Mikhail Sokolov

The End of Russian Radical Nationalism?[1]

This article advances an argument that could be summarised in the following way. The type of ideology which one could term 'Russian radical nationalism in the strict sense of the word' has been almost completely ousted from the ideological market over the last few years. From 2000 onwards, the political organisations that used to unambiguously identify themselves with this ideology began either to vanish from public life altogether, or to change the rhetoric that they used, and sometimes their name as well. Examples of this are Russian National Unity (RNU), the two 'Russian Parties' (of Yury Bondarik and Vladimir Miloserdov), two of the People's Republican Parties of Russia (of Yury Belyaev and Nikolai Lysenko), the Russian Liberation Movement, and numerous other organisations which were once considered by many to be the main threat to democracy in Russia, but which are now completely forgotten (details can be found in [Verkhovsky, Pribylovsky 1996]). The groups that replaced them show a preference for other varieties of rightist ideology –

[1] This article is based on a paper given at the First Regional Congress of the ICCEES (*International Council for Central and East European Studies*) in Berlin on 4 August 2007. The author is grateful to all those who took part in its discussion. [The editor and translator thank Mikhail Sokolov for his help with translating the specific terminology used here.]

white racism, Orthodox religious fundamentalism, various forms of geopolitical imperialism (of which the most well-known is Dugin's Eurasianism), and, finally, '*gosudarstvennichestvo*' (for which the translation 'statism' is only a rough approximation – see below) – but not for nationalism as such.

'Nationalism in the strict sense of the word'

One can only evaluate the argument that I have just set out if the question of what one should understand by 'nationalism in the strict sense of the word' has been resolved. The literature dedicated to answering this question is practically endless. The definition proposed below is not the absolute best for all practical purposes, but it does allow me to demonstrate what I would like to demonstrate with the maximum brevity.

At the centre of any ideology that could be qualified as 'rightist' lies a belief in the absolute value of a certain form of social organisation (supposedly, existing from time immemorial), which this ideology describes as being under constant threat from the processes of modernisation and in need of constant protection.[1] For religious fundamentalism this central social construct is the Church with its community of believers; for racism it is the endogamous racial group; for '*gosudarstvennichesto*' (a peculiar concept which English 'statism' approximates only partially, since *gosudarstvo* means the sovereign state) state institutions as such; finally, for ethnic nationalism, a nation understood as a community of people who are united by an (imaginary) shared descent, culture and historical life experience under the auspices of one and the same social institutions.[2]

In many situations these ideological principles get mixed up, while the political rhetoric used represents a combination of all the principles in which, depending on the circumstances, now one ingredient prevails, now another. Characteristic of Russian radical nationalism is the example of the RNU, which prides itself on its 'ideologically monolithic character' but which, in reality, uses a whole array of clearly discordant systems of argumentation (a detailed account is to be found in [Sokolov 1999]; [Sokolov 2005]). Those who use such contradictory arguments may be cynically striving to gain from the breadth of their ideological repertoire, hoping to attract people with different convictions, but it is equally possible they are sincerely con-

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1 This definition is inspired by the work of Mikhail Minkenberg (see [Minkenberg 2000]; [Minkenberg 2002].

2 This classification, in its general outline, coincides with that to be found in Benedict Anderson's idea of 'imagined communities' [Anderson 1983], which contrasts nationalism with racism, nations with religious communities holding their shared faith in common, and national identities with the identities of the subjects of imperial rule.

vinced that these arguments amplify and complement each other in various ways.

The latter, to all appearances, is a more frequent occurrence. Raymond Boudon showed, using the example of sociology scholars, to what extent even the best minds, dedicated to a strict analysis, are susceptible to 'the convergence effect' which forces us to believe that all theoretical notions giving rise to one and the same practical conclusions at the very least do not contradict one another [Boudon 1989]. Members of the RNU more or less unanimously believed in the necessity to put up an energetic resistance to 'the power of the Jews who brought about the genocide of the Russians'. The fact that some of them defined Jews as a religious group, others as a depraved race, and others again as an ethnic group united not by descent or religious belief but exclusively by a desire to monopolise profitable social positions, did not stop them from viewing each other as like-minded.[1] Moreover, at this organisation's meetings and discussions, any over-energetic debates on the subject of the correct definition of 'Russianness' or 'Jewishness' were cut short by its leaders, concerned as they were with avoiding a potential schism.

However, the fact that such debates could still arise time after time shows us that the results of ideological fusion are never set in stone; they can always be undermined. Sometimes they are undermined by the work of intellectuals who are interested in the development of ideas and who come across logical disparities. Sometimes they founder on the interests of politicians who are looking for an opportunity to position themselves, renouncing some of the theoretical constructs that make up the dominant synthesis since these could compromise them (or simply because the names of other politicians are too firmly associated with these constructs). And they are sometimes undermined by political practice itself: this sets itself certain tasks which, within the framework of different ideological schemes, would have diametrically opposite solutions. This process of erosion, of course, happens more and more often as the organisation moves to power, as its members must clothe their blurred ideological

[1] Many Russian researchers, who confidently identify xenophobia in any 'essentialist' or 'primordialist' view of ethnicity [Makhalov 2001], would most likely be shocked to find out that the members of the RNU often resorted to completely instrumentalist arguments in their rhetoric. At the first meeting of the Petersburg RNU, which I attended when I was working on his undergraduate dissertation, I was handed Ushkuinik-Larikov's book, *Pamyatnik russkomu cheloveku* [Guidelines for the Russian Person], in which the author attempted to prove that contemporary Jews are not descendants of Jews from the Palestine of Jesus's time (and are in no way a strictly endogamous group), and also bear no relation to orthodox Judaism (to which Ushkuinik was very positively inclined). They are, in his view, more like a status group of the kind identified by Max Weber, which keeps up its distinct cultural practices in order not to admit everyone else to those social and economic blessings which its members monopolise [Ushkuinik 1998].

postulates in practical solutions. If the RNU won the elections they would most likely have to be clear on whom exactly they consider to be Jewish. In the meantime the organisation could easily avoid strong disagreements over questions which at the moment hold a completely academic interest for it.[1]

My argument also takes into account one other distinction of analytical importance. When talking of an ideology, we can contrast the group, institution, or form of an organisation that is proclaimed by this ideology as its highest value (in other words, that is *normatively relevant*) and the groups, institutions or organisations which in its view of the world turn out to be the crucial driving force (i.e. which are *causally relevant*). These two categories can coincide completely. So, for an orthodox Marxist, classes are the fundamental and, in essence, the sole active players in the historical arena, and the well-being of one of these classes is proclaimed as the highest purpose of the political battle. However, one can list many cases where this 'coincidence' of normative and causal relevance turns out to be not so complete. Some forces can be present in an ideological map of the world as 'objectively active', but, at the same time, may emerge as a subject for specialist moral-political evaluations only where they impact upon normatively relevant objects.

For most Russian ideologists, 'ethnic relations' possess a causal relevancy — they are acknowledged as existing in reality, and seen as potentially explosive and in need of specialist control for the maintaining of an 'ethnic balance'. However, these relations have normative relevance only for the minority of those systematically espousing nationalism, those who consider that the maintaining of the balance (that is, the balance desirable for their group) is not only the means of their policy, but also its aim. For the others, the balance is important in a narrowly technical sense, as a way of securing the stability of political institutions, or the constancy of economic growth, or even as a way of guaranteeing that an individual's rights and freedom will be observed.[2]

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1 Rightist ideologies hardly differ from all other ideologies in this respect. In any sphere of ideological space, we must observe that combinations of incompatible ideas can turn out to be incredibly tenacious, despite the clear logical contradictions. The majority of people (including the majority of intellectuals) continue to use the concepts of *Rechtsstaat* (or 'the rule of law') and 'democracy' almost as synonyms, despite the fact that any political philosopher could easily explain why they point to completely different, and, sometimes, directly conflicting ideals, while the category of 'liberal democracy' almost presents itself as an oxymoron. Chantal Mouffe is one of many to consider this topic over the last few years [Mouffe 2000].

2 One should remark that such a distinction is in need of an important modification when used with regard to the most intellectualised New Leftist movements which consciously strive for the politicisation of any 'technical considerations'.

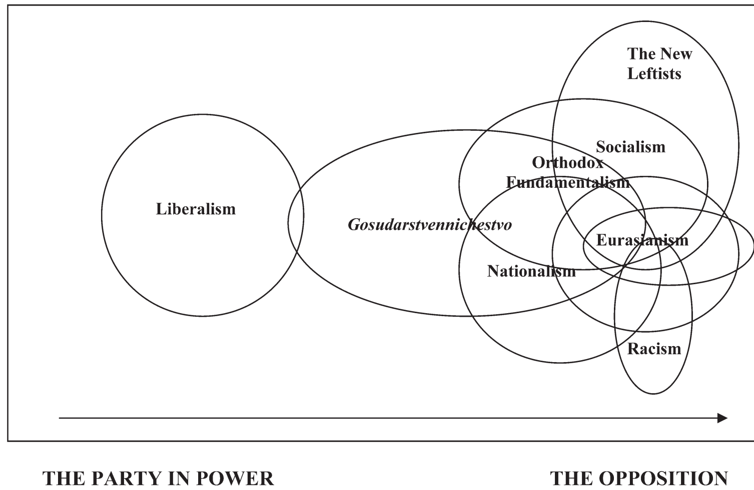
The measures taken for the maintaining of such a balance in concrete situations can hardly be described as inoffensive (let us remember the well known incidents of deportation motivated by considerations of 'maintaining the ethnic balance'). They are often qualified by critics as 'nationalistic' in themselves. However, for the political scientist, the distinction between an ethnic discrimination that is exercised as a means to higher ends, and an ethnic discrimination that turns discrimination itself into the ultimate aim, is a crucial one. It is precisely by drawing this distinction that we may shed light on a paradox that has attracted the attention of many researchers: how is it that radical-nationalistic organisations do not have any real support amongst a populace so utterly replete with ethnic phobias? People who believe in the significant harm brought to the country by ethnic migrants can, no matter how strange it may seem, consistently refuse to support a party whose main aim is to protect the 'indigenous population'. This is the result not just of 'muddled consciousness'. They can do this because they assume that, even if ethnic discrimination may bring them personally some sort of benefit, it is likely to have negative consequences for other institutions, groupings, and networks whose importance to them outranks this incidental benefit. Anyone who has at some stage interviewed people on such topics has, most likely, come across people who complain about the domineering behaviour of the 'Caucasians' but, at the same time, are opposed to the introduction of any discriminatory state policy, in as much as they believe that separatism would consequentially arise, jeopardising the integrity of the Russian state.

It is precisely normative relevancies on the basis of which the classification of ideologies in this article will be arranged. Nationalists – in the sense in which this word is used here – are not simply those who believe in the objective existence of nations and ethnic groups as particular essences which have their own consciousness and own interests. Nationalists also believe that nations are of the utmost importance in themselves. And it is precisely their share of the ideological market in Russia that has dramatically decreased over the last decade.

The segmentation of the ideology markets

Despite the always-present potential for disagreements, all the different forms of rightist ideology in Russia were, by and large, on good terms with each other throughout the '90s, just as they rubbed along fine with socialistic conceptions that were completely alien to them. The ideological market of the '90s was subdivided into two main segments – those employing a liberal rhetoric, i.e. the ruling 'democrats', and those resorting to the rhetoric of the 'red-brown' opposition, whose platform consisted of a mixture of '*gosudarstvenichestvo*'

with nationalistic, religious-fundamentalist, and socialistic ideas. A representation of this one-dimensional polarisation can be seen in (Graph 1).



Graph 1. The ideological space of the '90s.

Several inner tensions, ready to take the form of differentiation given the right conditions, could be traced throughout this period as well. Inside and around the organisations that strove to occupy both nationalist and religious-fundamentalist seats discussions regularly broke out about whether one should admit Jews into the organisation if they wanted to join it. From 1999 to 2001, while carrying out research for my undergraduate dissertation, I myself was able to observe how this subject was discussed time after time at the Petersburg RNU's meetings (in so far as this local organisation was then already moving in the direction of militant Orthodoxy, the answer given to the question about letting in Jews was, as a rule, affirmative). In the same way, Barkashov has written several articles[1] in which he condemns those who place the State higher than the Nation (judging by indications in the text, this rhetorical attack was aimed, first and foremost, at Barkashov's rival, General Sterligov). All the same, though, the 'red-brown' opposition of the '90s managed to turn a blind eye to these undercurrents, and negate the potential for ideological schisms.[2] This period — and, especially, its start — was

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1 For example, his 'Nationalizm i patriotizm', later to be re-published twice in the party's 'Russian Order' [Barkashov 1997].

2 The few exceptions (on the whole, very few in number then, just as now) are seen among the non-authoritarian leftists - radical ecologists, anarchists and others. However, a significant chunk of those who identified themselves with them still considered it possible to side with the National-Bolshevik Party which, on principle, welcomed all members of the opposition into their ranks, including open Nazis.

marked by a surge of activity in the creation of all kinds of political coalitions and umbrella organisations, the conducting of mass-meetings and the founding of publications that attracted participants, advocates, authors and readers who adhered, it would seem, to the most diverse political trends. Practically all of the political leaders who were not considered inveterate 'democrats' attended the Russian National Assembly. Sympathisers who did not associate themselves with these groupings avidly read the journal *Den* [Day] (or *Zavtra* [Tomorrow]) and bemoaned 'the victims of the coup d'état of 3–4 October' [1993].

Things started to change, gradually but irreversibly, as the year 2000 approached. The ideological unity of the opposition split, and the various versions of rightist ideology rose up in harsh opposition against each other. Thus, the majority of skinhead groups – information about which has become widely available over the last 10 years thanks to their own statements and material from investigations by the police and by journalists – identified themselves, first and foremost, with the White Race. They saw themselves as the immediate heirs to the legacy of the European Nazis, viewed Western rightists (above all those from the German-speaking world) as their main models, and defined their main enemy in racial terms ('Caucasians'), not in cultural or national terms. 'The Russian nation' or 'the Russian state' had next to no impact on this, in essence, deeply internationalist worldview. The desire to be with the 'White Race' expressed itself in steps that would have horrified any staunch supporter of the 'red-brown' opposition of the '90s: several of the skinhead-oriented groups, such as the 'Freedom Party' of Yury Belyaev, or the People's National Party of Ivanov-Sukharevsky, came close to calling for a struggle against the Russian state and a renunciation of the most important symbols of the nation's own origins.

To give just a few scattered examples of this. Such groups were the first and sole organisations to speak out publicly in support of the anti-Moscow attacks made by the 'Orange revolutionaries' in the Ukraine (for a long time, most of Ivanov-Sukharevsky's website's homepage was taken up by the slogan, 'Russians, learn Ukrainian!'). This, at first sight, unexpected episode in fact neatly fits the general trend. The rightist radicals of a racist persuasion welcomed the movement of this part of their 'Slavic brothers' into the EU, and they wanted to be rid of the 'Asiatic influence' of Moscow. It was precisely amongst such groups, especially those located in the North-Western European part of the Russian Federation (Petersburg, Novgorod, Pskov, Petrozavodsk), that the separatist views of people such as Aleksei Shiropaev were most widely disseminated – people calling for the overthrow of the 'Mongol-Muscovite yoke' and for the re-writing of the official version of the nation's history in such a way that

the traditional heroes of patriots, such as Aleksander Nevsky, would turn into villains and traitors to the race.[1]

It goes without saying that Russian Orthodox religious fundamentalism, Eurasianism, and '*gosudarstvennichestvo*' are completely incompatible with such an ideological stance. Inevitably, those espousing racism of this systematic kind were soon to abandon the 'red-brown' coalition of the '90s.

A similar movement away from the nationalist caucus, though one in a completely different direction, was made by those belonging to all the other segments of the rightist scene. Some of them were even ready to find a way of meeting their former liberal opponents halfway. The ideological evolution of the National Bolshevik Party is particularly revealing in this regard. From 2001 Limonov's party sought out (at first quite reticently, but more energetically after 2003) a union with the liberal opposition. But in order for the union, later realised in 'Another Russia', to become possible, Limonov had to say goodbye to the racist and nationalistic flourishes in his public speeches [Sokolov 2007].[2] A similar change in direction was made a bit earlier by his former National Bolshevik Party comrade Aleksander Dugin, who had to renounce all mention (in public, at least) of an ideological synthesis of the right-left opposition (the cause he had worked for in the '90s) so that he could hold the comfortable seat of *Reichsideolog* under the Presidential Administration.

But the most profound and important change was the gradual isolation of *gosudarstvennichestvo* — the variety of rightist ideology that at present dominates in Russia. The specifics of '*gosudarstvennichestvo*' have not been thoroughly evaluated by many researchers of Russian nationalism, who have generally striven to see in it either a form of Anderson's 'imperial nationalism', or a reflection of the longing for strong paternalistic leadership from the state. However, '*gosudarstvennichestvo*' is neither of these things — or more accurately, not just one of these things. Nationalism sees in the state a reflection of the nation's will to sovereignty; the state is a means of guaranteeing the nation's survival and prosperity. '*Gosudarstvennichestvo*', on the other hand, views the nation as a mere instrument for the strengthening of the state. The state whose citizens are united by strong nationalistic feelings can count on their

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1 As is the case, for example, in Shiropaev's book *Tyurma narodov: Russkii vzglyad na istoriyu Rossii* [The People's Prison: a Russian Look at the History of Russia] (see one of the main websites related to this trend, www.rusrepublic.ru).

2 Initiatives to create an ideological formula which would permit a political union between racist rightists and liberals have been, understandably, less prominent. Nevertheless, there does exist a certain attraction between them based on the mutual desire to 'live in Europe and not in Asia'. An example of an organisation backing the possibility of such an ideological merger is the National Movement 'The People', headed by Sergei Gulyaev, the hero of 'The Dissenters' Marches'.

loyalty in the face of threats or false promises from other states. In this sense, for example, the preservation of a national culture can serve not as a path to national identity as a goal in itself, but as a way of avoiding disguised ideological influences from sources which are, supposedly, themselves under the control of other states.

These ideological constructs sometimes remind one of the influential nationalism theories of Hobsbawm or Tilly, who asserted that at the roots of any type of nationalism lie the interests of political elites ([Hobsbawm 1989]; [Tilly 1994]). Someone who espoused *gosudarstvennichestvo* would be in complete agreement with them. The difference lies in the political conclusions derived from these assumptions. Hobsbawm thought that the picture drawn up by him would discredit nationalism. For an admirer of *gosudarstvennichestvo*, however, this picture does much to rehabilitate nationalism, even if it does dictate a somewhat condescending way of relating to staunch nationalists. From the point of view of the currently influential theories of nationalism, in order for nationalistic feelings to become possible, the truth about their sources must be safely hidden. It is hardly likely that any hero-nationalist – so such theorists suppose - would carry out an effective act of heroism if he knew that the image of the community in whose name he sacrifices himself was simply a result of the ideological machinations of the political elites. The hero in the eyes of *gosudarstvennichestvo*, however, considers himself capable of self-sacrifice despite his clear realisation of the fact of political manipulation – in a certain sense, precisely because of this realisation.

Using the terms introduced above, one can say that for the follower of *gosudarstvennichestvo*, the state is the normative force, while the nation is only relevant only in the causal sense. Although not normatively relevant, the safety and the special status of the Russian nation or the Russian Orthodox Church are often recognised as desirable from the state's point of view. On the statist map of the world, there is a place for 'the state-forming role of the people' and for 'traditional religions', which are held to be crucial to the preservation of the state. Sometimes it is even suggested that the state is actually indebted to whichever ethnic or confessional groups. However, such groups do not have any transcendental importance despite all this, and their interests can be put on the back burner without any problems or argument.

At the same time, *gosudarstvennichestvo*, in its unadulterated form, is also not reducible to purely utilitarian hopes for protection and support from Big Brother, as the theories of paternalism would suggest. Just like nationalism, 'statism' implies that service to the larger whole is selfless.

The exact nature of *gosudarstvennichestvo* can be most easily explained by citing a dramatic conflict that is ubiquitous in

contemporary Russian mass culture of an 'ideologically sound' variety. The protagonist (a secret agent/military man/incorruptible detective inspector/diplomat) discovers that the state to which he has been a loyal servant has betrayed him (either because it sacrificed him in some political game or other or, more often, due to the betrayal or incompetence of his immediate authorities). He has to choose between self-preservation (and vengeance) and following his duties despite everything. The moral superiority of those choosing the second path is usually unreservedly acknowledged by the author. This is the principle behind hundreds of paperbacks from the series 'Spetsnaz GRU'[1] (the protagonist is 'handed over' to the baddies in the course of the dirty political games, but he continues the battle, averting an almost inevitable terrorist atrocity and avenging the death of his friends along the way) and films such as *Punishment Battalion* (the heroes are those victims of the Stalinist regime who held up his banners when the state was under threat). A special role in the ideological crystallisation of contemporary 'statism', it seems, was played by the 'military-historical' literature of the Soviet period, exemplified in the novels of Valentin Pikul. It is easy to note that such a conflict regularly arises in works of Western mass culture, but it is hardly ever resolved by a show of stoical loyalty at all costs (Belmondo's classic, *The Professional*, or the more recent *Top Gun*, manifest a very different pattern). One often hears discussions provoked by two recent Russian films whose heroes did not choose loyalty to the state at any price – the screen adaptation of Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, and Meskhiev's film *Our Own*.

Understood in this way, *gosudarstvennichestvo* was, in the 1990s, one of the ideologies of the opposition, and it blended with nationalism, Soviet socialism, and religious fundamentalism to such an extent that it was interpreted as an integral part of all of this by the participants of the antiliberal movement. Putin's regime, however, caused a sharp change in the landscape of the political battle space (Graph 2). *Gosudarstvennichestvo* was taken away from the opposition, and those people who effected the expropriation (first and foremost, well-known journalists like Maksim Sokolov and Mikhail Leontyev) tried in every way possible to ensure that it was cleansed of all types of additives: nationalism, racism (Putin himself, along with other figures whom we must take to be the mouthpieces of the regime, has remained steadfastly critical of ideas like 'Russia for the Russians'), and Soviet socialism. In fact, at the present time, 'statism' has practically taken the place of liberalism as the official ideology, while liberalism, on the other hand, has turned into an oppositional ideology.

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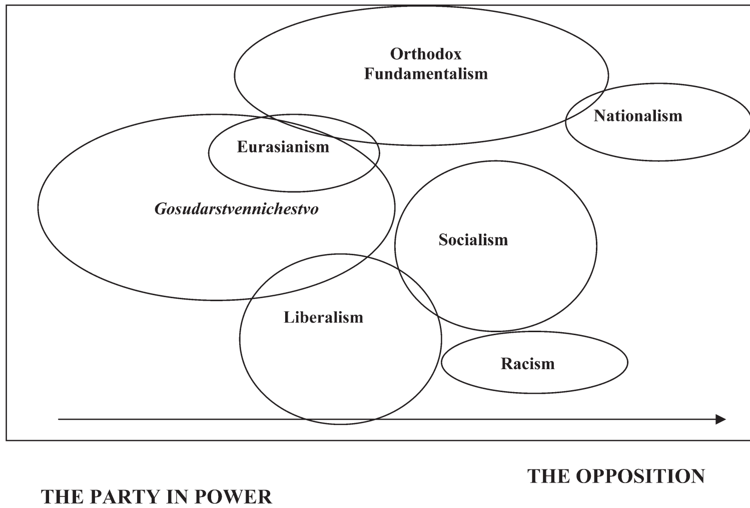
[1] The Special Forces of the Main Investigatory Authority, i.e. a crack squad of the intelligence service [Trans.].



Graph 2. The ideological space after 2000.

Thinking in terms of historical analogy, we could suppose that, once the regime's representatives had begun using a different rhetoric, a new oppositional alliance would have come to replace the old 'red-brown' front of the '90s. However, this alliance has not materialised. The attempts of several ideological segments to collaborate continue but, as a rule, they do not lead to any long-term results. There is a certain attraction between liberalist and socialist groups which is seen in the collaboration of 'Yabloko' and all kinds of leftist organisations, and in the consolidatory efforts of the National Bolshevik Party (and even in the election campaign of the Union of Rightist Forces. 'Rodina' – right up until the expulsion of Rogozin – experimented with bringing socialist rhetoric and open racism together. However, no programme, organisation, or activity arose which could, even nominally, unite all the members of the opposition. Furthermore, severe ideological conflicts have sprung up between them, conflicts that did not beset the relatively united opposition of the 1990s. The organisations representing the liberal camp have started to engage in active polemics with the Russian Orthodox fundamentalists, the New Leftist antifascists are at the throats of the rightist skinheads, and so on.[1]

As noted above, 'Another Russia' has united the liberals with the once-rightist National Bolshevik Party, but only owing to the fact

[1] One can find examples in the 1990s of clashes of power between the representatives of different organisations but, in the vast majority of cases, these were clashes between ideologically close-knit groups – intraspecial, not interspecial, conflict, so to speak. Conflicts between anarchists and 'fascists' also took place but they did not occur that frequently and they did not escalate into permanent battles on the streets, unlike the current clashes between Nazi-skinheads and antifascists, nor did they escalate into lawsuits like those that are now being levelled by the Union of Orthodox Citizens.

that Limonov has been prepared to repeatedly disavow his previous public political statements. The racist, Communist and Orthodox-fundamentalist critics of Putin have taken no part in the 'Dissenters' Marches'. Conversely, the largest collective events organised to demonstrate the unity of the rightist radicals – 'The Russian Marches' have, in the event, attracted only a fraction of these groupings – mainly racists. Amongst those who did not attend were the socialists (apart from a small amount of people from 'Rodina'), the 'multicultural imperialists'[1], and the leading figures of the Orthodox fundamentalist movement.

Using the market metaphor already established above, we can state that the character of supply on the Russian ideological market has changed completely. Earlier on, the predominant commodity was a mixture of fragments of the most diverse ideological systems, and the organisations and publications did not worry about the conceptual stability of their profile. On the contrary, they concerned themselves with making sure that all concepts that were potentially capable of discrediting 'the regime' were included in their rhetoric. What then developed was a fragmented market, in every segment of which a highly specific rhetoric was demanded and supplied. Racists no longer agreed to hear out addresses to the Orthodox faithful purely because the orator concluded his speech with an expression of hatred for the 'regime'; the Orthodox didn't want to listen to the Communists, and the Communists were no keener to listen to them. The ideological mishmashes of earlier years were replaced by ideological 'niche markets'.

The fate of nationalism: some conclusions

Offering a plausible hypothesis to explain the atomisation of the ideological marketplace is beyond my remit. However, there is no doubt that this process did take place, and that it was accompanied by the disappearance from the scene of radical nationalism. Different ideological currents that had formerly co-existed unexpectedly began to struggle viciously with each other, and one could hardly have predicted, at the early stages, what the relative power of each would be at the end of this process of the transformation of the ideological space. Neither outside observers nor even the participants of the events predicted what was to happen to Russian radical nationalism:

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[1] One of the organisers of the Russian march of 2005 was Dugin's 'Eurasian Youth Union' but only a year later, Dugin and his supporters refused to have anything to do with the 'racists' who had marched on 4 November. Also taking part in the march of 2005 were several deputies from the Russian Liberal-Democratic Party (including Nikolai Kuryanovich) who were later to be expelled from the party. In 2006 the 'Russian marches' were attended only by the Movement Against Illegal Immigration, along with several organisations that were ideologically close to it.

after the ideological programme of the nationalists began to diverge explicitly from the ideological programme of the followers of *gosudarstvennichestvo*, it turned out that the demand for radical nationalism was extremely insignificant.

There are two tenable explanations for this. First, it is possible that nationalism, in its pure form, was never in demand. When nationalism was only on offer in an impure state, mixed in with other ideologies, no one suspected this. But once various organisations and individuals had fastened their fate to nationalism in its pure form, it transpired that hardly anyone was ready to follow in their footsteps. This explanation fits in beautifully with the currently widespread theory according to which Russian nationalism was always fatally weak (see, for example, [Nozhenko 2007]).[1] According to a different explanation, which the author of this article prefers, each version of rightist ideology enjoyed success from the very start, but only amongst one clearly defined group of consumers. For as long as the market was home to more or less standardised parcels of ideological produce, everyone was forced to opt for one and the same thing. Once the supply had become more differentiated, each of these groups started to become interested purely in the rhetoric that was addressed to them and to them alone - and, accordingly, to support only those who produced this rhetoric, and this rhetoric alone. Thus, the numbers of such groups were in a constant state of flux – and the shrinking or growth of one of these groups would be reflected in the change in the size of the market of the corresponding ideological produce.

The collapse of radical nationalism, from this point of view, is a result of a combination of two processes - (a) the segmentation of the ideological market, and (b) the changes in the absolute numbers of the adherents of each segment. All the available facts about the make-up of the RNU - and other organisations which at some point chose for themselves Russian nationalism in its pure form – bear witness to the fact that their main body was made up of former and current members of the military rank-and-file, along with low-ranking employees of the police and other law enforcement agencies [Likhachev 2002]. In another article, I have argued that Russian radical-nationalistic ideology itself reflects, to a large extent, the social standing of the group's members [Sokolov 2005]. At the centre of the RNU's ideology was the belief that the social order should be based on the moral virtue of simple folk, expressed in its purest form in the military ethos. The Jews – who in the worldview of such nationalists, stood for absolute evil, – were defined, first and

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1 A comparable thesis is advanced by Geoffrey Hosking. *Russia: People and Empire*. London, 1997. [Editor].

foremost, by their propensity to use their contacts and education so that they could, whilst luring the masses into obedience, preserve the most profitable social standings for themselves and their children. The explicit anti-intellectualism, the tendency towards moralising, the extolling of military selflessness, modesty and discipline, and also the approval of a policy built on the use of military might – all of these look like the ingredients of an ideological formula that has been specially prepared for the class which was most sensitive to it.[1]

To all appearances, in about the year 2000 there was a radical turning point in the general mood of this stratum. The new political leader turned out to be a lot more attractive and, in a certain sense, more 'one of us' than the previous one, the standard of living gradually improved, and the regime did not seem at all threatened by its enemies – whether at home or on the international scene.[2] In 2002, I bumped into one of the former members of the RNU and asked him why he had left the organisation. He explained his decision by his growing confidence in and fondness for president Putin : '*You see, Putin is just more of a hard man than Barkashov!*'

It is easy to link these processes with the decline of radical nationalism. It is unlikely that all the people who previously shared such convictions renounced them completely under the influence of the mass propaganda of more 'civilised' forms of statism (though it is perfectly possible that this sometimes did occur). However, one can hypothesise that people's radical nature gradually decreased as they got older, as the crisis began to seem less acute, and as their own lives seemed less impoverished and hopeless.

The behaviour of the former nationalist leaders in the period after the year 2000 reflects a desperate desire to find some sort of rhetoric to replace their lost ability to attract supporters. The two main paths for them were racism and Orthodox fundamentalism. In this sense, the ideological trajectories of 'Pamyat'[3] and the two main off-

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1 The reader will most probably realise that this variety of nationalism is certainly not the only one, and that nationalism can just as successfully be a pacifistic and deeply elitist ideology aimed at intellectuals. Most of the early cultural nationalisms in nineteenth-century Europe were precisely of this order. Why has the sole version of nationalism to have received relatively widespread popularity in the post-perestroika era turned out to be completely different? The author can offer no answer to this question. The fact remains that the former producers of a radical-nationalistic rhetoric found it simple to re-orient themselves for the Orthodox-fundamentalist or racist auditorium, but could not comply with the potential demand for other versions of nationalism.

2 There is an interesting parallel to this in the decline of the British radical right during the Thatcher years; it is customary to argue that many 'natural' voters for parties like the National Front and the British National Party simply voted Conservative at this point. [Editor].

3 i.e. 'Memory': this was a radical nationalist movement of the 1980s, notable for being one of the first political groupings to voice openly anti-Semitic views. It emerged, as the name suggests, from the campaigns to protect the Russian national heritage of the late Soviet era. [Editor].

shoots of the former RNU (of Barkashov and the Lalochkin brothers) are most telling. From 2002 both organisations identified themselves completely with radical Orthodoxy. At the same time, other nationalistic leaders of the '90s evolved in another direction – but also away from nationalism-in-the-strict-sense-of-the-word. Some of them (Yury Belyaev, Aleksander Ivanov-Sukharevsky) found themselves in the racist ideological sector. But as far as I know, there is not one example of a movement in the other direction – from racism or Orthodoxy to political nationalism. It would be risky to suppose that the history of Russian radical nationalism is over, but one can say with certainty that a rupture in its history has occurred.

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