

January-March 2020

ANTI-BELARUSIAN PROPAGANDA

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SUMMARY

The first quarter of 2020 witnessed plenty of publications in pro-Kremlin media outlets produced for Belarusian audiences. They contained classical propaganda narratives aimed to discredit the West and Ukraine, the Belarusian language and culture, and to promote the "Russian world" concept.

In January, the tone was set by articles on visa facilitation between Belarus and the European Union, in connection with the signing of the long-awaited agreement. In February, propaganda efforts focused on a short visit by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Minsk and a meeting in Sochi between Alexander Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin. In March, the main theme was the coronavirus epidemic and alleged failure of Western countries and institutions to handle it against the background of the "outstanding successes" of Russia and China.

In this quarterly issue, we systematically describe the key topics of pro-Kremlin propaganda in each of the three months followed by a series of striking examples of propaganda publications in the first quarter of 2020.

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JANUARY THEME: THE PRICE OF VISA FACILITATION WITH THE EU: MORE GAYS, CIVIL WAR, AND LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE

Visa problem, on account of the small number of gays and women with “balls”

During 2019 and the beginning of 2020, many propaganda articles were published with various crazy interpretations of the protracted negotiations on visa facilitation between Belarus and the EU. For example, the pseudo-Mogilev site “Podneprovie,” part of the pro-Kremlin regional propaganda network, [provided](#) the following explanation of the guilt of the Belarusian opposition:

“The high cost and the problem of issuing Schengen visas is primarily due to the slander of the opposition. Moreover, slander not only has a political character – it is unrelated to the essence of the matter. For example, a ban on holding gay pride parades in the center of Minsk. European politicians see that minority rights are being violated, that in Belarus rates of gays are too low per capita, and therefore they do not let our citizens in.”

Podneprovie-info provides an additional parameter from which the EU moves forward in its visa policy:

“Have women grown balls yet in Belarus? Then that means it does not belong in the ranks of the European Union. It is along such lines that Europeans make decisions on whether their attitude to our citizens will warm or not. And well, of course, the opposition is the main bookkeeper here – if it does not come up with a couple thousand gays in their reports, which are sent to Western customers quarterly, then do not expect any warming over the next ten years. This is the reality of the ‘zmagars’ (trans. note – subset of Belarusian opposition).”

Free Schengen visa for international sporting events for gays

The pseudo-Grodno website GrodnoDaily went further in tying together the European Union, visas, and the Belarusian opposition. It slipped into an even more ridiculous conspiracy theory. Apparently with the goal of inflating the number of Belarusian gays in the eyes of the EU, and in parallel to divert Belarusians from the European Games in Minsk in the summer of 2019, the opposition allegedly began to lure the population into “international sporting events for gays and lesbians in Madrid”.

“Moreover, the ‘holer’ opposition began to sell tickets to international games for gays and lesbians, and even promised to provide free visas, if only to lead people away from the country’s main event. It is good that it’s not yet compulsory, but only so far”, as GrodnoDaily [described the horror](#).

Regarding the involvement of children in various patriotic events in Belarus, the site writes, “you have to agree that it is much more pleasant to see our well-kept guys in red ties laying flowers at the eternal flame than to watch demon-possessed children with phalluses and strapons at European gay parades”.

The immoral, decaying West – a classic pro-Kremlin propaganda narrative.

The price of “visa-free travel” – civil war, war with Russia, and loss of independence

In turn, the pseudo-Brest website BerestjeNews [claimed](#) that in return for Schengen concessions the EU is counting on Belarus for no more or less than “*rampant democracy in the form of ‘peaceful processions’ of the opposition*”, cooling relations with Russia, and the full development of all kinds of European programs. And that is still putting it lightly!

“That is, for a miserable 60 euros, Europeans want the Belarusian government to surrender the country and lose its independence... It seems they are confusing our government with the Ukrainian one, which is ready for a civil war and war with Russia for a visa. When will naive Europeans understand that for us Belarusians their visas are just a blot – that we are not so poor that we are not willing to pay 60 euros to save our independence?...”

However, the absence of visa relaxations with the EU is not a big loss, the pseudo-regional site reassured:

“The Belarusian government now needs a Schengen like a bald man needs a comb. The issues of close cooperation with Russia are much more important now for us... At the very least, we have had a visa-free regime with the Union State for many years. In this regard, we receive many more benefits from the Union State represented by Russia. This says something about our loyalty to our Russian brothers and that this loyalty is not for sale for European sausages.”

In reality, Moscow has never linked its relationship with Belarus to the specifics of its visa relations with the European Union. But what difference does it make if the goal is to lay out a classic propaganda narrative that contrasts the Russian brothers with the insidious and immoral EU-ers?

Tax maneuver over killing for Schengen visas

The pseudo-Grodno website GrodnoDaily [painted the pros and cons](#) of Schengen simplifications in a similar vein. If the European Union is interested in Belarus, then it is only “*for the implementation of the Ukrainian scenario, where zealous activists are ready to kill for the ‘multis’ (trans. note – “multis” here refers to “multiple-entry visas) with ninety-day stays in the EU*”.

And again, it is an overdrawn reference to Russia as the antithesis of a decaying Europe, although visa negotiations have nothing to do with Belarusian-Russian economic relations:

“We do not need these kinds of Schengen ‘multis.’ We would be better to pay sixty euros and go on trips to other countries as tourists rather than humiliating ourselves, begging for ‘visa-free.’ Much more important are tax maneuvers for oil, gas at preferential rates, and the export of our products to the Russian market than the continual promises of a rotting Europe.”

FEBRUARY THEME: PRO-KREMLIN MEDIA SEND LUKASHENKO TO ROSTOV

Talking titles

A brief visit by the U.S. Secretary of State to Minsk and a meeting between Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko in Sochi in early February became a catalyst for dozens of articles about the unenviable stake of the latter. And if usually the network of propaganda sites discredits the Belarusian opposition, history, and statehood, then in early February Lukashenko himself became its main target.

A selection of titles of publications of one of the internet resources (Politnavigator.net) in the first week of February gives an idea of their content:

[“Lukashenko has burned all bridges”](#) – The time has come to act (03.02)
[Moscow doubts that Lukashenko will win the presidential election](#) (03.02)
[Lukashenka makes everyone sick domestically and throughout the world](#) (02.02)
[Ukrainian politician warned Lukashenko: Everything will end in grief](#) (04.02)
[Lukashenko leads Belarus to disaster](#) (06.02)

The last of these describes extremely gloomy prospects for Lukashenko (the fate of Yanukovich) and Belarus (grief, fascism, and Nazism). However, a bit earlier Politnavigator [admitted](#) that even the “path to Rostov” is an extremely optimistic scenario.

A dozen sites refer to Rostov

An article entitled [“Lukashenko today is the Yanukovich of yesterday”](#) was republished by a dozen internet resources. Without a hint of diplomacy it reports:

“Rather, he awaits his road to Rostov to join his friend Yanukovich. Unless, of course, he has time (like the other, who also jumped out of his seat to show loyalty to the U.S. and Europe) to reach the Belarusian-Russian border.”

“Starting the game with alternative oil, Lukashenko also set his foot on the path to Rostov.” These are Rostov companions to the [publication](#) on the Ukraina.ru site.

This and several other internet resources published in the same period even more radical forecasts. [One article](#) on the Ukraina.ru website claims that when *“it comes time to pay the bills for European integration, he, like Allende, may die with a gun in his hands, protecting his residence from a pro-Western coup, or, like Yanukovich, retire to Rostov”*.

It is possible, Ukraina.ru [mentions in another article](#), that *“Belarusian elites can arrange Lukashenko’s death (or he can die by chance), appoint an acting president and set the elections in which the candidate they need to win must win”*.

[Another online resource](#) resorted to even more obvious threats:

“At a meeting in Sochi, Lukashenko was clearly told that he should not count on the fate of the traitor Yanukovich, whom Moscow ultimately kept warm on its territory. If he now turns to the West, then he can forget about security guarantees from Moscow. The fate of Gaddafi and Hussein is his edification. Think, Alexander Grigoryevich! Do not rush or get excited. The life and well-being of your children are at stake...”

It is no accident that upon returning from Sochi, Lukashenko admitted that he raised the issue of misinformation and propaganda on Russian internet resources at a meeting with the Russian president. *“As for the Russian media, the Russian media are free media. These are all issues for their editorial policy,”* Putin’s press secretary [retorted](#).

MARCH THEME: EU AS A PEST HOUSE, RUSSIA IS DOING GREAT

In March, pro-Kremlin media published a long list of materials on how the European Union and the West as a whole are ineffectually coping with the coronavirus epidemic and that they will die and go into oblivion. And all this against the background of Russian and China’s successful fight against the coronavirus.

“The crisis with the coronavirus uncovered the fact that in the realities of the 21st century the European Union will simply cease to exist”, RuBaltic.ru [online publication writes](#). The Sputnik’s commentator [disagrees](#): *“The EU has in fact already collapsed because there is no leadership”*. [Ukraina.ru echoes this](#): *“The West is psychologically broken. It agrees with its defeat. The single powerful structure has broken apart”*.

A selection of aphoristic descriptions of the inferiority of the West is impressive:

- “Europeans are increasingly [viewed by the world as plagued](#)”;
- The EU is [“falling into a new feudalism”](#);
- “Europe is recognized by the world as the [‘sick person’ of the planet](#)”: The European Union as ‘an unhealthy aging organism,’ a symbol of failure, catastrophe, stupidity, irresponsibility, and laxity”;
- The West [“plunges into the classical Middle Ages”](#);
- “The coronavirus will become for NATO and the EU what [Chernobyl](#) became for the Soviet Union”.

The explanations for the failure of the West are painfully familiar.

Firstly, of course, Russophobia. *“Europe, in the last 6 years, has prepared not for the threat that has come. A significant part of the European political class fell victim to Russophobia and did not critically accept the situation, let us call it Crimean, that was in 2014”,* [said](#) one of the commentators for Sputnik Belarus.

Secondly, the EU, in principle, was doomed from the point of view of professionalism and responsibility of the ruling elites, and it had previously shown that it [“is unable to adequately respond to the geopolitical and military challenges of our time”](#). The coronavirus

only confirmed *“the monstrously low level of managerial culture and responsibility of European elites and their strategic carelessness”*.

Thirdly, the moral degradation of the West, which was expressed in mutual betrayal. Western leaders, [RuBaltic claims](#), are the last-generation Soviet communist nomenclature of the U.S.S.R. in its advanced years. The conclusion is implacable: *“The moral catastrophe that shook the collective West because of the coronavirus launches the process of its actual breakdown”*.

Another thing is Russia and China, which show everyone a managerial example and moral guidelines. *“The Old World, which has swallowed its pride, humiliatingly copies the Chinese experience in fighting the pandemic and accepts humanitarian aid from Russia, Cuba, Egypt, and China”*, [RuBaltic.ru says](#). According to one of the commentators from Radio Sputnik, *“for Russians, [coronavirus is like scaring them with cockroaches](#), as we have already been through so much”*.

In any case, there are pluses in the epidemic, [Sputnik broadcasts](#):

“It seems that the overlapping of the systemic crisis, the crisis of hydrocarbon prices, and the coronavirus pandemic can take the place of a new world war for us, serving as ‘nature’s cleanup crew’ and rejecting non-viable political entities”.

This [opinion is not unique](#): *“Nobody needs a world war – they decided to reset alignments with the help of an epidemic”*.

One publicist even [predicts the disappearance](#) of some European countries due to the pandemic. True, he does not specify which ones, however, one of the Ukraine.ru commentators [makes it clear](#) that at least Ukraine is on this list:

“It’s just that the West rejected the function of colonial administration that it had entrusted to itself because it was useless. The native compradors brought to power by the West turned out to be incapable of anything themselves (also, by the way, not news), instantly lost control of the processes, and fell into a panic”.

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are also obvious candidates for extinction, like minded colleagues [add](#). It is maintained that with the nullification of their *“post-Soviet development model”*, the Baltic countries asked for such a severe shock from the effects of the coronavirus epidemic such that *“they may not survive it”*.

TOP 5 OTHER QUARTERLY PROPAGANDA PUBLICATIONS

THE U.S. OUTLIVES THE POPULATION OF THE BALTIC COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO PREPARE FOR ATTACK ON BELARUS

The bad West would not be so bad if it would encroach only on the statehood of Belarus and Russia. In reality, pro-Kremlin outlets claim, the U.S. throws even their allies, including the Baltic countries, under the bus in planning to establish their world order.

“The Baltic has been assigned the role of the U.S. NATO bridgehead from where military operations against Russia and, of course, against Belarus are set to begin to establish a unipolar world”, the site of the Coordinating Council of the Leaders of the Belarusian Public Associations of Russian Compatriots (KSORS) in Belarus, supported by the Russian Embassy, [writes](#).

Apparently, the United States inherited its colonial policy directly from Nazi Germany, the article continues:

“It must be understood that the original Baltic quasi-states were not considered by the Yankees to be some kind of ‘independent states,’ but as a NATO bridgehead of aggression against Russia. The logic here was purely colonial – the liberation of the territories of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia from the population to create a NATO shock fist for movement to the East. An American ‘Drang nach Osten,’ so to speak”.

The author explains the specific ways the Baltic governments clean their territories from the population that NATO does not need. Firstly, the inclusion of *“resident Russians by their mentality”* in the category of non-citizens. And in order to create particularly unbearable living conditions for them and force them to leave for Russia, the U.S., and the European Union, the Baltic states, in the author’s opinion, *“inspired and launched [in the Baltic countries] a large-scale Russophobia policy”.*

“There are no citizens, no residents – such is the slave-owning philosophy of NATO and their Baltic puppets... Americans in the Baltic states do not need Russians, Latvians, Estonians, or Lithuanians, but only territory cleared from the Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian populations”, the author explains. Hence the *“policy of maximally pushing out the most mobile part of Baltic society... to other European countries”.*

The Baltic quasi-governments keep the rest of the population, the publication continues, *“in constant fear of the imaginary threat from the East, which will increase stress levels and accelerate the death of people from this”:*

“As a result of such a NATO policy, the territory of this region will quickly be completely cleared of the population and will turn into a clean field where NATO troops can safely deploy their offensive forces without fear of a negative reaction from local residents”.

This conspiracy thesis hits several key narratives of pro-Kremlin propaganda at once:

- A bad, aggressive, colonialist West / U.S., which in preparing its attack on Belarus and Russia is not squeamish about the survival of the population of allied countries;
- Discrediting the United States through a parallel with Nazi Germany;
- Baltic countries completely dependent on and controlled by the U.S.

ALL NEIGHBORING STATES (EXCEPT RUSSIA!) THREW IN WITH HITLER

“The regimes that rule in the Baltic states, Warsaw, and Kyiv, raise up their pedigree to the pre-war regimes of Poland and the Baltic states, and to Banderites in Ukraine. All these regimes threw in with Hitler”, [Sputnik Belarus reports](#).

“The fact is that in the same way that the memory of the mythical ‘Soviet occupation’ unites Polish, Baltic, and Ukrainian Russophobes professing a radical nationalist ideology, the Holocaust unites people and states that honor the true memory of the war”, the author’s publication says. It concludes that ‘Russophobia and anti-Semitism go hand in hand, organically complementing each other’.

Parallels with Nazi Germany, accusations of fascism / Nazism and their support is a classic propaganda technique for discrediting Western states. Once modern Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Ukraine have joined up with Hitler, Belarus has only one clean neighbor. Roger that.

BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION PLANS CORONA-GENOCIDE AT THE DIRECTION OF SOROS

Pseudo-Belarusian sites belonging to the regional network of pro-Kremlin propaganda published a series of conspiracy theory reports about the opposition’s criminal plans for mass infection of the population with coronavirus. In March, the pseudo-Mogilev site passed the baton to its pseudo-Vitebsk and pseudo-Brest counterparts.

They allege that the powerful Soros finances various programs aimed at the extinction of mankind, in the implementation of which the Belarusian opposition also takes part. [The pseudo-Vitebsk website goes on](#) to say:

“Oppositionists do not need the people to vote for them. They need to gather a dozen “scumbags” in every corner of Belarus in order to organize a bloody revolution where the genocide of the people will come first”.

In addition to hatred of humankind, another motivation for criminals is monetary. According to a propaganda resource, the opposition has managed to fatten itself well with Soros’s money:

“They bought houses abroad, took lovers to resorts, lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in Las Vegas, paid for prostitutes and had fun with them”.

Soros launched the coronavirus as a biological weapon and it was personally transferred by U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in test tubes to the Belarusian opposition,

activists, and bloggers in February, the publication claims. From now on, their bank accounts do not depend on ratings and slogans, but on the “*number of victims of the Belarusian people*”.

All this can give rise to a true apocalypse, warns [another pseudo-Vitebsk online publication](#). And finally, yet [another piece](#) from the same resource claims that a number of Belarusian politicians and bloggers advocate broader quarantine measures “*to ensure that stores will run out of food supplies and pharmacies will run out of necessary medicine*”, so that people would then come out onto the streets.

By the way, Soros is just one of many other “creators” of the coronavirus. Other online publications by pro-Kremlin outlets in March demonstrated [Rockefeller](#) and [Bill Gates's](#) involvement.

The pseudo-Brest site [shares the concerns](#) of their “Vitebsk” colleagues regarding the apocalyptic plans of the opposition:

“They will use the pandemic as a political tool to influence the government, and more importantly the people, urging them to panic – to buy up buckwheat, grains, pasta, and toilet paper”.

Therefore, the article concludes, “*it is time to recognize and declare the Belarusian opposition a pandemic and begin to fight it as in Wuhan*”. This completely contradicts [another article appearing on the same website](#) that represents the opposition as being opposed to no one and uninfluential.

RUSSOPHOBIA AS AN IDEA SAVING THE EU FROM COLLAPSE

The KSORS website continues to publish articles that draw absurd parallels between the modern European Union and the West as a whole and Nazi Germany and uses Russophobia as a universal explanation for the various decisions and actions of Western countries.

First, [the article states](#), “*On June 22, 1941, united Europe attacked our country with the Nazi Fuhrer Adolf Hitler at the head*”. This is because Hitlerite Germany at that time was supported by the economies of occupied France, Czechoslovakia and other European countries in its aggressive plans, the author explains.

If we develop such flawed logic, the absurd statement can be made that in the fall of 1941 not only the Hitler armada in the person of united Europe, but also in the form of the Nazi-occupied BSSR broke through to Moscow. Indeed, until August 1941, BSSR’s economy was also under the control of the Third Reich.

Nazi aggression finds a continuation in our times in the form of NATO military operations in Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya, as the article makes clear. Their consequences were the migration crisis in the EU, which gave rise to Euroscepticism and the real threat of the spread of the EU. And the collapse of the EU is preempted by nothing more than Russophobia, the article continues:

“And since most EU countries are not connected to each other, except for economic benefits, the Eurocrats from Brussels have thought of playing with connecting ideas... Russophobia, that is, an unreasonable fear of Russia and a hostile attitude towards everything Russian”.

In general, Russophobia has always been inherent in the West, though it has simply acquired especially cynical forms in recent times. And this is due to the UK's exit from the EU, as the article paradoxically concludes, saying:

“Only those countries that during the war years or together with Hitler's Reich officially participated in the war against the U.S.S.R., or those that supported the Nazi war machine economically, remained in the EU”.

THE “JUDAH'S NATURE” OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS POPULARIZING THE BELARUSIAN LANGUAGE

Several pro-Kremlin sources in the worst propaganda traditions have long equated the love of the Belarusian language and culture and their promotion with Russophobia / fascism. Mixing Ukrainian events and politics with Belarusian realities in a heap and sprinkling them with speculation and absurd generalizations, [Teleskop's online publication says](#):

“And the fact that in Belarus the so-called “civil society”(represented by purportedly independent media and all kinds of “Belarusianizing” supporters, rallying around language, Russophobia, praising Polish nationalists, and denigrating Belarusian partisans) did not notice the obvious violation of the rights of the Ukrainian people and heroization of Nazism by “servants of the people”, once again proves its Judah's nature – its ideological and political kinship with Bandera fascism”.

The KSORS site in Belarus, whose domain is maintained by the Russian Embassy, [practices similar manipulations and absurdities](#) – the promotion of the Belarusian language is presented as nothing short of Polish chauvinism:

“It is no coincidence that modern Philomaths work in exactly the same way as their ideological predecessors. They advocate for Belarusian independence, the Belarusian language, and our homeland, but in reality they reanimate the ideology of Polish chauvinists, for whom Belarus is the Polish “Kresy Wschodnie” (Eastern Borderlands)”.

It got to the point where the Editor of the KSORS website [has already started to proclaim](#) which words are Belarusian and which are not. In particular, the online publication insists that the Belarusian words for “socks” and “tea” should be replaced by their Russian counterparts.

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