess what the “ulterior people” live by, what they value, and what their dreams are. The war turned out to be a test of the worldview of the masses which split into a submissive majority blindly following the leader, as it befits the rashists, and a minority resisting the war in a passive way, e.g. by fleeing abroad.

Mass rashist consciousness is actively formed by propaganda. The Kremlin has revived propaganda as an ideological apparatus to promote the ideas of rashism and V. Putin’s political goals both in Russia and beyond its borders. Russian propaganda has turned into an independent social phenomenon, which is qualitatively different from the old Soviet one because the former has no red lines, and it exploits rashism and the Russians’ basic mental characteristics: their addiction to unlimited lying without any apologies, their cruelty, and lack of empathy and any moral limitations. Propagandists call to kill children, destroy cities, and use nuclear weapons, which their Soviet counterparts never did. The apotheosis of propaganda and social madness is “pobedobesie” which cyclically plunges Russians into a state of militaristic affect, cultivates hatred to other nations, and preaches a false utopian messianism. The state invests heavily in the so-called military-patriotic education, which includes not only public actions and military training of the younger generation, but also the creation of pieces of art on military topics. The aesthetics of rashism appears thanks to the work of engaged writers, filmmakers, musicians, who promote violence, Western-phobia, Ukrainophobia, the right of Russkiy people to disregard laws and generally accepted moral norms.

Russia’s great war against Ukraine has accelerated the civilizational gap as much as it was possible. Even three hundred consecutive years of cultural pressure exercised on Ukrainians living on the Left bank of the Dnipro river did not break their internal code

of civilization, cultural identity, or inclination towards freedom, all of which began to manifest itself in peacetime, when the Kremlin's ideological control fell to the lowest level in history. The Ukrainians proved their will to freedom during the Maidan revolutions aimed at defending the ideals of freedom and national dignity, while the Russians, on the other hand, failed to consolidate their forces to resist authoritarianism and protect their own civil rights. But it was the war that heightened the breakage trends to a civilizational gap which, unlike Huntington had predicted, did not happen because of a religious difference, but due to a specific cultural identity of a different order. This is clearly visible from the observation of Russians and Belarusians who have sided with Ukraine and are waging war against Putin's horde. So, all the years of the war, since 2014, the struggle has not been based on the principle of ethnic division (as it was in the Balkans), but on the criterion of European identity, that is, not so much for interests, but for values. Modern Ukraine embodies the European choice, which for most Ukrainians is understandable and corresponds to national value guidelines. All those who support the ideals of freedom, human dignity, and democracy, join the Armed Forces of Ukraine; on the opposite side, the Neo-Horde warriors are fighting, doing it, as they say, for the "motherland", i.e., for the "Russkiy Mir", the empire, the leader, and "eternal rashism".

The ideology of rashism has not been built as a coherent concept yet, and obviously, this will not happen in the near future, although many Russian nationalists and conservative thinkers have tried to create something similar, and such experiments continue. The general opinion of both the right and left flanks of the political spectrum is that Russia needs its own ideology, though as a matter of fact, it already exists, namely, the one V. Surkov calls "the ideology of Putinism". In my opinion, this is a set of ideologemes reflecting "eternal rashism" encompassing the idea of Eurasianism and the "Russkiy Mir", the postulate regarding traditional Orthodox values, the concept of the historic Russia, the theory of the Russkiy civilization, Russian messianism, etc. These ideologemes do not require deep rationalization, as they are perceived by the mass consciousness at the emotional level, actualizing ideas already existing at the subconscious level.

According to all the criteria of building a social system and dominant ideology modern aggressive rashism corresponds to

fascism, or Ur-Fascism, if to use the terminology by U. Eco. Rashism is many centuries older than fascism, so it does not need to copy the systems developed by Mussolini or Hitler. The common thing among all the three is that all these systems express a totalitarian way of organizing social life. V. Putin has opened Pandora's box, betting on those forces and spiritual foundations that were supposed to provide him with a lifetime rule. Under the rashist worldview, an autocrat (king, emperor, secretary general, or president), indeed, has a natural right to stay in power as long as the English monarchs do. But there is one "but": the "ulterior people" demand a Russian autocrat to provide them with the greatness of the state, military successes, and the humiliation of enemies, to which public opinion and propaganda easily drags all those who disagree with Russian messianism. Ukraine has turned into a stumbling block on Putin's way to the areopagus of "collectors of Russkiy lands". If he does not win, he will be destroyed, and everything will go full circle, because the "ulterior people" will look for a new Stalin. How can this terrifying circle be broken? Certain guarantees can only be drawn from Russia's defeat and restrictions imposed on militarizing the country. This is not an everlasting guarantee, but it can protect Europe from new incidents in the east for the next 15 to 20 years.

After the World War II, the victorious countries tried to build a system of international security that would preserve peace for the future. And now it is coming to an end due to the fact that the state that should guarantee international law has crossed the crooked step and committed the crime of aggression and international terrorism. A new security system might be created, but a worse option can prove likely, as well: no global community of human beings inhabiting the Earth will exist as such, and the world will disperse to separate civilization homes for an indefinite period of time, facing intercivilizational wars along the fault lines.

The Russian war against Ukraine provides a useful lesson: every real threat must be deterred by an adequate response of the other party to the conflict or a collective response of allied countries. Before February 24, 2022 when the Russian armed forces invaded Ukraine, an active debate was held both in Ukraine and abroad: whether there will be an invasion or not, whether Putin will risk it or not; and is his preparation ordinary blackmail or something real? Discussion of such situations cannot be prohibited in a democratic world, as

citizens, politicians, and the media have legal rights to conduct them. Still, responsible persons, statesmen, heads of governments and specialized ministries should not get involved in discussions, but act according to the mirror principle: every real physical threat should generate timely real material responses. The scale of reflection should not be inferior to the scope of the threat. Acting on prejudice is the only reasonable way to prevent aggression, because inaction or a weak reaction only encourages the aggressor to start an attack. The situation cannot be returned to the original positions, but at least the principle of security equivalence must be learned, engraved in all the relevant textbooks and state discourses, from which new generations of politicians and statesmen should learn.

Rashism is an antagonistic entity in relation to the prevailing consciousness of Europeans; from the very beginning, this spiritual substance was hardly understood by those who mistakenly considered Russians to be natural Europeans but, due to a coincidence of circumstances, were not lucky enough with political leaders. I hope that the presented analysis of the rashist ideology, its origins, forms, and consequences of existence will contribute, on the one hand, to the debunking of Moscow myths and the fog that, relatively speaking, envelops Russian spaces, and on the other hand, will provide a deeper understanding of the threats and risks that consolidated Russia brings to the modern world.

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NOTES

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THE IDEOLOGY OF RASHISM

This is the third book by the author dedicated to the Russian war against Ukraine, preceded by "Russo-Ukrainian Hybrid War: A Sociologist's Perspective" (2015) and "War of Civilizations: Anatomy of the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict" (2020).

"The Ideology of Rashism" explores the spiritual component of Russian imperialism. The author examines rashism as a cultural code of Russian civilization that has remained unchanged for five centuries and poses a threat to international order. The book can be valuable for the academic community, humanities students, politicians, and activists – anyone seeking a deeper understanding of Putinism and the reasons behind Russian aggression in Ukraine.