



ARTICLE

The “End of Times” and the Antichrist’s Arrival: The Orthodox Dogmas and Prophecies in the National-Patriotic Media in Post-Soviet Russia¹

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ABSTRACT

A return of the Orthodox religion and a renaissance of the Russian Orthodox Church gave a way for politically active movements of Orthodox fundamentalists and monarchists. They were obsessed with the idea of the “end of time” and argued that the Antichrist was at the door. The article focuses on several national-patriotic newspapers and their interest to Orthodox prophecies about the end of time, which can be traced from the turn of the 1990s. It is examined who exactly, in what way and for what goals developed and discussed eschatological ideas. The major themes, rhetorical means and key words are scrutinized, which helped consumers to disclose the “enemies of Russia” and to reveal their “perfidious plans” and “harmful actions” aimed at the destruction of Russia and its people. A relationship between this ideology and theological teaching of the end of time is analyzed.

KEYWORDS

Russian Orthodoxy, eschatology, fundamentalism, image of enemies, the Antichrist

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Introduction

A number of new political movements with their own programs and hopes had come onto the scene in the USSR at the wave of *perestroika* by the end of the 1980s. As the Communist ideology declined and a democracy arrived, there was an evident trend towards religion, including the Russian Orthodoxy, particularly after the celebration of the millennium of the Baptism of Rus' in 1988. Having thrown away the burden of totalitarian ideology, Russian society demonstrated a fast fragmentation. Various interest groups emerged with their own views on the further development of the country and even on the very goal of its existence.

The former uniform macro-ideology was replaced by numerous micro-ideologies based on a complex combination of political, social, economic, ethnic, religious and cultural ideas. In this article, I focus on the period of 1990–1993, which marked the beginning of political life in contemporary Russia. Political pluralism came into being, censorship vanished and a freedom of speech was introduced for the first time after a long period of the tough authoritarian regime. Religion became legitimate and turned into a useful resource for political projects. I will analyze an impact of certain Orthodox dogmas on the propaganda, which was actively disseminated by several national-patriotic media.

I will focus, firstly, on the Orthodox-Monarchist periodicals (*Tsar'-Kolokol* [Tsar Bell] and *Zemshchina*) with a limited circulation, secondly, on the well-known Russian nationalist newspaper *Russkiy vestnik* [Russian Herald] and, thirdly, on the *Den'* [The Day] newspaper of the so-called “spiritual opposition”. These media were chosen because, while sharing (at least rhetorically) loyalty towards the Russian Orthodoxy, they applied to different audiences, represented different streams of the national-patriotic political wing, and had different political views.

Tsar'-Kolokol and *Zemshchina* aimed at a narrow circle of monarchists, as well as clergy and believers in the Russian Orthodox parishes and monasteries. *Zemshchina* appeared irregularly in ca. 990 copies; 97 issues were published in 1990–1993. The newspaper was officially issued by the *Soyuz “Khristianskoe vozrozhdenie”* (Union of “Christian Revival”–UCR), headed by Vladimir Osipov (see: Dunlop, 1983). Initially it represented also a voice of the *Bratstvo vo imya svyatogo Tsarya-iskupitelya Nikolaya II* [Brotherhood for the sake of Tsar-martyr Nickolas II] led by Andrey Shchedrin (Nikolay Kozlov), who was obsessed with a “ritual murder”. The newspaper together with its editorial board was enrolled into the dwarf neo-Nazi People's National Party in 1994, and its content had changed since then. These media were established and run by the Orthodox monarchists who appeared in Russia in the 1980s and came out from underground in 1987–1988 (Platonov, 2012, pp. 184, 503–504). They hoped that a revitalization of the Russian Orthodoxy would bring about a radical transformation of the Russian society. At the same time, they were sensitive to rumors about some “mighty secret agents”, who wanted to destroy Russia (Kruglov, 2004, pp. 324–327).

Russkiy vestnik was sponsored primarily by the Cossacks and initially aimed at all ethnic Russians regardless of their political or religious views. Yet, over time,

it turned to those who identified themselves with the Russian Orthodoxy. At the beginning, this newspaper enjoyed a press run of 100 thousand copies per issue, but had reduced to 60 thousand copies by the end of 1992.

Den' newspaper was established in 1991 by the Union of Writers of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, but its policy was entirely in the hands of its editor Alexander Prokhanov. The newspaper stood for the Great Empire and presented itself as a Neo-Eurasian voice. It appeared irregularly in editions ranging from 85 to 120 thousand copies.

Zemshchina claimed its Christian orientation from the very beginning, which made a point of reference for a discussion of any key problem. Initially, both *Russkiy vestnik* and *Den'* provided only a limited space for the Russian Orthodox issues, but over time it expanded. The *Zemshchina* discourse focused on the end of time and ritual murder; *Russkiy vestnik* aimed at the Orthodox monarchy; and the *Den'* authors were obsessed with conspiracy.

Eschatology, the Fate of Russia and Neo-Monarchists

In the turbulent years, when Russia's destiny was at stake all these newspapers took an active part in discussions around its history and did all their best to predict its future. The Orthodox fundamentalists extensively used the Christian sources of information. They stuck to traditionalist views and believed that the world was moving to a decline and a catastrophe as the *Book of Revelation of St. John the Divine (Apocalypse)* predicted. This part of Scripture is not easy to understand, and it has been provided with numerous interpretations for centuries. St. John tells us that the Antichrist would arrive at the end of time. He would tempt and charm many people, and they would proclaim him the ruler of the world and accept a uniform religion he would introduce. Yet, not everyone would be tempted, and being supported by Satan, the Antichrist would arrange harsh persecutions of the devoted Christians. According to a popular Christian belief appeared in the second century A.D., the Antichrist is identified with the Jewish Messiah originated from the tribe of Dan. He would establish his capital in Jerusalem and his headquarter in the Third Temple. The Jews would celebrate his arrival and support his attempt to eliminate Christianity. The disorder would last for three years and a half, after which the Savior would arrive to gain a victory over the forces of Darkness, and a millennial kingdom would be established.

An important point of this narrative is that bishops would also be tempted by the Antichrist, and the Church would be ruined almost entirely. Thus, the narrative is dangerous for the clerics because it permitted their criticism for apostasy from the side of parish.

The growth of eschatological mood has been observed many times over the last two thousand years, and sometimes people were scared of the end of time. Yet, this has never happened. That is why one of the key actors of the myth in question is the "restrainer", i.e., the factor, which stops Satan from using all its might and impedes the coming of the Antichrist. The term of *Katechon* ("restrainer") was borrowed from St. Paul's teaching (2 Thess. 2, 7).

Regardless of numerous and controversial theological interpretations of the term, certain Russian Orthodox thinkers of the 19th century identified the Russian Emperor with the *uderzhivayushchiy* (“restrainer”) (Belyaev, 1898, Vol. 2, p. 522). According to the Russian clergy, the true Christianity survived only in Russia, and therefore God would save Russia from the Antichrist. And Russia would save the rest of the world.

This view was taken by the Orthodox-Monarchist media as a basis for their ideas on what was going with Russia and what would be its destiny. Therefore, they paid great attention to prophecies about the end of time and to signs of its coming, in particular. For them, the most important omens were linked with the Jewish activity because, according to the myth, Jews not only were anxiously waiting for the Antichrist’s arrival but also did all the best to speed it up and to harm Christians as much as possible. Thus, the Judeophobia was embedded in this outlook by no means accidentally and was fostered by conviction rather than by emotions—this can be defined as the doctrinal religious anti-Semitism. It necessarily included blood libel closely linked with the idea of the restrainer (I. N., 1990, p. 7; Kozlov, 1990, pp. 29–56; Sel’ski, 1994, p. 65; Tsar’-Kolokol, 1990b, p. 44). Indeed, those who paved the way for the Antichrist had to eliminate the restrainer and to make that in a ritual way based on traditional practices. Hence, an idea was popular in these circles that the Tsar Nicholas the Second had been murdered ritually by Jews, which strengthened a parish’s belief in the coming Apocalypse. The monarchist media were alarmed with the allegedly Kabbalist inscription left in the Ipatiev’s house in Yekaterinburg where the Tsar and his family were executed, and republished an occult article of 1925, which claimed that the obscure signs reliably confirmed that the Tsar had been sacrificed (Enel’, 1990, pp. 25–35; see also: Enel’ 1991). And it is no accident that the American political scientist Walter Laqueur noticed a revival of the idea of the Antichrist among the contemporary Russian right-wing radicals (Laqueur, 1993).

Moreover, the right-wing media sometimes turned the Christian myth of the Antichrist into the Nazi myth of the eternal confrontation between the Aryans and the Semites. It was presented in a symbolic way as an opposition between the swastika and the Star of David (Tsar’-Kolokol, 1990a, p. 21; Demin, 1993, 1994).

Zemshchina and the Ritual Murder

Initially the Russian Orthodox monarchists disseminated their ideas through the *Tsar’-Kolokol* almanac issued in 1990–1991. Some articles were provided with comments discussing the “Jewish plot” as though its goal was to tempt Sacred Rus’ for the sake of Satan’s triumph. They stuck to a traditional view of the Apocalypse including “blood libel” together with prophecies about Russia’s mission in the world and its salvation due to God’s benevolence.

Monarchists viewed the Tsar’s death as crucifixion at Golgotha, and an idea was developed that God’s Mother had taken the restrainer’s role after his murder. They treated Jews as a monstrous sect or a satanic force with the mission to pave the way

for the Antichrist. Ritual murders were considered one of the most convincing proofs for that. This point made up a core of the discussions in *Zemshchina* in 1990–1993. The ritual murders were extensively discussed in almost every single issue and ascribed to the Talmudic Jewry.

The key terms of the eschatological discourse were borrowed from the Apocalypse and St. Paul's epistles, such as a "secret of lawlessness", "Prince of this World", "children of Satan", "sons of death", "Satanic forces", "seal of the Beast", "end of time", "restrainer", etc. Notably, with a growth of the anti-Semitic emotions, a "Judeo-Masonic plot" turned in the newspaper into the world "Talmudic plot" (cf. *Vozzvanie predsobornogo soveshchaniya*, 1991), which emphasized the key role of Talmud in this discourse. Indeed, the UCR considered an unmasking of the world Talmudic plot against Russia and a struggle against the eternal enemy under the aegis of the Russian Orthodoxy as one of its most important goals. The nature of the struggle was emphasized by that, since the late 1991 the newspaper had begun using the swastika either for decorating articles or as a protection for the author's signature side by side with traditional symbols of a double-headed eagle and an Orthodox cross.

Zemshchina shared a traditionalist view on history, which claimed that after Creation the world was under a permanent decline up to the very end of time when the Antichrist had to arrive. Stability in the world was allegedly protected by Russia with its "God-bearing" people, and the Orthodox Tsar functioned as the restrainer. Yet, demonic, Godless forces came to power in 1917—they had murdered the Tsar ritually, and then occupied themselves with an extermination of Orthodox people under the aegis of *mestechkovy* [local] nationalism and Russophobia. Allegedly, they wanted not only to destroy Russia, but also to build up the world kingdom of the Antichrist. All of this was emphasized in the UCR Manifesto published in May 1990 in the first issue of the newspaper. According to this document, the movement's goals were Russian people's regeneration, their return back to the Church, the re-establishment of the Tsar's rule and building up of the Sacred Rus', which had to protect the world from the Antichrist (Manifest Soyuz, 1990, p. 1). Evidently, this program made a political factor derivative of a religious one.

While promoting the program, the newspaper focused on the following themes: a struggle against heresies (embracing Freemasonry, Catholicism and Protestantism) and Ecumenism; a rehabilitation of the Emperor Nicholas the Second as the Tsar-martyr, unmasking of the ritual murders (including an attempt to prove that many Russian Tsars were murdered ritually); a struggle for a restoration of monarchy and Sacred Rus'; an exposure of both the "godless West" and an idea of the World Government, a struggle against population recording through an introduction of personal identification numbers (viewed as the "Beast's number") implemented by authorities; a glorification of icons' miracle power; and a celebration of the Church Fathers and Russian Orthodox enlighteners, whose prophecies of the end of time were regularly published and discussed in the newspaper. Notably, the newspaper paid special attention to those prophecies or their fragments, which represented Jews as natural supporters of the Antichrist.

Thus, the image of the enemy proved to be one of the most important points. The enemies were depicted as Kikes, Zionists, Talmudic priests and Freemasons. The authors were searching for a “monstrous sect” among them, which was arranging ritual murders. It is worth noting that certain authors tried to make a sharp distinction between Jews and Kikes, although without great success. Whereas initially Jews were viewed as enemies without any reserve, over time the major authors began to claim that they struggled only against a “secret sect” among Jews. Later on, they began to single out and even approve of Orthodox Jews, who broke away from Judaism. While emphasizing that the Church originated from the Jewish Christian community, the authors began to argue that the terms *Jew*, *Judaists*, *Israelite* with a capital letter meant Christians, but unfortunately were viewed as Talmudic Kikes in everyday life. Later on, they began to oppose the Jewish people of the Old Scripture to Kikes, who turned into a sect of initiated and began to serve Devil in the New Testament times. In the late 1992, the newspaper acknowledged that the lion’s share of the Moscow Orthodox Christian community consisted of ethnic Jews, and called for distinguishing between Jews-Christians and Judeans to avoid inter-ethnic conflicts. Yet, one of the major authors warned against an unreserved trust towards Jewish Christians even when they criticized or entirely rejected their brothers in blood. And in the very late 1993, the newspaper accused Jews-Christians of the aspiration to undermine the very basics of the Church. Thus, a circle was closed, and once again, all Jews found themselves guilty before the Church.

The newspaper authors tirelessly exposed Talmud as a case of human-hatred ideology. In addition, they permanently recollected the revolution of 1917 and argued (with a reference to less reliable documents of the Civil War [1917–22]) that it had been organized by the Jews, who were Freemasons. The authors represented the Soviet period as the Jewish yoke or a period of the Talmudic imprisonment. And they viewed socio-political confrontation either as a struggle of the Orthodox monarchism against the atheist Talmudism (Derzhavnoe stroitel'stvo, 1991; Shiropae, 1991), or as a clash between the New Testament Church and the Talmudic Jewry (Talmudicheskaya konspiratsiya, 1991). In this regard, no rapprochement with Jews was possible at all. Indeed, all of them allegedly originated from the tribe of Dan and, thus, were the Antichrist’s relatives. Certain authors tried to provide this argument with a racial foundation (Bolotin, 1991).

In addition, the newspaper was attentively analyzing the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchs and blamed them for apostasy. It criticized the Patriarch Alexy II for his favor of Judaizers and discovered a challenge in his visit to New York in 1991, where he visited Synagogue and talked before the Rabbis. While organizing a campaign against a celebration of Hanukkah in the center of Moscow in December 1991, the newspaper was puzzled with the inactivity of the Metropolitans, who declined to take part in the protests. And the newspaper could not but accused the hierarchs of the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church of betraying the Tsar. It went so far as to blame the contemporary hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church for the Judaizers’ heresy. The newspaper did not wish to disguise its frustration and warned the hierarchs that those faithful could stop

to obey (Zayavlenie Dumy Soyuzha “Khristianskoe vrozozhdenie”, 1991). At the same time, the newspaper rehabilitated the *Chernaya sotnya* [Black Hundred] as a community of virtuous Russian patriots, and scarred the general public with secret murders of contemporary priests and Russian patriots. To put it another way, in this presentation the Russian patriots proved to be more loyal to Orthodoxy than the Russian Orthodox Church itself. That is why they suffered as the major target of the satanic forces.

The newspaper chose Hasidim as the key target and was searching among them for a monstrous sect occupying itself with ritual murders. In a very bizarre way, this accusation was coordinated with a ban on passing Rabbi Schneersohn’s manuscripts from the Lenin Library to Hasidim—allegedly otherwise the anti-Christian era would come, and a triumph of the Talmudic human-hatred consciousness would begin (Delo Beylisa, 1991; cf. Bolotin, Demin, & Shiropayev, 1991; Iгла satany, 1991; Novogodnee pozdravlenie, 1991; Odna tayna, 1991; Pomogite detyam, 1991; Zayavlenie o khasidskikh rukopisyakh, 1991; Zayavlenie Dumy Soyuzha “Khristianskoe vrozozhdenie”. K delu o khasidakh, 1991). The newspaper used to disseminate fantasies that the manuscripts contained data on human sacrifices and, moreover, plans for the Russian people genocide. All of this seemed very important for the newspaper with respect to prophecies claiming that the Antichrist had been already born and would be active in 1992.

Whereas initially the newspaper called for a spiritual battle (Bran’ gospodnya, 1991; Nevidimaya bran’, 1991; Slovesnaya bran’, 1991) and for an enlightenment activity with the help of cross and prayers, later on its authors decided that this was less sufficient. They turned their eyes to *Oprichnina* as a Russian kind of inquisition. Noteworthy, they intended to enroll the baptized Jews and Muslims into a restored *Oprichnina*. Yet, in the early 1990s, its actions were still restricted to only rhetoric (Kozlov, 1991; Oprichnaya gramota, 1991; Oprichniy nakaz, 1991; Oprichnoe poslanie, 1991; Oprichnoe sluzhenie, 1991; Stenorushenie, 1991)².

The newspaper’s infamous anti-Semitic mood was based on both certain prophecies about the end of time and faked *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov* [Protocols of the Elders of Zion], as well as obsolete radical right publications on the Russian revolution, which had been previously used by German Nazis. The newspaper republished pre-revolutionary priests’ opinions and Russian émigré discussions, yet it mostly respected the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. It also used to republish materials from the *Tsar’-Kolokol* almanac. Notably, only a few contemporary authors published their articles by their own names—most of the publications came out anonymously.

It is also worth noting that, while viewing the Tsar as the restrainer, the monarchists were planning to pass power in future Russia not to a monarch but to All-Russian *Zemsky Sobor*, which, in their view, could take up the function of a restrainer (Gryadushchee Voskresenye, 1991). Simultaneously, the newspaper took an active

² The Oprichnina movement was initiated by Shchedrin (Kozlov), but the only result of his schismatic activity was that the “Brotherhood for the sake of Tsar-martyr Nicholas the II” has been broken into two parts.

part in the campaign against Prince Vladimir Kirillovich Romanov (1917–1992) as a possible future ruler. It seems that it wanted to provide the authoritarian political body rather than the Tsar with the role of the restrainer. Therefore, it argued that the Soviet state partly maintained the function of the restrainer (Obrashchenie, 1991).

Some of these themes were discussed in 1993 in another almanac named *K svetu* [Towards the Light] issued by Russian Orthodox journalists. Although it focused on the Orthodox everyday life, its editors considered it important to devote one of the issues entirely to Sergei Nilus' life and works. They published various apologetic materials about this well-known eccentric mystic, including his prophecies about the coming Antichrist and arguments in favor of authenticity of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (K svetu, 1993).

***Russkiy vestnik* and the End of Time**

Over time, the Apocalypse became a point of discussions in *Russkiy vestnik*, which initially looked quite temperate. The newspaper was established in the very late 1990 to cover various aspects of Russian people's life. The goal was to unite all Russian patriots—communists and monarchists, Orthodox people and pagans. Yet, over time, the newspaper turned into a voice of the Orthodox-Monarchist faction of the Russian nationalist movement. That is why it was no accident that eschatological themes received more and more extensive coverage at its pages—initially as obscure hints, then as more clear messages. At the same time, they were discussed side by side with such issues as economy, military and Russian people's life, especially the Cossacks, as well as the Soviet Union dissolution, ethnic conflicts and local wars at the borderlands of what was formerly the USSR.

A search for the enemy started with the Trotskyists and Catholics, and further on encompassed Zionists, Freemasons, Protestants, Theosophists, Democrats and, in general, world back-stage and the New World Order. Thus, the discourse shifted to conspiracy, although it never reached an intensity demonstrated by the *Den'* newspaper. The newspaper's authors made their best to rehabilitate the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and to confirm the reality of the "world conspiracy". The enemy opposed Russian people, who looked as permanent victims, subjugated to foreign rulers and exposed to genocide. The heroes were represented by patriots, who struggled for their human rights as, for example, *Soyuz russkogo naroda* ("Union of the Russian People") that was depicted as a protector from social terror. Over time, the discussion of the murder of the last Russian Emperor and his family, as well as their inclusion into the list of martyrs became the third important theme in discussion. This theme was closely connected with the one of Orthodox monarchy, which already in 1992 was presented by the newspaper's authors as an ideal state establishment. Eschatological prophecies that had become more and more popular since the fall of 1991 made up the fourth theme. It was at that time that the newspaper began to celebrate certain Orthodox icons allegedly having secured Russia from foreign invasions. The fifth theme, not the major one but important for my analysis, was the criticism of the Russian Orthodox Church for its passivity and unwillingness to discuss

urgent social and political problems. It is in this context that one comes across the issue of apostasy.

Over time, all these themes have to be discussed with the eschatological overtones. Democrats (including “children of Synagogue”) were depicted as being driven by satanic forces, as destroyers and parasites, strictly connected with forces of lawlessness. They were ascribed satanic plans as though they acted in the name of the “Prince of This World”. The West having broken away from Christianity was listed among the evil forces. Only Christian monarchy as the natural statehood established by God could resist them. In this discourse, Russians looked but as natural proponents of the principle of *pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'* [Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Peoplehood], and democracy proved to be incompatible with Christianity. The Orthodox monarch served a restrainer, who did not let the Antichrist to arrive. And his dethroning was accompanied with the aggression of non-Russians against the Church. The author of these arguments did not want to know where the Antichrist was in the Soviet period. Having ignored this period, he focused on the *perestroika* time and accused it of Satanism. He made the Godless West its ally, who hated Russia for its loyalty to the Orthodox faith, which persistently resisted the Antichrist (Tuskarev, 1992, pp. 12–13).

The former view of the world and its history was radically changed by that discourse. The Soviet view of the capitalist and imperialist West hostile to the Soviet socialism was replaced by a civilizational paradigm with its emphasis on cultural and religious factors. For the newspaper authors, the major conflict of nowadays was a struggle between Western and Russian civilizations (Platonov, 1992, p. 13). According to the head of the *Soyuz dukhovnogo vozrozhdeniya Otechestva* [Union of Spiritual Regeneration of the Fatherland] Mikhail Antonov, market economy did not fit into the Orthodox milieu while being linked to the society of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish-Shinto world and life view. He called for resistance against this hostile world to respond the challenge of the end of time. He claimed that Protestants and Catholics wanted to introduce neo-slavery and to establish world government, which would open the door to the Antichrist. At the same time, the Russian Orthodoxy and Russia itself proved to be a shield against “forces of Darkness” (Antonov, 1992a, p. 4; 1992b, p. 6).

In this context, certain authors associated social revolutions directly with apostasy, which helped the Antichrist to arrive. Their driving forces were identified with non-Russians. Therefore, Russians had to throw away the spirit of the French Revolution of 1789 and to be reactionaries. To this end, they had to support the monarchist slogan of “Orthodoxy, Monarchism and Populism” and to build up a “Russian Kingdom” (Shiropaev, 1992, p. 11; cf. Balkov, 1992, p. 13).

To be precise, a reference to non-Russians was often replaced with the euphemism of Freemasons. In this discourse, masons included both social-democrats and Jews as though the latter organized the revolution of 1917. While putting the revolutionary events in Russia into the apocalyptic context, one author insisted on their religious rather than social motives. He recalled the Devil’s hatred towards the Orthodox faith and Russian people. As a result, Russians were advised

to come back to prayers and to Jesus Christ (Bulgakov, 1992, p. 3). Thus, the circle was closed, and the reader had to come back to the idea of the Judeo-Masonic plot.

Notably, the newspaper referred to the Church hierarchs' authority—mostly from abroad, but also from the Moscow Patriarchate. It published the reflection of the late Archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad Konstantin (Zaytsev), 1887–1975, who identified Great Russia, or Sacred Rus', with a restrainer and argued that the Western hatred towards it was rooted in religion. In his view, world was rapidly moving to the Antichrist epoch, and only the Orthodox Church was able to stop it (Konstantin, 1992, p. 12). This argument was shared by both the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov), 1910–2006 (Vitaly, 1992, p. 2), and Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga Ioann (Snychev), 1927–1995. The latter identified a restrainer with Russian people, who were the only actors able to save humanity from the satanic evil, aspiring to enter the world (Ioann, 1992, p. 12). In saying that, Metropolitan Ioann did not hesitate to refer to Nilus's fantasies.

Thus, after the newspaper shifted to the Russian Orthodoxy, it began viewing contemporary world and its destiny through the glasses of Orthodox dogmas—it alarmed readers with images of the coming Antichrist and argued that only the Orthodox monarch as a restrainer could stop the catastrophe. Yet, the readers evidently were less interested in that. The newspaper received dozens of letters from them, but only a few (mainly youngsters) sharing the idea of the Orthodox monarchy (and immediately demonstrated their anti-Semitic stance) (Fedosov, 1992, p. 7; Sovet Nizhegorodskogo, 1992, p. 4), believed that nowadays the enemy of the humanity wanted to destroy the Orthodox faith (Evgenyeva, 1992, p. 8), and ascribed masonry a “Satanic cult” (Pis'mo iz Sankt-Peterburga, 1992, p. 2).

The newspaper's shift towards the Orthodox identity and a monarchic idea was marked with several landmarks. The first step was taken in July 1991, when, firstly, criticism against Masons and Zionists grew up, and secondly, the urgency of national ideology was emphasized. Thus, a way to rapprochement with the Russian Orthodox Church and to monarchist idea was opened. It is at that time that the newspaper made an attempt to put into question a faked nature of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and to argue that they were completed by the Freemasons and Zionists rather than by the Tsarist secret agents (A. Ivanov, 1991). Simultaneously, the newspaper re-published an article from emigrant media, which focused on rehabilitation of the swastika. Also, for the first time, it published an eschatological prophecy on great unrest, which had to be followed by a spiritual regeneration of Russia. The authors became fascinated with the miracle power of Orthodox icons. Finally, it was in July that a supplement focused on the “Russian question in the USSR” was published, which covered the issue of the Russian people' genocide arranged by Zionist-fascists. So, it is in July, i.e. at the eve of the August *putsch* [coup] that all the major themes of the Russian version of the Apocalypse were already on the scene.

A new step towards the Russian Orthodox Church was made in fall 1991; in September, the newspaper's office was sanctified by the priest Vasily Mel'nichuk,

and in November it was blessed by the Patriarch Alexy II. Ever since, the newspaper had stopped dealing with Neo-pagan authors. Instead, its Orthodox propaganda hardened, and *Zemshchina's* authors were welcomed, which provided them with a podium to appeal to the mass audience.

Ever since, the newspaper had published more and more materials on the Tsar's mission side by side with prophecies about the end of time. In addition, the newspaper began to participate regularly in campaigns organized by Orthodox fundamentalists—against Hanukkah in Kremlin in December 1991, against passing Rabbi Schneersohn's collection of manuscripts to Hasidim, as well as against recognition of Prince Vladimir Kirillovich as a legal monarch. In addition, the newspaper published discussions around the canonization of the Tsar's family initiated by fundamentalists. It also informed readers of a "Public Investigation Fund" established to investigate criminal deeds in secret circumstances including mystic murders (V zashchitu grazhdan, 1991, p. 2; cf. Obrashchenie, 1991). It goes without saying that they meant ritual murders. It is in this context that the newspaper informed its readers about deaths of certain well-known Russian nationalists from the hands of secret murderers and pointed to ritual (according to Judaist rite) nature of those murders committed by some anti-Russian agents. This stance grew up, especially after the nationalist musician Igor' Tal'kov's murder on November 6, 1991.

The newspaper's drift towards the Orthodox identity had finally come into fruition by the early 1992. Since that time on, it had been speaking on behalf of Russian Orthodox people alone rather than Russians in general, be them different Christians, pagans or non-religious at all. Priests appeared among the authors, and the Church-religious field expanded far beyond the space initially provided for that and received room even within political, economic and military discussions. The folk traditions that were associated with paganism earlier, found their place within the Orthodox doctrine. For example, folk medicine began to be represented mostly by the Orthodox pray. Kids' education and secrecy of marriage were directly linked to Orthodox rites. Even food recipes and festive table demonstrated the Orthodox spirituality. And the school of survival was now taken in the Orthodox way as a struggle against evil forces.

Ever since, the Russian way had been viewed by the newspaper as both Orthodox and monarchist, and its enemies had been associated with the rest of the world with its heresies, satanic sects, godless West and evil forces as though all of them wanted to establish the world government. Whereas in 1991 many authors still emphasized internationalism as natural for Russian people, a year later its interpretation has been changed to the opposite (Afonina, 1992, p. 14). Almost all Russian enemies were presented as Freemasons—the label, which was turned into a code word for any enemy, i.e. satanic forces. As a result, images of Jews, Zionists, Masons and democrats blended up into some awful mix that hung over Russia as a sword of Damocles and arranged the Black mess. All this made *Russkiy vestnik* closer to *Zemshchina*, although its authors never went so far as to blame the Talmudic Judaism.

***Den'*, Eschatology and Conspiracy**

The radical *Den'* newspaper was very active in 1991–1993, when it proclaimed itself a spiritual opposition. Whereas the Orthodox-Monarchist media and the *Russkiy vestnik* newspaper aimed at ethnic Russians, *Den'* stuck to the Eurasian program and favored both Russian Orthodox and Muslim people. Evidently, that is why it participated in the eschatological discourse less intensively than *Russkiy vestnik* and much less than *Zemshchina*.

Den' turned to the Russian Orthodoxy between late 1991 and early 1992, and in his New Year congratulation, Alexander Prokhanov addressed the readers on behalf of believers (Prokhanov, 1992, p. 1). The “New Year Address of Patriarch Tikhon” of 1918 was reprinted in the same issue, which demonstrated the Orthodox orientation of the newspaper. Yet, during almost the whole 1992, the newspaper was still eclectic and could not choose what sort of Orthodoxy to follow. It seems that the newspaper finally obtained its religious identity only in October 1992, when it asked radical Orthodox priest Dmitry Dudko (1922–2004) to be its spiritual father.

Nonetheless, eschatological themes closely connected with *Den's* favorite conspiratorial ideas began entering the discourse already in the early 1992. The newspaper addressed the same themes as *Russkiy vestnik* and *Zemshchina*, namely, Satanists and Evil forces; Russian autocracy and its religious origins; international Zionism and Hasidim. Latent anti-Semitism presented itself permanently in the newspaper, and sometimes it expressed itself in statements on the “Zionist Mondialism”, which had allegedly destroyed the USSR. The rhetoric also included the idea of occupation of Russia by the new power of “Sverdlovs-Bronsteins”³ who had not learned to pronounce “r” correctly (O. Ivanov, 1992, p. 3). Yet, Freemasons were the worst, and they were permanently blamed for secret evil plans. The newspaper accused Bolsheviks for their following Masons, Masons—for a service to some secret Jewish organization, and all of them—for the destruction of the Christian civilization in Russia. Sometimes even the Moscow Patriarchate was criticized for ecumenism and rapprochement with Judaism.

Although prophecies about the end of time were welcomed in the very first issue where Saint Serafim of Sarov’s views on the tragic fate of Russia and an arrival of the Antichrist were published (Gryadushchie sud’by Rossii, 1991, p. 7), in 1991, this sort of materials appeared very rarely. At that time, only Father Antony focused on the Apocalypse (Antony, 1991, p. 5), and writer Vladimir Karpets recalled Serafim of Sarov’s prophecies (Karpets, 1991, p. 4). Even Dudko in his attempt to understand the nature of the August *putsch* of 1991 mentioned satanic forces and the coming end of times, but avoided getting deeper into that (Dudko, 1991, p. 5). Finally, emigrant Mikhail Nazarov mentioned the end of time in his argument against Neo-pagans (Nazarov, 1991, p. 5).

Only in June 1992, Dudko put forward the idea of the end of time and God-bearing Russia, which was confronted by the entire world instigated by Sanhedrin (!).

³ Yakov Sverdlov was the Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (1917–1919); Bronstein is the real surname of Leon Trotsky.

Noteworthy, while discussing Russia's mission, he initially referred to Dostoevsky's prophesy rather than to the Church Fathers. He claimed that the Antichrist had not come yet because of the restrainer. Initially, he did not know who the restrainer was precisely (Dudko, 1992a, p. 6). But in October 1992, he was already sure that it was Russia itself. While discussing the prophecies, he referred to the Russian saints, including Serafim of Sarov (Dudko, 1992b, p. 6).

After him, the same idea was discussed by Alexander Dugin, who introduced himself as an esoteric scholar. He claimed that the restrainer was either Russian God-bearing people or Russia, which he identified with the Soviet empire. In July 1992, he stated that *Katechon* had lost its power after the dissolution of the USSR. Yet, he believed that misfortunes arrived not for long; as Russia does not belong to this world, Jesus Christ still is its God, which promises a fast regeneration (Dugin, 1992, p. 5). To be sure, all of this looked like heresy from the theological point of view.

Finally, an interview with the aforementioned Metropolitan Vitaly was published in November 1992. On behalf of the Russian Orthodoxy as the genuine Christianity, he attacked all other religions as heresies brought by the Devil. He predicted that the Antichrist would arrive very soon. He also underlined a special role of Russia: the world's future depended on Russia—that is why it was hated by Satanists, who instigated the wave of Russophobia (Lish pravoslavie izluchaet lyubov', 1992, p. 5).

Conclusion

Thus, the Russian Orthodoxy coming back to public discourse and its usage by national-patriots were accompanied by a growing interest towards eschatology, which helped them to explain (in fantastic terms though) the nature of the current crisis and to develop their view of Russia's role in the world and its future, as well as to disclose its numerous enemies. The discourse covered several key themes—Good and Evil, friends and enemies, local and global, national and cosmopolitan, autocracy and democracy, the unity of empire and the value of national state, and the like. All these themes were perceived at two different levels—phenomenological and metaphysical. The former focused on the current events and their discussion in political, social and economic terms. At the latter level, one dealt with the traditionalist concept of involution. It depicted the movement from the Golden Age to decline and decay, which was explained by the Christian eschatology with a reference to satanic forces that paved the way for the Antichrist. Only a restrainer could resist, and from this point of view, the major conflict in the world emerged from a clash between the restrainer and Evil forces, whoever they were. The New Testament and the Church Fathers identified Evil forces with Jews, which view was secured by a long theological tradition⁴, taken for granted by national-patriots. Therefore, fundamentalists have been tirelessly searching for the signs of the Antichrist's arrival in almost any activity of Jews, Zionists or Freemasons whatever they are called. To be sure, not all participants of the discussion understood the spiritual depth of these signs, which has been pointed out by Metropolitan Vitaly.

⁴ The Second Vatican Council has declined that point of view.

The Russian Orthodox tradition has its own flavor. While proclaiming Russian people as God-bearing one and Moscow as the Third Rome, the conviction exists that only the Russian Orthodoxy maintains a genuine Christian spirit. Thus, Russia (or Russian people) as the only stronghold of the Christianity is viewed as a restrainer. Hence, it naturally opposes the rest of the world, which allegedly has given up with God and is under decay. It is in this context that messianic prophecies about the Russian wonderful future became popular among Russian priests and holy elders, who believed that Russia would avoid the Kingdom of the Antichrist and would rescue the world. At the same time, this made Russia a natural target for satanic forces; such idea caused paranoid emotions, as well as extreme forms of xenophobia among national-patriots. That is why the revival of the Russian Orthodox historiography with its eschatological attitude inevitably led to regeneration of the doctrinal religious anti-Semitism imbedded into it.

However, the narrative of Apocalypse can be interpreted in various ways; there is the distinction between Philo-Semitic, Judophobic, as well as quite neutral interpretations, which does not cover the Jewish factor at all (Shnirelman, 2013). Nonetheless, in the 1990s, Russian national-patriots were obsessed with the Jewish factor, which they viewed as the key one with a great explanatory power. For them, it not only explained what happened in the world history and what the humanity can expect in future, but also was both inevitable and harmful, as the New Testament and the Church Fathers have predicted.

Yet, the Russian nationalism was segmented into several factions with different ideas in mind, and also demonstrated a dynamic through time, which was reflected in the three newspapers that were under study. *Zemshchina* represented the most radical faction of the Russian nationalism, which entirely rejected the Soviet heritage as the Jewish project and looked back to highly romanticized pre-revolutionary past with its monarchic political arrangement allegedly given by the Lord. In this paradigm, Jews (and non-Russians in general) were viewed as the most harmful enemies of the established Russian order, who successfully undermined it, and the narrative of the Antichrist provided an explanation of what was happening and why. It is no accident that the editorial board had shifted to the Neo-Nazi program by the mid-1990s.

Russkiy vestnik was somewhat more temperate and initially provided a floor for various voices of Russian nationalists, including Neo-pagans. Yet, after the newspaper had shifted to the Russian Orthodoxy, it became more rigid and exclusive. *Russkiy vestnik* had begun celebrating the Russian monarchy and, since that time, it welcomed certain *Zemshchina* authors with their fundamentalist views. The newspaper was hostile to non-Russians (including the Jews) from the very beginning, but a shift towards Russian Orthodoxy provided a new understanding of history and Russia's messianic role in the world. Needless to say, eschatology played a key role there.

Finally, the *Den'* newspaper focused on the value of empire be it Soviet or non-Soviet. It was obsessed with the image of enemies, who made all the best to spoil and undermine it. The newspaper stuck to conspiracy, and an image of the Antichrist

helped to understand what the Russian mission was, and why exactly Russia was attacked by numerous enemies. Yet, the phenomenological approach seemed more appropriate for the newspaper's authors than a metaphysical one. That is why they stood for a strong authoritarian leader rather than for the Tsar.

The idea of the Orthodox monarchy was exploited by all three newspapers. It was no accident since it was instrumental with respect of the idea of a restrainer. At the same time, the image of the Tsar as a restrainer was easily replaced by Russia or Russian people. As a result, the fundamentalist approach to the Russian Orthodoxy transforms political factor into religious one. Thus, a new political theology was born in Russia at the turn of the 1990s. It is still alive, and although Judeophobe has shrunk during the recent decades it immediately comes back onto the scene in critical periods as, for example 2014 (Shnirelman, 2016) and 2017 (Shnirelman, 2020a, 2020b), when once again they recalled the end of time and the Tsar's ritual murder.

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