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THE NEW EXILE STRATEGY OF RUSSIAN NATIONALISTS



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The New Exile Strategy of Russian Nationalists

The evolution of the political regime in Russia led to a new wave of politically motivated emigration, mostly of liberals but also of a growing number of nationalists. By nationalists, I define those who position themselves in public space as Russian nationalists and oppose the Putin's regime. Russian nationalism emerged back in the mid-1980s in a situation of collapse of the Soviet Union and of its ideology, and assumed its current form in the early 2000s. Since then, Russian nationalism, as represented by various organizations, has been primarily rooted in the idea of ethnic ties understood as the based on blood kinship.

The majority of Russian nationalists who emigrated did so to hide from criminal prosecution. Nationalists can indeed be charged under the Criminal Code's "political" articles (prosecution for inciting hatred, i.e. for xenophobic speeches at rallies and statements on social networks) or ordinary criminal charges (hooliganism or robbery). These criminal prosecutions vary in their appropriateness. A number of nationalists had actually called for riots or committed violent crimes, and their prosecution was justified. At the same time, some of them were either prosecuted for something they had not actually done (or for statements that were not exceptionally xenophobic) or faced excessive punishment. Some such as Daniil Konstantinov or Vitaliy Shishkin have even been recognized as political prisoners by the Human Rights Centre "Memorial" (*Memohrc.org* 2014)

Political emigration accelerated after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in spring 2014. The majority of Russian nationalists who left the country were opposed to the Novorossiia project of annexing eastern Ukraine territories to Russia. However, we also know of some departures of Russian nationalists who supported Russian aggression in Ukraine, such as Olga Kudrina of the National Bolshevik Party (*Natsional-bolshevistskaia partiia*, NBP)¹ (*Vse ob oruzhii* 2018) and Roman Strigunkov of the Russian National Unity (*Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo*, RNE)² (Namestnikov 2013, Nikulin 2014).

We do not know the exact number of Russian nationalists currently staying abroad. We have the names of 64 of them residing in different countries, but, obviously, this number is far from exhaustive. Comparing the list of those known to currently live in Ukraine (23) with the estimated number of fellow activists who left to fight on the side of the Kiyv government (about 60, as of late 2014) (Yudina 2015), we can very roughly assume that we have personal information on approximately one third of those who left Russia. The real size of the putative "Russian nationalist diaspora" is thought to be about 150-200 people.

¹ The National Bolshevik Party (*Natsional-bolshevistskaia partiia*, NBP) was founded in 1993 by Eduard Limonov; it was legally recognized as extremist by the Russian justice in 2007. At the founding congress in July 2010, former members of the NBP created a new party, the Other Russia (*Drugaiia Rossiia*). The NBP, initially regarded as a radical nationalist organization, later became more "leftist." According to the National Bolsheviks, the NBP is a party of radical anti-centrism – "absolutely right and infinitely left" at the same time.

² Russian National Unity (*Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo*, RNE) is a Russian ultra-right paramilitary organization headed by Alexander Barkashov, created in 1990. In the mid and late 1990s, it held a de-facto monopoly on political representation of radical Russian nationalism. In 2000, the organization split into several groups. Several regional RNE branches were later recognized as extremist organizations. In 2014, after a long absence from political life, RNE groups led by Barkashov became more active and formed volunteer detachments to be sent to Donbas under the slogan "Holy War for Novorossiia."

What countries do Russian nationalists live in at this time? Sizeable diasporas have appeared in Ukraine, Lithuania, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, the United States, and Latvia. Fewer reside in Estonia, Denmark, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, Armenia, Turkey, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. In some cases, we have no information about the country of their stay. This is the case for example for Vladimir Basmanov, one of the past leaders of “The Russians” association (*Russkie*)³ —the largest ultra-right coalition of the first half of the 2010s—who now serves as a leader of the Nation and Freedom Committee (*Komitet Natsiia i Svoboda*, KNS),⁴ banned in July 2020 (*SOVA Center 2020a*). He left Russia in 2013 for an unknown location—according to unverified reports, Moldova (Chernukhin 2018). This article is based on data published in the media, materials found in social networks, websites of right-wing radical groups, personal webpages, as well as social network communities.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in Ukraine

Unsurprisingly, the largest diaspora of Russian nationalists can be found in Ukraine. Russia still has a visa-free regime with its neighbor; and it was possible to enter the country with an internal passport until 2015. Further, Ukraine could be reached quickly; crossing the border illegally is not difficult, and communication is easy, since Russian is understood everywhere in the country.

Historically, Ukraine has been a refuge for Russian right-wing radicals since the early 2000s. Pyotr Khomyakov, the ideological mastermind of the Northern Brotherhood (*Severnoe bratstvo*),⁵ spent some time hiding there; so did Yuri Belyaev, the leader of the neo-Nazi Freedom Party (*Partiya svobody*).⁶ Also hiding in Ukraine were Alexander Parinov and Alexei Korshunov, former members of the neo-Nazi groups United Brigades-88 (*Ob'edinennye Brigady-88*, OB-88)⁷ and the Combat Organization of Russian

³ “The Russians” (*Russkie*) is a nationalist organization created in the spring of 2011, following the ban against two largest right-wing radical organizations with a long history of collaboration – the Movement against Illegal Immigration (*Dvizhenie protiv nelegal'noi immigratsii*, DPNI) led by the Potkin brothers (Alexander Belov and Vladimir Basmanov) and Slavic Strength (*Slavianskaia Sila*, SS) under the leadership of Dmitry Demushkin. The association’s ideology was based on ethnic nationalism and the opposition to the current regime. Other far-right organizations, such as Dmitry Bobrov’s National Socialist Initiative (*Natsional-sotsialisticheskaia initsiativa*), also joined The Russkie but, for the most part, left it in 2014 due to disagreements on the war on Ukraine. On October 28, 2015, the Moscow City Court recognized “The Russians” as an extremist organization and banned its activities; the organization has subsequently disbanded.

⁴ The Nation and Freedom Committee (*Komitet 'Natsiia i Svoboda'*) is a nationalist organization created in the fall of 2014 as part of “The Russians.” Vladimir Basmanov is the KNS’ leader and founder. Once “The Russians” were banned, the KNS claimed the position of its heir. On July 2020, the Krasnoyarsk Regional Court recognized the KNS as extremist and banned its activities in Russia.

⁵ The Northern Brotherhood (*Severnoe bratstvo*) is an ultra-right group founded in 2006 by Alexander Mironov and Pyotr Khomyakov. Among other initiatives, the Northern Brotherhood launched “Big Game: Break the System,” an online project, in which the participants performed various tasks, including those representing forcible actions primarily against migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus (presented as “aliens”), and then reported to the organizers. On August 6, 2012, the Moscow City Court recognized the Northern Brotherhood as extremist and banned it from Russia.

⁶ The Freedom Party (*Partiia svobody*) is a radical Russian nationalist organization founded by Yuri Belyaev and liquidated in 2009.

⁷ United Brigades-88 (*Ob'edinennye Brigady-88*, OB-88) is a group of Moscow Nazi skinheads created in 1998 by representatives of various soccer fan groups and skinhead associations. For example, members of OB-88 organized a pogrom of the Yasenevo market on April 21, 2001, and a pogrom of the market in Tsaritsyno on October 30, 2001, as a result of which four people were killed and more than twenty wounded. On June 9, 2002, OB-88 members took part in riots and pogroms on Manezhnaya Square, during which one person died and several dozen were injured.

Nationalists (*Boevaia organizatsiia russkikh natsionalistov*, BORN).⁸ Korshunov was killed by his own grenade in Zaporozhye in October 2011. BORN co-founder Nikita Tikhonov, later convicted for the murders of lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova, was also hiding in Ukraine for some time (Yudina 2014).

The rate of emigration increased with the onset of the Maidan events and the ensuing war in Donbas. The most militant Russian nationalists left for Ukraine to personally participate in the hostilities on the side of the Kyiv government, mostly in Azov Battalion (now known as Azov Regiment). This is not accidental, since the backbone of that unit was formed by the neo-Nazi Social-National Assembly (*Social-natsional'naia assambleia*, SNA), the largest Russian neo-Nazi organization of the mid-2000s (SOVA Center 2014). Many Russian neo-Nazis had been familiar with SNA. In addition, Azov has been the largest military unit created and led by the Ukrainian far-right, so participating in it seemed politically promising. Russian citizens' Azov fighters included Sergey (Malyuta) Korotkikh, one of the leaders of the National Socialist Society (*Natsional-sotsialisticheskoe obshchestvo*, NSO)⁹; Alexander Valov from Murmansk; Roman "Zukhel" Zheleznov of the Restruct! Association;¹⁰ and neo-Nazi leader Mikhail Oreshnikov from Cheboksary (Yudina 2014).

Oreshnikov was involved in the creation of the Ukrainian cell of the international neo-Nazi association called The Misanthropic Division.¹¹ The Misanthropic Division is not a centralized organization: it does not have permanent leaders or a rigid structure. There are branches in Germany, the Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, the United States, and, it seems, even in Belarus (Tarasov 2016). The Ukrainian branch was organized in 2013 under the SNA auspices with the active participation of Russian nationalists. Misanthropic Division's Russian activists participated on the Maidan demonstrations, in clashes with Maidan opponents in Kharkov, and some of them took part in the Donbas hostilities on Kiyv's side. Over a dozen of its Russian members fought in Azov.

After the end of the active phase of the hostilities in Ukraine, almost all of them stayed in Ukraine. Some of them integrated into Ukrainian society, received Ukrainian citizenship, and now take part in a local political life. For example, the above-mentioned Sergey Korotkikh received his Ukrainian passport from president Petro Poroshenko personally on December 5, 2014. He worked in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, heading the Special Objects Protection Unit, but he left this post in late 2017. Along with his fellow Azov member Nikita Makeev, Korotkikh was suspected of involvement in the attack against Petro Poroshenko in August 2019 (SOVA Center 2019a). However, Korotkikh have never faced

⁸ The Combat Organization of Russian Nationalists (*Boevaia organizatsiia russkikh natsionalistov*, BORN) was created with the aim of committing politically impactful murders motivated by ideological and national hatred. For a long time, the organization was regarded only as a "brand" used by various groups for the purpose of intimidation. In fact, however, BORN was the militant wing of the Russian Image (*Russkii obraz*) organization; the latter was supported by the Kremlin in its competition against the DPNI. BORN members committed a number of political murders; their victims included Judge Eduard Chuvashov of the Moscow City Court, lawyer Stanislav Markelov, and several prominent Antifa activists. BORN discontinued its activities after the arrest of Nikita Tikhonov and Yevgenia Khasis in November 2009, and was eliminated in 2010.

⁹ The National Socialist Society (*Natsional-sotsialisticheskoe obshchestvo*, NSO), with its headquarters in Moscow, was founded by Dmitry Rumyantsev and Sergei Korotkikh. It was active from 2004 until summer 2008. In 2011, members of the NSO were convicted of 27 murders, and that represented only the ones committed between January and July of 2008. On February 2010, the Society was recognized as extremist by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation and disbanded.

¹⁰ Restruct (there is no Russian-language version of the organization's name) is a national-socialist social movement founded by Maxim "Tesak" Martsinkevich in 2011. Tesak, who promoted brutal racist violence in the 2000s, came up with initiatives that included moderate forms of violence against gay men, alleged drug dealers, migrants, etc. Restruct gained considerable popularity among the right-wing radical youth and was liquidated in 2014.

¹¹ There is no Russian-language version of this organization's name.

responsibility in this case. In the spring of 2020, he continued to act as a representative of National Corps (*Natsional'nyi korpus*), Azov's political wing.

Russian nationalists based in Ukraine have formed their own organizations, the most famous of which is the Russian Center (*Russkij Tsent*). It was created in September 2015 by members of WotanJugend,¹² an ultra-right online group, and by activists of the Kirov cell of the Movement against Illegal Immigration (*Dvizhenie protiv nelegal'noi immigratsii*, DPNI-Vyatka),¹³ now banned in Russia. The Russian Center positions itself specifically as pan-Slavist, calling for the unity of all Slavs, and seeking to reach beyond Russia and Ukraine. They cooperate with nationalists in other countries, primarily with Polish nationalists from Zadruga (a Polish neo-pagan organization created in 2006 in Wroclaw) and People's Free Poland (a radical Polish group that became famous in 2015 after the destruction of a Ukrainian cultural center in Warsaw). In September 2018, they conducted an event "to strengthen the Polish-Russian ties" in partnership with People's Free Poland. They also participated in the nationalist "independence march" in Warsaw on November 11, 2018. The Russian Center from Ukraine marched along with the Black Bloc, chanting "White Revolution" slogans ("Europe, Youth, Revolution" and "Honor and Glory to the Heroes"), and they burned the LGBT+ and EU flags (*Russkij Tsent* 2018).

However, the Russian Center supports non-Slavic nationalists as well. In February 2019, some of its activists participated in the torchlight procession on the 101st anniversary of Estonia's independence and the Etnofutur third international nationalist conference in Tallinn (*VKontakte* 2020a).

Another organization worth mentioning is the Institute of National Policy (*Institut natsional'noi politiki*). It was founded in Kyiv in 2017 by Ivan (Beletsky) Timoshenko. In the past, Beletsky was one of the leaders of the Party of Nationalists (*Partiia natsionalistov*), a splinter group of "The Russians" that competes for the latter's legacy with the Nation and Freedom Committee. Beletsky received political asylum in Ukraine in April 2019. He actively comments on developments in Russia in his video blogs. Formally, the Institute of National Policy pursues a general oppositional agenda; it "studies and opposes anti-democratic political regimes" (*Institute of National Politics* 2020). In fact, however, Beletsky, while in Ukraine, heads the Third Alternative (Right Bloc) (*Tret'ia al'ternativa / Pravyi blok*)¹⁴ movement in Russia – the successor to the Nationalist Party – and tries to organize Russian Marches, though his efforts for the last three years have been unsuccessful.

The Nation and Freedom Committee (KNS) is represented in Ukraine as well by Sofia Budnikova, its general coordination emissary, also a member of the Forces of Good (*Sily dobra*), an association of Russian nationalists in emigration (see below).

Some Russian nationalists live in Ukraine without being engaged into public activities. For example, Ilya Bogdanov, a former member of the WotanJugend community and a former FSB officer, left for Ukraine in 2014 (Ilio 2015) and fought in the Right Sector. In 2015, he unsuccessfully tried to run for the Ukrainian Rada from the Petro Poroshenko Bloc. Bogdanov then worked at an auto service center in 2016 and then opened his own Korean-style cafe "Pian-Se Bar" in Kyiv (Gorchinskaya 2016).

¹² WotanJugend (there is no Russian-language version of the organization's name) was a network of national socialist neo-pagans, active in Moscow and some Russian cities, in existence since the late 2000s. It was based around the eponymous public page on VKontakte. It ceased to exist due to the intervention of the intelligence services around 2015.

¹³ The Movement against Illegal Immigration (*Dvizhenie protiv nelegal'noi immigratsii*, DPNI) is a nationalist movement created in 2002 by Alexander Potkin (Belov). It became the largest organization of Russian nationalists in the 2000s and was banned in April 2011.

¹⁴ The Third Alternative / Right Bloc / Nationalist Party (*Tret'ia al'ternativa / Pravyi blok / Partiia natsionalistov*) is a small ultra-right organization that emerged on the ruins of "The Russians" association in 2016. It changed its names several times, but also used several names in parallel.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in the Baltic States

The second-largest diaspora of Russian nationalists took roots in Lithuania, now one of the main centers of Russian political emigration. Lithuania-based Russian nationalists actively participate in the activities of the Russian political opposition and are present at every minimally noticeable action in support of it.

The most visible form of cooperation of Russian nationalists with the Russian liberal opposition was their participation in the Free Russia Forum (*FreeRussiaForum* 2019), founded in March 2016 by Garry Kasparov and Ivan Tyutrin; Tyutrin is the former executive director of the democratic movement Solidarity (*Solidarnost*). Held twice a year in Vilnius, the Forum discusses issues of Russian and international politics, as well as proposes scenarios to enable Russia to move forward toward a more democratic regime. The total number of participants in the past eight forums came to about 1,300 people. The most recent forum took place on November 20-21, 2020. At the, 2019 forum, Russian emigrants, now residing in 30 different countries, made up 37% of the participants. About 20–25 Russian nationalists, both from Russia and from other countries, attended it. These participants do not specifically address nationalist issues such as, for instance, migration issues, but adhere to the Forum’s general oppositional agenda.

Since 2018, the Forum’s standing committee has included nationalist Daniil Konstantinov, the former leader of the Moscow Defense League movement (*Liga oborony moskvy*).¹⁵ In 2011, the League was the first ultra-right group whose principal activity consisted of illegal raids on immigrants’ places of residence. Now, Konstantinov leads the human rights focus area of the Forum, since he is better known for being falsely accused of murder. He was released in 2014, fled to Lithuania, and received political asylum there (*SOVA Center* 2018).

In Vilnius, Konstantinov created and led his own Russian European Movement (*Russkoe evropeiskoe dvizhenie*). The organization brings together a number of emigrants from Russia but includes almost no nationalists. The organization held several political events in Vilnius: a photo exhibition on violations of human rights and freedoms in Russia, a “Peace March,” an action in support of Oleg Sentsov and other Ukrainian political prisoners, and so on. The Russian European Movement tried to establish cooperation and merge with the Support Association (*Assotsiatsiia podderzhki*) from Latvia (*Delfi* 2018), created by another nationalist emigrant, Dmitry Savvin, formerly an activist of the New Force party (*Novaia sila*)¹⁶ (*Eadaily* 2018). So far, no progress has been made beyond the declaration about the merger. The agenda of the Association is also narrowly nationalistic but generally oppositional.

As for the Russian nationalists who immigrated to other Baltic countries, Latvia and Estonia, their number is small and they do not openly identify as nationalists. Some have joined Estonia’s Blue Awakening (*Sinine äratus*), the youth (and radical) wing of the EKRE party. In Latvia, Savvin also supports local nationalists and has criticized the Russian narrative about Russian-speaking population’s discrimination.

¹⁵ The Moscow Defense League (*Liga oborony Moskvyy*, LOM) is an organization, created in 2011 by Daniil Konstantinov, which advocated restricting the rights of migrants and the Muslim population of Moscow. LOM actively participated in different public actions, and also carried out several raids on the hostels housing illegal migrants, together with the organization “Svetlaia Rus”. The organization’s activities were discontinued after the arrest of Konstantinov in March 2012.

¹⁶ The New Force (*Novaia sila*) is a Russian unregistered political party created by Valerii Solovei at the founding congress on February 4, 2012 as an attempt to proclaim a “nationalism with a human face”. On November 4, 2012, it proved unable to bring in participants for its own Russian March, and later de-facto ceased to exist.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in France

France is another country where a Russian nationalist diaspora is visible. Most of those who ended up in France were supporters of the Artpodgotovka movement,¹⁷ the Russia-wide fan club of Vyacheslav Maltsev, a political adventurer, whose platform included nationalist ideas. Maltsev called for a revolution on November 5, 2017. The Russian authorities banned the movement, Maltsev fled to France along with several associates (*SOVA Center* 2017a), and continued to incite participants from afar. Several criminal cases were opened against him (*SOVA Center* 2017b) including for the possession or use of weapons. Some Artpodgotovka supporters are so apprehensive that they do not even reveal their country of residence (Nikolaenko and Kovylyayeva 2018).¹⁸ While in France, Maltsev continues his *Bad News* (*Plokhie novosti*) blog (Maltsev 2020). He actively comments on everything happening in Russia and provides informational support to the ultra-right Third Alternative (Right Block) movement. Maltsev almost never gives his opinions about French or other foreign events.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in Germany

The Russian diaspora in Germany is probably the most powerful inside a European Union's country. The Right Germany (*Pravaia germaniia*), a small VKontakte community of 244 participants, provides a communication platform for Russian nationalists living in the country. It is headed by a certain Vukoslav Krause-Kondrashov. This immigrant community organizes "cultural, athletic, political and philosophical events" for the "development of Russian and German nationalism in Germany" (Krause-Kondrashov 2020).

Germany has also been a home for Russian nationalists who do not belong to any associations and are engaged in the "hyping up" of nationalist incidents in Russia. In June 2020 for instance, Kirill Kaminets (a pseudonym; his real name is unknown), a resident of Germany, gained notoriety in the Russian media and on social networks in Russia. Acting under the nickname @Fatalist_Rus, he launched a hashtag on Twitter that criticized Yandex.Taxi to infringe on the "rights of Russians."¹⁹ In 2012–2014, Kaminets was an author at *Sputnik and Pogrom*, a well-known nationalist Internet publication (Russimperialist 2014). Later, he, along with "a group of comrades," left *Sputnik and Pogrom* due to a personal conflict with the site's editor-in-chief Egor Prosvirnin and founded his own Vendée project, designated as "the theoretical basis of Russian nationalism" and "a new center of politically incorrect thought"²⁰ (Pogrom 2018).

Perhaps the best-known Russia-related ultra-right association in Germany is White Rex.²¹ It was created in 2008 by former football fan Denis Nikitin. It is worth noting that Nikitin moved to Germany with his family in 2001 as a Jewish refugee (Maltsev 2019). White Rex, a Russian clothing brand and martial arts tournaments organizer, has grown into an international neo-Nazi network of white racists (Laruelle and Rivera 2019). Following the Maidan events, Nikitin moved to Kiyv in 2014. There, he took part in the

¹⁷ The word Artpodgotovka can be interpreted as "preparation through art," but "artillery preparation for an attack" is a more likely interpretation.

¹⁸ For example, Ruslan Galiullin, who left Russia in 2018, is only known to live "in one of the EU countries."

¹⁹ The response was based on an incident with a Yandex.Taxi driver who refused to pick up a Black student named Roy Ibonga. When Ibonga asked, "Are you a racist?" the driver replied, "Yes, of course." On June 9, Yandex.Taxi announced that they had "contacted Roy, found out the details of the incident and apologized" and disconnected the driver from the service. After that, Kirill Kaminets launched the hashtag #Yandexcuckold, under which he stated that Yandex.Taxi "infringes on the rights of Russian drivers and denies them the right to choose customers." "Why do some internal American memes, such as 'racism', determine your behavior?" Kaminets wrote.

²⁰ The term "Vendée" in Russian political language has long become the standard designation for an uprising in the name of conservative values.

²¹ There is no Russian-language version of this organization's name.

actions by Azov and the Russian Center but continued to visit Germany and other countries to participate in mixed martial arts tournaments.

Nikitin also spoke at the conference “Europe of the Future” on November 10, 2017, in Warsaw, founded by Azov’s long-time friends, the members of *Shturm* magazine. The speakers included a representative of the Polish Storm Troopers movement and Elena Semenyaka from the National Corps. In 2018, Nikitin gave a speech at a martial arts tournament in Ostritz, Saxony. Shortly after his Ostritz address, the Security Service of Ukraine arrested him on suspicion of amphetamine manufacturing and for an attempt to acquire weapons. However, he was soon released (Maltsev 2019). According to unverified reports, Nikitin currently resides in Ukraine.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in Norway

In Oslo, Russian nationalists have been a part of the Norwegian cell of Dmitrii Demushkin’s Slavic Union (*Slavianskii Soyuz*), a Russian neo-Nazi organization also known under the characteristic abbreviation “SS.”²² They were used to held their gatherings in the tattoo parlor True Metal Tattoo in the very center of the Norwegian capital. The Slavic Union cell attracted police attention in connection with the case of Vyacheslav Datsik (nicknamed Red Tarzan), a Russian ultra-right activist and a former no-rules fighter. In 2010, Datsik fled from a psychiatric hospital near St. Petersburg to Norway and asked for political asylum, which he was denied (*SOVA Center* 2020b). After the Datsik affair, the Norwegian police raided and closed down the tattoo parlor (Fochkin 2010).

With the outbreak of war in Ukraine, at least three Russian nationalists from this cell left to fight on the side of the separatists in Donbas. Ian Petrovsky achieved the greatest notoriety as a commander of the militant group Rusich in 2014–2015. In 2015, he participated in a major international conference of the ultra-right organized by the St. Petersburg branch of the Rodina party (*SOVA Center* 2015). In October 2016, the Norwegian government decided to deport him to Russia, where he conducted combat training at the Rusich military-patriotic club in partnership with his former commander Alexander Milchakov. In particular, both men went to Belarus to teach fighting skills to schoolchildren, a visit that caused outrage in the Belarusian press (Pinji 2017).

The second nationalist from this group, Oleg Neganov, posted a number of photos of the Quran on social networks in 2013 and then resurfaced as Abu Amir al-Russi in an Islamic State document in 2014. In the spring of 2016, he was spotted in Syria. His current whereabouts are unknown (Jentoft, Svendsen, and Alayoubi 2017). The exact number of Muslim converts from among Russian nationalists is unknown; however, such conversion to Islam does happen among Russian nationalists. As their main reason for joining Islam, the converts point to the example of the “Islamic militants” whose “courage and fearlessness could not but attract.” (Pashinskiy 2014). It was reported in 2017 that the Russian nationalists remaining in Norway were collaborating with the local branch of Scandinavian Resistance Movement, a national-socialist movement based in Sweden founded in 2014, participating in their actions and installing posters with anti-Semitic and homophobic content (Hansen 2017).

²² The Slavic Union National Socialist Movement (*Slavianskii soiuz*, SS) is a neo-Nazi organization founded by Dmitri Demushkin around 1999-2000. It was recognized by the Russian justice as extremist in 2010 and renamed into “Slavic Strength” while retaining the style and abbreviation “SS” of the former organization. Later it joined “The Russians” association and ceased to be an independent organization.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in the United States

Very few Russian nationalists have reached the United States. In 2013, Igor Artyomov, the leader and founder of the Russian All-National Union (*Russkii obschenatsional'nii soiuz*, RONS),²³ immigrated to New Jersey and received asylum (*Svoboda* 2016). Other people currently residing in the United States are Vyacheslav Demin, an activist of the Orthodox-monarchist movement; Alexei Kutalo, the former head of the RONS branch in Vladimir; and Kutalo's wife Tatyana Kungurova, also a RONS activist and an editor of the KNS Public page on VKontakte (Belogvardeec61 2019).

The United States became the birthplace of an idea to create an organization named "The Forces of Good." The organization, formed in October 2016, was an attempt to unite Russian nationalists in exile. The American branch of the organization was headed by Demin. It includes well-known Russian nationalists of various kinds from different countries, including the already mentioned Dmitry Savvin, Alexey Kutalo, Tatyana Kungurova, Vladimir Basmanov, and Sofia Budnikova.

Among them are people such as Yuri Gorsky, a former member of several nationalist organizations who left or was expelled from all of them (currently living in Lithuania) or Ambrose von Sievers (Alexei Borisovich Smirnov), a notable figure in the alternative Orthodox movement and a former confessor of the Russian Orthodox National Socialist Movement (*Russkoe pravoslavnoe natsional-sotsialisticheskoe dvizhenie*)²⁴ and the Party of Defenders of the Russian Constitution "Rus" (*Partiia zashchity rossiiskoi Konstitutsii "Rus"* or PZRK Rus'),²⁵ also a member of the Oprichny Brotherhood of St. Joseph of Volotsk²⁶ (currently living in Sweden) (*Russkaia sluzhba novostei* 2017).

The Forces of Good call for uniting Russian nationalists but has not been implicated in any activities worth mentioning, although its website is continuously updated (mostly recirculating political news from Russia). Its presence is noticeable only in the petition by Vyacheslav Demin (*Change.org* 2017), which calls on the nations and heads of government of the Eastern European states to hold an international public tribunal against the communist regimes of the past and present.

The Russian Nationalist Diaspora in Other Countries

Of course, Russian nationalists live in other countries as well, but we know only about one or two individuals in each country. In some cases, they make it known that they are in a given country because it is easier to obtain the necessary documents there. For example, Vitaly Shishkin, the head of the Rights for

²³ The Russian National Union (*Russkyi obshchenatsional'nyi soiuz*, RONS) is one of the oldest nationalist Orthodox organizations in Russia, founded in 1991 by Igor Artyomov. The organization was recognized as extremist by the Vladimir Regional Court in 2011 and gradually ceased to exist.

²⁴ The Russian Orthodox National Socialist Movement (*Russkoe pravoslavnoe natsional-sotsialisticheskoe dvizhenie*, RPNSD) is a group that combined the Catacomb Orthodoxy, esotericism and Hitlerism, founded in 2001 on the basis of a group of "True Orthodox" Christians led by Alexei Smirnov (Amvrosy Sivers). It ceased to exist in 2012 due to the departure of Sivers, who emigrated to Sweden.

²⁵ The Party for the Defense of the Russian Constitution "Rus" (*Partiia zashchity rossiiskoi konstitutsii Rus'*, PZRK "Rus'") is an unregistered nationalist political party formed in 2006 by several veterans of the Russian National Unity, the largest ultra-right organization of the 1990s. The name of the party was deliberately chosen so that its abbreviation (PZRK) coincides with the abbreviation used for a rocket launcher ("Man-portable air-defense system", *Perenosnoi zenitnyi raketnyi kompleks*). PZRK "Rus" was mostly active in 2006-2008.

²⁶ Oprichny Brotherhood of St. Joseph of Volotsk (*Oprichnoe bratstvo vo imia sviatogo prepodobnogo Iosifa Volotskogo*) is a right-wing radical Orthodox fundamentalist organization, founded in 1998 in Moscow. The brotherhood does not recognize the spiritual authority of the Moscow Patriarchate. Its ideology is based on "right-wing anarchism" and "revolutionary monarchism".

European Development group (*Pravye za evropeiskoe razvitie*),²⁷ was granted political asylum in Armenia in August 2019. In January 2019, he was released from the Russian penal colony where he had been imprisoned for inciting riots on Manezhnaya Square in Moscow in 2015. On prior occasions, he had called for migrants from the Central Asia to be deported from Russia. Shishkin stated that he had no plans to obtain Armenian citizenship and wanted to go somewhere else but ended up there because he could go there with an internal passport (*SOVA Center* 2019b). Based on his Facebook account, he had moved to Bulgaria by May 2020 and currently resides in Sofia (Shishkin 2020).

Unfortunately, our information about the Russian diaspora abroad is far from complete. For example, little is known about the fate of Russian nationalists in the Czech Republic. We know that former Azov fighter Igor Vasilyev was awaiting political asylum there in 2017. He illegally crossed to the Czech Republic from Ukraine (Volchek 2017). More interestingly, the Czech Republic is the current home of a LiveJournal blogger known as Bogemik; among his other activities, he was an author of the aforementioned Internet publication *Sputnik and Pogrom*.²⁸ Bogemik is apparently associated with the Black Hundred (*Chernaia sotnia*) publishing house in Moscow.²⁹ In early July of 2019, the publishing house held a closed “Bohemian Conference” in Prague, which was attended by leader of the National Democratic Party (NDP)³⁰ Konstantin Krylov and by well-known journalist Oleg Kashin. It is worth noting that the photo report on the conference had the faces of all local participants hidden (*Izdatel'stvo Chernaia sotnya* 2019).

Conclusion

While Russian nationalists reside in various countries abroad in noticeable numbers, they are divided and have no single vision of their strategy for the future. Some are trying to integrate into the political life of their new home countries. They take part in the elections or join local parties of various kinds, mostly but not exclusively just ultra-right ones. Others are trying to attach themselves to the Russian liberal emigration and influence what is happening in Russia in collaboration with the formerly detested liberals.

The ultra-right emigrants who remain true to their previous ideals either remain affiliated with their original organizations in Russia or form new associations abroad, such as the KNS or the Right Bloc. They advocate for the idea of uniting nationalists from all the Slavic countries (e.g., the Russian Center) or for uniting Russian nationalists to defend their own interests (e.g., The Forces of Good). So far, neither of these strategies seems successful.

²⁷ The Rights for European Development group (*Pravye za evropeiskoe razvitie*) is a small group, created in March 2013. The organizing committee of the party was headed by Vitaly Shishkin. The group's activities were limited to an unsuccessful attempt to obtain registration with the Ministry of Justice and several pickets. After Shishkin's arrest in January 2015, the organization ceased to exist.

²⁸ The *Sputnik and Pogrom* (*Sputnik i pogrom*) website, created by Yegor Prosvirnin in 2012, became the first ethnonationalist website to attract the attention of at least a fraction of the non-nationalist intelligentsia. *Sputnik and Pogrom* was blocked in Russia at the request of the Prosecutor General's Office in July 2017. Prosvirnin shut down the site in October 2018.

²⁹ The Black Hundred (*Chernaia sotnia*) Publishing House was founded in 2013 with the aim of “restoring and returning to Russia the works of Russian nationalists.” It publishes works from the pre-revolutionary Black Hundreds, the émigré period, as well as military memoirs about the 2014 war in Donbas.

³⁰ The National Democratic Party (*Natsional'no-demokraticheskaia partiia*, NDP) is a political organization founded in 2012 by Konstantin Krylov and intended as “European-style nationalists,” who could be supported by the non-radical xenophobic majority of Russian society. For a long time, until 2015, the party had sought registration with the Ministry of Justice, but failed to achieve either registration or broad grassroots support and gradually ceased its activities.

This failure can be largely explained by the decline of the Russian nationalist movement inside Russia. The crisis among Russian nationalists, which began in 2012, was aggravated in 2014, once public attention shifted from the anti-immigrant rhetoric, which has always been the nationalists' focus, to the fate of Ukraine and the geopolitical tensions with the West. The attitude toward the Ukrainian events deeply split the Russian ultra-right movement, with yesterday's allies finding themselves on different sides of the barricades. As a result, many ultra-right associations lost many of their activists, entire movements left their long-term coalitions, and organizations, which had collaborated for years, stopped communicating. The Russian nationalist movement globally lost its autonomous voice: those who supported the "Russian Spring" were actually repeating messages that could be heard on federal television, while those opposed to Crimea's annexation and sided with Kiyev proved to be extremely unpopular among their traditional audience.

Moreover, starting in the fall of 2014, the pressure of law enforcement agencies against the most active Russian nationalist public figures and organizations has increased drastically. This harsher policy primarily affected ultra-right activists who had shown no support for the Novorossiia project, but had its impact on others as well (Verkhovsky 2018). The crisis of Russian radical nationalism is embodied in the massive reduction in the number of participants in the key nationalist e show of force, the Russian Marches of November 4, that now gather a very small number—a few hundred—of participants. The almost complete disappearance of an organized ultra-right opposition movement in Russia makes the prospects for the current Russian nationalist diaspora rather dim.

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