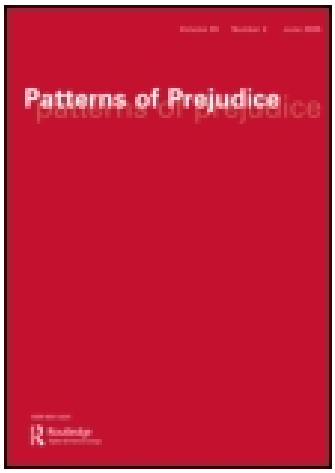

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Who is the enemy now? Islamophobia and antisemitism among Russian Orthodox nationalists before and after September 11

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Who is the enemy now? Islamophobia and antisemitism among Russian Orthodox nationalists before and after September 11[1]

ALEXANDER VERKHOVSKY

ABSTRACT In this article Verkhovsky focuses on Russian nationalist groups who base their ideology on the Russian Orthodox tradition. These Russian Orthodox nationalists should be distinguished both from those nationalists for whom Orthodoxy is clearly overwhelmed by the ideological demands of ethno-nationalism, as well as from those who use Orthodoxy simply as a popular symbol of national identity. Orthodox nationalists, moreover, are fairly independent of the Moscow Patriarchate and its ideology. The ideology of Orthodox nationalism focuses both on its principal enemy, the Antichrist, and on those enemies subordinate to the Antichrist: Jews, Catholics, the West, the New World Order and so on. In the mid-1990s Islam had no obvious place among this set of hostile forces. The Moscow Patriarchate and moderately nationalist politicians, relying to some extent on Eurasianist ideas, saw the relationship between Orthodoxy and Islam in Russia as a harmonious one, and, on the whole, Orthodox nationalists did not disagree, although individuals occasionally claimed that the Jews, using the West, were setting Islam against Orthodox Russia. The situation began to change during the second Chechen war, when Orthodox nationalists began to issue warnings of an Islamic threat. This was related not only to the situation in former Yugoslavia and in Chechnya, but also to an increase in the immigration of Muslims to ethnically Russian regions of the country. For Orthodox nationalists, this Islamic threat was part of the larger threat coming from the Jews and the West. Islam, they claimed, was being used as a tool by the Antichrist not only because it was a flawed religion, but because it, being less godless than the West, would produce radical Islamism as a synthesis of western technology and eastern passion. In the intense debates that followed in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001 most Orthodox nationalists in Russia supported adopting a neutral position in the supposed 'clash of civilizations' between Islam and the West.

KEYWORDS antisemitism, extremism, Islamophobia, nationalism, Russia, Russian Orthodoxy, September 11

Orthodox Christianity, as the dominant religion of Russians, is more professed than confessed. Over 80 per cent of ethnic Russians identify

1 This article was prepared with the support of grants from the MacArthur Foundation and the British Academy. The Russian version, 'Kto zhe teper' vrag? Islamofobiya i antisemitizm pravoslavnykh-radikalov do i posle 11 sentyabria', is available at http://religare.ru/article3236.htm (viewed 30 January 2004).

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themselves as Orthodox, while only 7 per cent of them pray often or go to church once a month or more, according to recent research.[2] The post-Soviet Russian nationalist movement as a whole reflects this general trend: nationalists make frequent reference to Orthodoxy, but religious issues are not their highest priority. However, there are a small number of nationalist groups who base their ideology on the Russian Orthodox tradition.[3] It is these groups, referred to by the term 'Russian Orthodox nationalists', that are the focus of this article.

Russian Orthodox nationalists should be distinguished both from those nationalists for whom Orthodoxy is clearly overwhelmed by the ideological demands of ethno-nationalism—the most significant group in this category is Russian National Unity (Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo)[4]—as well as from those who use Orthodoxy simply as a populist symbol of national identity, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (Kommunisticheskaya partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii) led by Gennady Zyuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's inaptly named Liberal-Democrat Party of Russia (LDPR, Liberal'no-demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii), and Yuri Belyaev's neo-Nazi Party of Freedom (Partiya svobody). They should also be distinguished from the majority of parishioners and clerics in the Russian Orthodox Church who are conservative but apolitical,[5] and from those hierarchs who represent the more moderate political position of the Moscow Patriarchate.[6]

The Russian Orthodox nationalist movement is fairly independent of the Moscow Patriarchate, and some of its members find themselves regularly in opposition to it. Nevertheless, many researchers have noted the movement's indirect influence on the Patriarchate. The impact that Orthodox nationalists have had on the general political landscape is not great, and their attempts at direct participation via the electoral process have, for the most part, been

2 Kimmo Kaariainen and Dmitrii Furman (eds), *Starye tserkvi, novye veruyushchie* (Moscow: Letnii sad 2000), 23, 16. See also Alexander Verkhovsky, 'Orthodoxy in the Russian ultranationalist movements', *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 22, no. 3, June 2002, 18–36.

3 This was the case also during the later years of the Soviet period; see Nikolai Mitrokhin, *Russkaya partiya. Dvizhenie russkikh nationalistov v SSSR, 1953–1985 gody* (Moscow: NLO 2003), 499–502.

4 For an examination of Russian National Unity's relationship with Russian Orthodoxy, see Stella Rock, 'Saints and symbols: post-Soviet Orthodoxy and the Russian nationalist movement', a paper presented at the 34th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Pittsburgh, PA, 21–4 November 2002.

5 There has been little sociological research done on this group; the best study so far is the collection of articles in Kaariainen and Furman (eds), especially that by Kimmo Kaariainen and Dmitrii Furman, 'Religion and politics in Russian mass consciousness', 49–78.

6 By 'Moscow Patriarchate' I mean the senior hierarchy rather than the entire Church, which is subject to the Moscow Patriarch. For a study of the political position of the Moscow Patriarchate, see Alexander Verkhovsky, 'Bespokoinoe sosedstvo. Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov' i Putinskoe gosudarstvo', in Alexander Verkhovsky, Ekaterina Mikhailovskaya and Vladimir Pribilovsky, *Rossiya Putina: Pristrastnyi vzglyad* (Moscow: Panorama 2003), 81–6.

unsuccessful. However, as the most active part of the Russian Orthodox Church, they are able to capitalize on the authority of the Church and the respect it commands and, in that fashion, to strengthen their ideological influence on society. One cannot call this movement 'marginal', since its impact far exceeds its numerical strength. It is, however, far from being unified. The majority of Orthodox nationalist groups are members of the Union of Orthodox Citizens (Soyuz pravoslavnykh grazhdan), although this body remains an extremely fluid and loosely structured coalition.[7] Furthermore, despite their similar aims and ideologies, these groups do not always enjoy friendly relations with one another.

The following are the principal organizations and publications that can best be included under the umbrella term of 'Russian Orthodox nationalists': the circle of so-called 'zealots in memory of Metropolitan Ioann',[8] including the Petersburg newspaper *Rus' pravoslavnaya* (Orthodox Russia);[9] the website *Russkaya liniya* (Russian Line) and the annual *Pravoslavie ili smert'* (Orthodoxy or Death); the activists engaged in the struggle against electronic coding, including the journal *Serbskii krest* (The Serbian Cross), renamed in 2002 *Pervyi i poslednii* (The First and the Last);[10] the Public Committee 'For the Moral Revival of the Fatherland' (Obshchestvennyi komitet 'Za nravstvennoe vozrozhdenie Otechestva');[11] the popular Orthodox newspapers *Radonezh*, *Russkii vestnik* (Russian Herald) and *Rus' derzhavnaya* (Sovereign Russia), which can be easily found in Russian Orthodox parishes and indeed outside of them; the journal *Russkii dom* (Russian House);[12] and other more marginalized groups such as the Black Hundreds (Chernaya sotnya) organization led by Alexander

7 The Union of Orthodox Citizens was founded during the period 1995–7; its permanent head is Valentin Lebedev, the principal editor of the apolitical Orthodox journal *Pravoslavnaya beseda*.

8 The Metropolitan of St Petersburg and Ladoga Ioann (Snychev), who died in 1995, was the acknowledged leader of Orthodox nationalism. For a study of his ideology and position in the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church, see Konstantin Kostiuk, 'Tri portreta', *Kontinent*, no. 113, 2002.

9 This newspaper is edited by the former press secretary to Metropolitan Ioann, Konstantin Dushenov. It became independent in 1997; previously it was a regular insert in the Communist Party newspaper *Sovietskaya Rossiia*. Since 1997 *Rus' pravoslavnaya* has been the most consistently antagonistic towards the Patriarchate among Orthodox nationalist publications

10 The main editor was Konstantin Gordeev, leader of the Moscow section of the movement Za pravo zhit' bez INN (For the right to live without an Individual Tax Number).

11 The Committee is headed by Father Alexander Shargunov, and has been active since the mid-1990s.

12 This journal is close to the more moderate Russian Orthodox nationalists grouped around the influential Sretenskii monastery in Moscow, the abbot of which is Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov; its main editor is Alexander Krutov, who also presents a television programme of the same name. Other publications closely associated with the Sretenskii monastery, the journal *Blagodatnyi ogon'* and the website *Pravoslavie.ru*, are not discussed in this article as, in my view, they are on the border between Orthodox nationalism and apolitical conservatism within the Church.

Shtilmark.[13] All these groupings consider the religious perspective to be more important than the political, and religious identity to be more important than ethnic identity (although these latter sometimes overlap). They also hold many ideas in common: they reject democratic and liberal values, and support the idea of a national dictatorship as a means of returning to an absolute and Orthodox monarchy, which they consider without doubt to be a realizable Russian ideal. Such a vision—based on their understanding of the concepts of 'Holy Russia' and 'The Third Rome'—leads, naturally, to a confrontation with a multitude of enemies, primarily 'the West' and 'world Jewry'. This confrontation is presented in extremely dramatic terms, as a struggle between a lonely Russia and her Church on the one hand, and the whole world on the other, a world, moreover, that has fallen into apostasy and become the servant of Satan.

The ideology of Russian Orthodox nationalists has often been subject to the scrutiny of researchers;[14] nonetheless, while their antisemitism is well documented, their attitude towards Islam is practically unexplored. An enemy—or, even better, a hierarchy of enemies—is the *sine qua non* of any nationalist ideology. In that sense, Orthodox nationalists are in a comfortable position as their main enemy, the Antichrist, has always been already clearly identified. There is also a rich tradition that identifies and describes those enemies that are subordinate to the Antichrist: Jews, Catholics and so on. In today's world, it is also possible to discern a new abstract enemy, namely, globalization.[15]

13 The contemporary Black Hundreds movement purports to be a revival of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Black Hundreds, infamous for inciting antisemitic pogroms.

14 For recent publications, see: Alexander Verkhovsky, 'Tserkov' v politike i politika v Tserkvi', in Alexander Verkhovsky, Ekaterina Mikhailovskaya and Vladimir Pribilovsky, *Politicheskaya ksenofobiya: radikal'nye gruppy, predstavleniya liderov, rol' Tserkvi* (Moscow: Panorama 1999), 60–122; Konstantin Kostyk, 'Pravoslavnyi fundamentalism: sotsial'nyi portret i istoki', *Politicheskie issledovaniya*, no. 5, 2000, 133–54; Vyacheslav Likhachev, 'Rol' religii v ideologii i deyatel'nosti sovremennykh rossiiskih pravoradikalov', in Mark Smirnov (ed.), *Dia-Logos. Religiya i obschestvo. 2000–01* (Moscow: Dukhovnaya biblioteka 2001), 139–55; Stephen D. Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharp 2001); Irina Kudryashova, 'Fundamentalism v prostranstve sovremennogo mira', *Politicheskie issledovaniya*, no. 1, 2002, 66–77; Stella Rock, '"Militant piety": fundamentalist tendencies in the Russian Orthodox Brotherhood movement', *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2002, 1–17; Alexander Verkhovsky, 'Radical Orthodox anti-globalism in 1999–2002', paper presented at the seminar 'Christian Fundamentalism, Racism and Antisemitism: East and West', Centre for German–Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, 10 April 2002, available at http://religion.sova-center.ru/publications/194EF5E/1951122 (viewed 28 January 2004); Anastasiya Mitrofanova, 'Fundamentalism and politicization of religion in Russian Orthodoxy', in Maria Marczewska-Rytko (ed.), *Religion in a Changing Europe. Between Pluralism and Fundamentalism. Selected Problems* (Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press 2003), 127–42. The author's own conclusions are based on research published in Alexander Verkhovsky, *Politicheskoe pravoslavie: Russkie pravoslavnye natsionalisty i fundamentalisty, 1995–2001* (Moscow: SOVA 2003).

15 See Verkhovsky, 'Radical Orthodox anti-globalism in 1999–2002'.

Contemporary political circumstances also give rise to the spectre of Islam, which poses certain difficulties for Russian Orthodox nationalists. In the 1990s they paid little attention to Islam, and therefore had no framework to call on in constructing their attitude to it as a whole. More important, however, was the fact that the world of Islam had no obvious place among the set of hostile forces that included the Jews, western heretics, the US government, the world financial centres and so on. It is the attempt by Russian Orthodox nationalists to solve this problem that is the subject of this article.

First, it is necessary to add a brief word about terminology, particularly the use of the term 'religious extremism', because this term is often applied to Russian Orthodox nationalists. If one believes that 'political extremism' means 'going to an extreme in politics', then, by analogy, 'Islamic extremism' means 'going to an extreme in Islam' or, similarly, in Orthodoxy or in religion generally. But going to an extreme in religion is not at all the same as going to an extreme in politics. For a person inclined to 'fundamentalism' (in any religious tradition),[16] the very notion of 'going to an extreme in religion' is total nonsense. When people use the term 'Islamic extremism', they are in fact referring to 'going to a political extreme in the name of Islam'. It would be more precise to use just such a formulation and avoid using the terms 'religious extremism', 'Islamic extremism' and so on. But as such usage has already been established in practice, it is impossible, unfortunately, to change it. I will use the widely adopted term 'Islamism' to refer to politically radical and aggressive movements within Islam.

Preliminary remarks concerning antisemitism

Russian Orthodox nationalists perceive world Jewry as the primary enemy of Russia and the Church. An important feature of 'the Jew' as an enemy is that he stands, visibly or invisibly, behind all other adversaries. It is a commonplace to say that the Jews control the United States or international finance, but the notion that Roman Catholics are also controlled by the Jews is less well

16 I use this term in the sense that it is used by the University of Chicago's five-year Fundamentalism Project, which published five volumes on the topic between 1991–5, although not all of the groups discussed in this article can accordingly be called 'fundamentalist'. To summarize, 'religious fundamentalism' refers to movements that are opposed to modernization and in favour of a revival of tradition, but a revival that relies on the tools of modernity (the mass media and so on), thereby modernizing the tradition itself in the process. These movements aim to create a new society based exclusively on (a modernized) piety; such an aim implies an opposition to the existing state and religious authorities, which are committed (more or less) to secularization and modernization. 'Fundamentalism' usually embraces both millenariansm and a Manichaean perception of the world. See Gabriel A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan, R. Scott Appleby, 'Fundamentalism: genus and species', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995), 402–14.

known: 'The past years have clearly shown that the heretic Vatican has become the main weapon of Israel in its fight against God and its efforts "to Judaize Christianity".'[17] Some commentators have even remarked that 'it looks as if both the Catholics and the Jews are waiting for the same Messiah',[18] that is, the Antichrist. Even the neo-pagans, the most virulent Russian antisemites, are apparently controlled by the Jews: 'As for the appearance of authors of neo-pagan, albeit anti-Zionist, books, this comes as no surprise because neo-paganism is directed by the very same Zionists . . .'[19]

Given such a world-view, it would have been strange if the Jews had no control over Muslims as well. Yet, since demonstrating this entails so many difficulties, such control is said to be exerted not by the Jews *directly* but, indirectly, by the West, which has long since become subordinate to Jewry. Here, in the words of the radical Orthodox nationalist Alexander Shtilmark, is how this control bears fruit:

> In global strategic terms it is very advantageous for the West to provoke us into fighting the Muslim world, turning Muslim hatred away from the USA and Israel to Russia, and from Judaism to Orthodoxy. They have already tested this out in Serbia and now are trying to use it in Chechnya . . . Simultaneously, the US leaders (under the influence of the B'nai B'rith) are feverishly trying to make peace between Israel and Palestine. They have even gone so far as to give the Palestinians some semblance of autonomy. First, it is planned that the Orthodox world and Russia be destroyed at the hands of Muslims, and then quietly to subjugate the Muslims.[20]

Thus, the Jews, using the West, are setting Islam (and everything else) against Orthodoxy, and their starting point is Russia. The prospect of such a global confrontation is highly provocative for Orthodox nationalists, as is their purely religious perception of what is the crux of the matter: namely, that Jewry, the New World Order and the West are all servants of the Antichrist.

Evidence for these apocalyptic scenarios is easily found in political realities. The spark for the second Palestinian intifada, the so-called 'al Aqsa' intifada,[21] made it possible to talk about the Jews' intention of restoring the Third Temple and of inviting the Antichrist there. In this context, even the recent war in Afghanistan can be perceived as a diversionary manoeuvre: 'With shells exploding in Afghanistan one almost fails to hear the work going on with ant-like thoroughness under the al Aqsa mosque to recreate the Third Temple

17 Father Svyatoslav Nevzorov, 'My ne iz koleblyushchikhsya na pogibel' . . .', *Rus' pravoslavnaya*, no. 11, 1999.

18 'Vatikan i iudei', *Russkii dom*, no. 8, 2000.

19 N. S. Lomakin, 'S chego nachinayetsya Rodina?', *Russkii vestnik*, nos 31–3, 2001.

20 Alexander R. Shtilmark, 'Nanesut-li Russkoy Armii udar v spinu?', *Chernaya sotnya*, nos 75–6, 2001.

21 The 'spark' was Ariel Sharon's 28 September 2000 visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, a site holy in both Jewish and Islamic traditions, where the Jewish Second Temple stood and where the al Aqsa mosque still stands.

where the Antichrist will take his seat.'[22] Incidentally, this remark—printed in *Russkii vestnik*, a well-known nationalist periodical with a large print-run and a website—was first made on the television programme *Russkii dom* on 8 November 2001, indicating the degree to which the notion of an imminent Armageddon has firmly taken root in Orthodox nationalist circles.[23] It should be noted that this manifestation of antisemitism was apparent before September 11; the radical Orthodox nationalist website *Russkaya liniya* had been regularly publishing similar material about events in the Middle East since the beginning of the second intifada.

Islam and Russian Orthodoxy

The attitude towards Islam of nationalists, even moderate nationalists, clearly diverges from that of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has established friendly relations with official Islamic bodies. The Church opposes proselytizing among Muslims and argues against confusing 'extremist movements using Islamic slogans' with Islam in general.[24] In 1999 the Patriarch said, 'I am categorically against using the term "Islamic extremism", because that is tantamount to our referring to [Orthodoxy or Christianity as a whole as] "Orthodox" or "Christian extremism"',[25] thus raising the important issue of terminology referred to above.[26]

As for the Orthodox nationalist camp, in contradistinction to the official Church, two tendencies have always co-existed. The first might be called 'Eurasian', in a broad sense of the word. From this perspective, the (former or

22 'Kto initsiator mezhdunarodnogo terrorizma?' (Who is initiating international terrorism?), *Russkii vestnik*, 19 November 2001.

23 *Russkii dom* is the only nationalist Russian Orthodox television programme broadcasting practically all over the country. In November 2003 it was taken off the air, and replaced by a similar programme, *Russkii vzglyad*; since January 2004, however, both programmes are broadcast alternately. The host of *Russkii dom*—the editor-in-chief of the journal of the same name—was elected to the State Duma in December 2003 from the Motherland (Rodina) bloc.

24 Speech by Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna at the conference 'Khristianstvo i islam. Vek XXI' (Christianity and Islam: the twenty-first century), 13 September 2002, published in a report by the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, available at www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/nr209101.htm (viewed 17 February 2004).

25 See the interview with the Patriarch, 'Katolicheskaya ekspansiya v pravoslavnoy Rossii', *Radonezh*, nos 19–20, 1999.

26 See also comments on the *Portal Credo* website, 'Sushchestvuyet-li "islamskii terrorism"?', 20 November 2002, http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=comment&id=105 (viewed 17 February 2004). The semi-official Church position is outlined in a draft document prepared by a special commission, which is available in English: 'The Draft of the Report of the working group of the Federal Council of the Russian Federation presidium on issues of counteraction to religious extremism in the Russian Federation of 30th October 2002', *Gazeta*, 5 December 2002, available at www.gzt.ru/rubricator.gzt?id=28550000000004192 (viewed 28 January 2004).

desired) Russian empire, due to its geographic boundaries, is based not only on Orthodoxy but on Islam. Accordingly, Islam cannot be hostile to Russia.[27] This is the perspective adopted by most nationalists, both within the Orthodox camp and outside it, including the Communist Party, the increasingly popular Motherland (Rodina) bloc,[28] and the moderate Orthodox community that follows the Moscow Patriarchate.

Statements supporting this vision of a two-faith Russia made by mainstream nationalist figures are usually motivated by a pragmatic desire to keep civil peace. They are often marked by rather superficial historical references and an unsophisticated notion of religion. At the congress of the People's Patriotic Union of Russia in 1998, for example, Gennady Zyuganov announced:

> . . . more and more often in the sphere of inter-religious relations, we come across some madmen who are trying to provoke conflict between Russian Orthodoxy and Islam. And all this despite the fact that the union of Russian Orthodox and Islamic peoples has been the cornerstone of Russian statehood for centuries on end! Also, the two religions profess similar moral values, primarily asserting the priority of spiritual sources over the vices of uncontrolled material consumption.[29]

Similar pronouncements can be found in statements by Dmitry Rogozin of the Motherland bloc as well as by politicians such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky and the leaders of the People's Party (Narodnaya partiya).[30]

The attitudes of the 'Eurasianists' towards Islam have subtly altered in the past decade. In the mid-1990s the moderate nationalist Congress of Russian Communities (Kongress russkikh obshchin)—the former 'home' of the present leaders of the Motherland bloc, Dmitry Rogozin and Sergei Glazyev—actually co-operated with Islamists in Dagestan, in particular by supporting the somewhat radical Khachilaev brothers.[31] Today, such a show of respect for

27 This refers not so much to Eurasian political ideologists, such as Alexander Dugin, Vadim Kozhinov, Alexander Prokhanov and others, but to the Moscow Patriarchate and its moderate, like-minded associates; see the contribution made by Roman Silant'ev of the Department of External Church Relations to the roundtable discussion, 'Islam v rossiiskoi politike: chem otvetyat pravoslavnye?' (Islam in Russian politics: how should the Orthodox reply?), *Radonezh*, no. 6, 2002.

28 Despite being formed only in September 2003, the Motherland bloc secured 9 per cent of the vote in the Duma elections held three months later.

29 Speech at the Second Congress of the People's Patriotic Union of Russia, 27 November 1998, quoted from Gennady Zyuganov, 'Manifest NPSR', *Zavtra*, no. 147, 1998.

30 The People's Party, led by Gennadii Raikov and Valery Galchenko, attempted to establish itself during 2002–3 as a main Church lobby group and a conservative force among pro-Kremlin parties. However, they fared badly in the December 2003 parliamentary election, receiving only 1.18 per cent of the vote.

31 Sergei Dunaev, '"Musulmanskii faktor" v rossiiskoi politike' ('The Muslim factor' in Russian politics), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 January 1998. Nadir and Muhammad Khachilaev were leaders of the Laktsy minority in Dagestan; Nadir was the rather radical leader of the Soyuz musulman Rossii (Union if Muslims of Russia), and both were killed in internal Dagestani conflicts.

Islam would be unthinkable. At that time, Rogozin could suggest reinstating the office of vice-president of the Russian Federation and giving that office to a Muslim.[32] Now, such a remark might only be expected from a marginal figure like Ali Vyacheslav Polosin, a Russian Orthodox priest who converted to Islam. On the other hand, those like Zhirinovsky, infamous for radical statements, now issue anti-Islamic pronouncements less frequently than in the past. It seems that the attitudes of all mainstream—in the sense of moderate—nationalists have now coalesced behind the more centrist 'Eurasianist' view of Metropolitan Kirill (Gundyaev), the chief ideologist of the Moscow Patriarchate. According to that view, Islam, as well as Buddhism and Judaism, should in principal be considered equal to Russian Orthodoxy although they should retain minority status, with Russia as a whole being regarded as a Russian Orthodox country.[33] This is exactly the position taken by the Communist Party, Zhirinovsky's LDPR and the Motherland bloc, even though Judaism is sometimes omitted from the list, as it was, for example, in the first version of Glazyev's bill on the social partnership of church and state.[34] Without dwelling too much on the evolution of these sentiments, it is evident that this first, more tolerant, 'Eurasian' tendency lost considerable ground at the onset of the second Chechen war, when even the non-nationalist section of society saw what an important role Islamism played in the Chechen separatist movement.

The second tendency, embodied by the more radical Orthodox nationalists, strictly adheres to the idea that the Russian kingdom can be only Orthodox, and that all other faiths should be tolerated only as long as they do not encroach on the Orthodox nature of the state. This religious tolerance is, in practice, quite limited as other faiths *are* generally seen by this group as interfering with an Orthodox essence by the very fact of their existence. Within the framework of radical ideologies attempts are sometimes made to make an exception specifically for Islam,[35] but these are hardly convincing.

Roman Vershillo, an Orthodox nationalist polemicist, has articulated the position of the 'radical' tendency quite clearly. In a twisted reversal of the Patriarchal position that holds that terrorists cannot be called 'Islamic extremists' because they have no true Islamic faith, Vershillo declares that Islam actually *requires* violence from its adherents. In response to the Patriarchal position, Vershillo asks:

32 Evgenii Antonov, 'Moskvayurt-2005', *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 24 December 1997.

33 Metropolitan Kirill, 'Rossiya—pravoslavnaya, a ne "mnogokonfessional'naya" strana' (Russia is a Russian Orthodox and not a 'multi-confessional' country), *Radonezh*, no. 18, 2002.

34 Sergei Glazyev's bill, 'O sotsial'nom partnerstve gosudarstva i religioznykh organizatsii', was submitted twice; the first version, submitted in December 2002, is available at www.state-religion.ru/cgi/run.cgi?action=show&obj=1650 (viewed 13 February 2004); the second version, submitted in March 2003, is available at www.state-religion.ru/cgi/run.cgi?action=show&obj=1695 (viewed 13 February 2004).

35 'Obrashchenie k russkomu narodu', *Rus' derzhavnaya*, no. 8, 1999.

> Does this mean that it is acceptable to profess Islam, but that to act according to its teachings is a criminal act? . . . Of course, convictions, ideological or moral, cannot have physical limits. Every person pursues that which he or she believes to be the truth and does not decide beforehand how far he or she might go. The whole history of mankind is full of extremes in such a pursuit of the truth, religious, ethical and scientific. . . . one should not worry about the strength of somebody's belief in ideas and on what continent those ideas flourish, but investigate whether the ideas are right in themselves. . . . Only by believing in the truth of Orthodoxy can one understand that terrorists indeed have no religion. No true religion.[36]

Islam is portrayed by Vershillo as a false religion and, similarly, many Orthodox nationalists have ceased to distinguish between 'bad' and 'good' Islam, an attitude that corresponds to the anti-Islamic prejudices of the wider Russian population.[37] The Orthodox newspaper *Radonezh* has been especially explicit on this point. For example, in one article, Vladimir Vasilik, a teacher at the Saint Petersburg Ecclesiastical Seminary, while recognizing the political usefulness of the thesis that 'terrorists indeed have no religion', writes: '. . . One cannot understand the motives of [those] non-ministerial politicians and observers, who are not burdened with any great responsibility, when they deny the existence of the religious roots of Chechen terrorism . . .'[38] Vasilik offers a set of standard arguments about the dangers of Islam, starting with a list of the crimes committed by Muslims against Christians in the twentieth century, and then quoting a set of aggressive phrases from the Qur'an, after which he simply adds: 'No wonder that, at a foundational level, an aggressive ideology is being born, one that is frankly aimed at grabbing power. And, ideally, grabbing power throughout the world.' It is characteristic of such respectable commentators, writing in relatively respectable newspapers and trying to appear respectable, that Vasilik expresses one reservation at the end: 'This article in no way aims to create "an image of the enemy" in the person of a Muslim. However, if we do not wish a repetition of the Yugoslav scenario in our country, it is necessary to understand the specifics of the war we are living through.'

36 Roman Vershillo, 'Dikie idei', November 2002, available on the website of the Public Committee 'For the Moral Revival of the Fatherland', www.moral.ru/pr4-10nov.htm (viewed 13 February 2004).

37 Such prejudices are clearly expressed, for example, in the scandalous piece written by Oleg Osetinskii, 'Esli by ya byl Ben Ladenom' (If I were Bin Laden), serialized in the mainstream newspaper *Izvestiya*, 13 and 26 September, 3 and 10 October 2002. As for the anti-Islamic prejudices in the population as a whole, a survey conducted by FOM (Public Opinion Foundation) on 19 June 2003, which included a question asking respondents to state the religion that they felt was the most alien to them, found that 26 per cent named Islam, while 21 per cent named Buddhism, 18 per cent Judaism, 13 per cent Protestantism, 9 per cent Catholicism and so on; for the findings, see http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d032411 (viewed 28 January 2004).

38 Vladimir Vasilik, 'Istoki agressivnosti', *Radonezh*, nos 21–2, 1999.

The editor-in-chief of the *Russkaya liniya* website, Sergey Grigoryev, formulates this even more clearly:

> Imagine a smart little journalist from Jerusalem coming up to you and asking: 'Guys, tell us who Mohammed is?' Well, I'll keep silent. But if I'm approached by my compatriot who really needs to know, I'll answer that Mohammed is the Antichrist. It is important for that Orthodox Christian and for the sake of his faith! But that little journalist from Jerusalem wants only to provoke us and make us quarrel with the Muslims.[39]

Orthodox nationalists and the 'Islamic threat'

The 'radical' position can be formulated as follows: Islam in general is essentially hostile to Russia and Orthodoxy, and Russians must be aware of this threat; but, in order to avoid direct conflict, they must avoid characterizing Muslims as an enemy. This difficult task is made more difficult by the growing number of immigrants from Muslim regions inside Russia (Northern Caucasus), from inside the former Soviet Union (Azerbaijan, Central Asia) and even from more distant places (Afghans, Kurds and others). As Russian nationalists see Islam as an aggressive force, they perceive this immigration as a danger and as part of the expansionist designs of 'world Islam'.

For the majority of Russia's citizens, notions of religious and ethnic identity are closely connected. The Church, politicians and public figures frequently use terms such as 'ethnic Muslims', 'the historically Orthodox' (meaning all ethnic Russians or Ukrainians) and so forth. While not denying the existence of a real link between religious and ethnic self-identification, one cannot but notice how this link is made absolute and, in essence, aggressively imposed on people. With regard to Islam, such a link automatically conditions a Russian nationalist to be suspicious not only of Muslims but of all the various ethnic groups that, for the most part, practise Islam. Conversely, suspicions against particular ethnic groups are redirected at Muslims in general: '. . . foreigners cannot live in peace with their hosts, they cannot live without furthering their expansionist designs in all spheres of life (and that expansion is a consequence of the Muslim world-view) . . .'[40] In the radical nationalist's mind, the weight of these suspicions gives rise to a sense that a violent reaction to 'the Islamic threat', and primarily the domestic one, is inevitable.

> For the first time in the history of Russia a demographic explosion has made the Muslims stronger than Moscow. For the first time Russia has almost no hope of preserving its ethnic integrity. Because the process of decomposition of Russian

39 'Nuzhen-li russkoy pravoslavnoy tzerkvi pomestniy sobor?', *Rus' pravoslavnaya*, no. 4, 2002.

40 V. Nikolayev, 'Moskovsky "dzhihad" i ego posledstviya' (Moscow 'jihad' and its consequences), *Pervyi i poslednii*, no. 4, 2002.

> national society has gone so far and the Muslims are so young and aggressive . . . We can look forward to a lot of fighting![41]

Nonetheless, the notion of Russia being the target of Islamist aggression, or of Muslims in general, requires further rationalization. The fact is that, until the middle of the 1990s, only Israel and the West were believed to be the objects of that aggression. One explanation for the shift in perception, the war in Chechnya, is readily to hand. But this explanation carries the implication that Russia is in some way responsible,[42] an implication that is hardly desirable.

Russian responsibility, however, can be formulated in such a way that it does not touch a raw nerve. The religious version of such a formulation holds that Islam, 'a religion of partial truth', has become degraded in line with the degradation that Christianity, 'the religion of complete truth', has suffered at the hands of materialism and secularization. Accordingly, 'if the Cross can assume its rightful place in the government and in society, in every family and in every person, then both we and our Muslim compatriots will most assuredly have nothing to fear'.[43] The implication here is that, in the West, 'the Cross' can no longer occupy 'its rightful place'. Hence, the more politicized version of this explanation for the responsibility that Russia bears in attracting the hostility of Islam is as follows: 'What other reaction could we expect from Muslims now, considering that we have almost completely turned to the West and are fawning on American interests?'[44]

The Jew and the world behind the scenes

Such an explanation is already quite sufficient for a nationalist. Nevertheless, placing the blame for Islamic aggression on the main enemy, the Jew, comes more naturally. Alexander Soluyanov, to take just one example among many, expressed it as follows in the Orthodox nationalist newspaper *Russkii vestnik*:

> Dark forces, specifically the followers of Talmudic Judaism, want to produce a clash between Orthodoxy and Islam . . . But true Muslims will never raise their weapons against an Orthodox Christian. Therefore, to reach their goal, the Talmudists use not Islam, but something that has been created from it, Wahhabism, which is a current that has adapted Islam to aggressive goals.[45]

41 'Oni pridut s yuga pod zelenym znamenem islama: statistika neumolimo svidetel'stvuet: russkie vymirayut, a ikh mesto zanimayut musulmane', *Serbskii krest*, no. 17, 1999.

42 A. V. Bazhenov, 'Yedinoy i nedelimoy Rossii—byt'!', *Russkii vestnik* (special issue), nos 18–19, 1997; this article is a report by the co-chairman of the Russian All-People Movement (Rossiiskoe obschenarodnoe dvizhenie) delivered at its third congress in May 1997.

43 'Polumesyats i krest' (Crescent and cross), *PravdaRu*, 21 August 2002, available on the *Portal Credo* website, http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=2026&cf= (viewed 28 January 2004).

44 'Bolshoye viditsya na rasstoyanii', *Rus' derzhavnaya*, nos 19–21, 1996, 32.

45 Alexander Soluyanov, 'Nam nuzhno edinenie', *Russkii vestnik*, nos 42–3, 1999.

Accordingly, Islamism is simply a tool of the world that lurks 'behind the scenes'.

In a slight variant, Islam is sometimes seen not as an unwitting tool but as a fully-fledged collaborator with the host of the Antichrist that is assaulting Russia. This is the way it is portrayed by Vladimir Semenko, an ideologist of the Union of Orthodox Citizens, the main coalition of Orthodox nationalists:

> . . . within surrogate Islam, western technology is combined with eastern passion, and its forces have been directly supported by the West (Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia—you name it) under the pretext of the fight to protect Tradition, which becomes in reality a war against Tradition, the destruction of traditional cultures (including the Islamic one), that is, a literal transition to Nothingness. Islam here, though, provides fertile soil by virtue of the fact that there is no principle of Godmanhood within it.[46] All this, taken together, is nothing less than materialized Satanism, the direct power of darkness. . . . The alliance of neo-liberals and ersatz Islamists . . . will undoubtedly target (and already do target) the religion of the true Godmanhood, that is to say, Holy Orthodoxy, the main bearer of which is the great eastern Christian civilization and primarily Russia. . . . Now the question is . . .: will Russia adopt the neo-liberal standards being actively imposed on her, abandoning her Orthodox-imperial identity? If so, radical Islam, within which God in fact still exists, as opposed to the liberal West, will enter the body of Eurasia as a knife into butter. Or will Russia return to its mission as 'the restraining hand [*uderzhayushchii*]'?[47] The approaching (and to a large extent already arrived) epoch will be, without a doubt, the epoch of universal catastrophe for Russia and the whole world.[48]

This long quotation from Semenko's article aptly summarizes the view of Islam that predominates among radical Orthodox nationalists. And bear in mind that it was published four months before September 11.

September 11 and 'the clash of civilizations'

What changed on September 11? First, nationalists saw that the West remained the primary object of Islamist aggression. Second, the theme of 'the clash of

46 'Godmanhood' (*Bogochelovechestvo*) is a concept developed by the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), meaning 'the humanity of God' or 'divine humanity'; see, for example, his 'Chteniya o Bogochelovechestve' (Readings on Godmanhood), available at www.philosophy.ru/library/solovev/chteniya.html (viewed 18 February 2004).

47 Semenko makes reference here to the words of the apostle Paul about the barrier to imminent apocalypse: 'For the secret forces of transgression are already at work, but they will not achieve their ends until the restraining hand [*uderzhayushchii*] is removed from their midst' (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

48 Vladimir Semenko, 'Metafizika apostasii: o dukhovno-metafizicheskich istokakh krizisa sovremennoy tsivilizatsii', *Vestnik Russkoi linii*, 5 May 2001, available at www.e-journal.ru/p_relig-st1-14.html (viewed 28 January 2004).

civilizations' (in Samuel Huntington's clichéd sense), which occupied centre-stage in discussions that ensued concerning the West's response to the attack, begged the question as to Russia's place in such a conflict.

One needs to bear in mind in this regard that there is, among nationalists, an informal (but almost universal) consensus that September 11 was inspired by some behind-the-scenes forces. It was not for nothing that the tale of 4,000 Jews being absent from the Twin Towers on the day of the attack became so widespread.[49] Thus, as seen by nationalists, especially Orthodox ones, the clash between the West and the world of Islam is one that has been artfully staged. Choosing sides, therefore, becomes immensely difficult.

The popular ideologue Mikhail Nazarov characterizes Islam as a third force lying between Orthodox Russia and the apostate West: 'I call the third force non-Christian, as it neither knows the truth of Christ nor betrays it. It is a blind element that can be used by the other two forces in their own interests, in their struggle with each other . . .' Nazarov considers Russia's international position to be a weak one, and therefore draws the following conclusion:

> . . . the interests of our state—especially in this difficult time when they [the enemies of Russia] try, in connection with Chechnya, to set the Islamic world against us—require a strict neutrality in the Islam–West conflict. I repeat, that conflict has emerged because of Israel, so let them look for a settlement themselves.[50]

Andrey Moskvin, a writer for *Russkii vestnik*, puts forward a conspiracy theory that is ideologically more coherent, and explicitly links the United States, Israel and the Antichrist.[51] Thus, according to Moskvin, September 11 was necessary in order to provoke a large-scale war in the Middle East, during which Iraqi missiles would—as if by chance—destroy the Dome of the Rock and the al Aqsa mosque, and render enormous damage to Israel. Public opinion would then, once again, perceive Israel as a victim. And Israel would then, in turn, be able to build the Third Temple—preparations for which were already well under way—without interference, and the Antichrist would be able to take his seat in the temple. Moskvin, quite obviously, is not calling for neutrality. He proposes that Russia should supply anti-aircraft missiles to Iraq, that is, that Russia should actively participate in the 'clash of civilizations' on the side of 'the world of Islam'. Despite this, he does not deny the necessity of opposing Islamist fundamentalism.

Anatoly Stepanov, a political journalist for the *Russkaya liniya* website, is principally in agreement with Moskvin's apocalyptic vision. Nevertheless, like

49 The first report of this myth in Russian was, apparently, Eduard Volodin, 'Iudino vremya—3' (Judas' time), *Russkoe voskresenie*, 2001, available at www.voskres.ru/kolonka/jt3.htm (viewed 28 January 2004).

50 Mikhail Nazarov, 'Novy etap ustanovleniya novogo mirovogo poryadka', *Radonezh*, nos 15–16, 2001.

51 Andrey Moskvin, 'Terakty v Amerike: komu eto nado?' (Terrorist attacks in America: who needs them?), *Russkii vestnik*, 25 October 2002.

Nazarov, Stepanov insists on maintaining a distance from the world of Islam, not only for pragmatic reasons of foreign policy, but also for ideological and domestic reasons:

> . . . when Professor al Janabi suggested the necessity of synthesizing Russian and Islamic traditions as part of the ideological baggage of the Russian anti-globalization movement, the dissonance produced an ear-splitting cacophony. The Muslim professor called for the removal of all obstacles in the way of Russian–Islamic unity. We have heard something similar recently, when Tatar public figures called for the cancellation of celebrations marking the anniversary of the Battle of Kulikovo[52] on the grounds that they were an insult to Tatar national pride . . . But a question arises that is perfectly justified: do the Russian people need this kind of struggle against American globalization? The role of Russia 'pulling chestnuts out of the fire' for the United States is certainly not a desirable one, but our fate will be even worse if we start pulling chestnuts out of the fire for China or the Islamic world. It would be sensible to make an alliance with the enemies of the United States but only when Russia can dictate the terms.[53]

The reference to the Battle of Kulikovo is not a chance one. Orthodox nationalists increasingly oppose the expansion of Islam in the Russian context. There are enough pretexts: the attempts by Muslims in Sergiyev Posad to obtain building permission for a mosque that would be visible from the Trinity-St Sergius monastery;[54] the plan to open an Islamic university in Moscow; the discriminatory practices of the Tatar authorities towards Orthodox Christians; and the totally fictitious threat of the Islamicization of ethnic Russians, allegedly posed by associates of Sergey Kiriyenko, the presidential representative in the Volga Federal District (the so-called 'Russian Islam' project), and so forth.[55]

52 In this battle of 1380, the Russian army, led by Prince Dmitrii of Moscow, won a significant victory over the Golden Horde of the Tatars. Although it took another 100 years before the Russian princes were completely free of the 'Tatar yoke', this battle became a symbol of Russian military glory, the more so because this particular venture was blessed by St Sergei of Radonezh, a beloved mediaeval saint.

53 Anatoly Stepanov, 'Antiglobalistskii kokteil', *Russkaya liniya*, 10 December 2001, www.rusk.ru/Patriot/Polinf/po6.htm (webpage no longer available).

54 This monastery, founded by St Sergei of Radonezh in the fourteenth century, is considered historically to be the spiritual centre of the Russian Orthodox Church.

55 All this is rendered in detail in statements by the Union of Orthodox Citizens; see, for example: 'Prekratit' presledovanie pravoslaviya v Tatarstane i propagandu islamskogo prozelitizma za gosudarstvennyi schyot!' (Stop the persecution of Orthodoxy in Tatarstan and Islamic propaganda at the state's expense), *Russkaya liniya*, 20 September 2002, www.rusk.ru/News/02/9/new20_09r1.htm (viewed 28 January 2004); 'Soyuz pravoslavnykh grazhdan protiv stroitel'stva mecheti v Sergiyevom Posade' (UOC is against building a mosque in Sergiyev Posad), *Newsru.com*, 18 October 2002, www.newsru.com/religy/18Oct2002/spg_mechet_print.html (viewed 28 January 2004); 'Publlikatsii v "Izvestiyakh" i "Nezavisimoy gazete" protiv SPG porazhayut

So far, these domestic events have not been thought about in the context of global problems. But, in any case, domestic policy issues are interpreted in the same manner as foreign policy ones. The Union of Orthodox Citizens believes:

> The arguments by supporters of state-funded 'unified Islamic education', that it is necessary to counterbalance Islamic extremism, are unconvincing and provocative. Satisfying the appetites of a minority at the expense of the majority does not lead to peace, it only whets appetites. . . . the thesis that one should satisfy to the maximum all the demands of radical Islam or else 'they will blow something up' [is based on] the logic of 'permanent Khasavyurt'.[56]

The Khasavyurt Accords, which concluded the first Chechen war in 1996, are seen by nationalists—and not only by them—as evidence of Russia's forced capitulation. But regardless of the attitude to Khasavyurt, comparing it with an educational programme demonstrates that, basically, Islam is perceived as a military opponent. It is this, probably, that characterizes the changes indirectly brought on by September 11.

Who is the enemy now?

The characterization of world Jewry and Islam as 'enemies' was commonplace in Russian Orthodox nationalism prior to the attacks of September 11, with the second Palestinian intifada and the second Chechen war acting as catalysts. Moreover, the idea of Islam as part of a general 'enemy structure' headed by the Antichrist was already being developed. (Incidentally, in this sense, the threat of pan-Turkism serves as a kind of bridge between the West and the Jews on the one hand, and the world of Islam on the other, as Muslim Turkey politically belongs to the West.[57])

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svoyei nekompetentnostyu' (Publications in 'Izvestiya' and 'Nezavisimaya gazeta' against UOC are shockingly incompetent), 24 October 2002, available on the website of Edinoe Otechestvo (United Fatherland), www.otechestvo.org.ua/obrashenia/zayvl_SPG_241002.htm (viewed 13 February 2004).

56 'Antitserkovnoye lobbi protiv osnov pravoslavnoy kultury, protiv evropeiskikh khristianskikh tsennostey' (Anti-Church lobby is against the foundations of Orthodox culture and European Christian values), Union of Orthodox Citizens press release, 21 November 2002, available on the Edinoe Otechestvo website, www.otechestvo.org.ua/obrashenia/zayvl_SPG_281002.htm (viewed 13 February 2004).

57 The theme of a pan-Turkist threat merits separate consideration, and I will here provide only a couple of references: Nataliya Narochnitskaya, 'Rossiya i Zapad v novykh geopoliticheskikh real'nostyakh', available on the *Pravoslavie.ru* website, 1999, www.pravoslavie.ru/analit/global/roswestgeopol.htm (viewed 28 January 2004); Nataliya Narochnitskaya, 'Evropa, Aziya, Blizhnii Vostok—kto sleduyushchiy?', available on the *Pravoslavie.ru* website, 22 February 2002, www.pravoslavie.ru/analit/europa-asia-mideast.htm (viewed 28 January 2004).

September 11 caught Orthodox nationalists in the middle of these conceptual tasks. Accordingly, there was no unity with regard to the question of whether Russia should act as Islam's ally in the ensuing 'clash of civilizations'. Currently, advocates of neutrality predominate. This is possibly also due to the fact that, domestically, Islam's place among 'the combined enemies' of Russian nationalists has been steadily growing; the hostage-taking incident in Moscow in October 2002 is only one of the factors influencing this growth, and cannot be said to have significantly altered the larger picture.

Can one expect the conceptual wrangling to reach a point at which the hierarchy of enemies is turned upside down and Islam is ranked higher than world Jewry? Frankly, there are insufficient grounds for thinking so, and there is at present no sign of such a change. One can most probably expect the formation of a commonly accepted hierarchy of enemies that I would summarize in the following way. If Russia is closest to God, then the liberal West (led, implicitly, by the Jews) is closest to the Antichrist. The liberals have no God in them; they represent pure evil. Liberals demoralize all other cultural groups and set them against one another. They use the Wahhabis to destroy Islamic tradition. Most importantly, they set everyone they possibly can against Orthodox Russia. In pursuit of this end in the contemporary world, Islamism is their main instrument. Accordingly, reinforcing Russia's connection with God and revealing to the Muslims the plots of the liberals and Jews are tasks of the highest priority for Russian Orthodoxy.

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