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**“MAGAZINE WAR” BETWEEN RUSSIA AND FRANCE: TO THE
ORIGIN OF INFORMATION WARFARE**

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Abstract

The article is written within the framework of the interdisciplinary synthesis methodology and is devoted to the study of the information warfare between Russia under Nicholas I and France under King Louis Philippe of Orleans. The theme under discussion is relevant: the information wars are the attribute of the modern political and international life, which makes it important to discuss the origin of this problem both in scientific and practical terms. The study of the information warfare is closely connected with such important phenomena of political life as the Russian threat and Russophobia that has deep historical roots. On the one hand, the reasons for this phenomenon are the civilizational differences between Russia and the West. On the other hand, Russophobia was provoked by the active foreign policy of Russia, aimed at the protection of its national and geopolitical interests. Such policy was very often perceived in the West as the expansion, the flow that must be stopped. The article also analyzes the information wars mechanisms, namely, the phenomenon of indoctrination that is the introduction of necessary schemes and structures into the mass consciousness with the help of media. The main results of the study are the following: the information war as a socio-political phenomenon has deep historical roots and is fraught with escalation into the real war that can be traced on the example of Russian-French relations in the 19th century, when the “magazine war” eventually was transformed into the Crimean war of 1853-1856.

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Keywords: Information war, Russian-French relations in the 19th century, indoctrination, Russophobia, Russian threat.



1. Introduction

Fear and interest are the emotions that people usually experience towards anything unfamiliar, “the Other”, whether it is at the interpersonal or the state level. As for the French, their perceptions of Russia have always been characterized by ambiguity and inconsistency. As a rule, in the assessment of our country there was no “golden mean”: we were either loved or hated or praised. Quite often the expectations of the future of the European civilization were linked to Russia, though much more often Russia was perceived as a barbaric despotic country. The fear of Russians as “new barbarians”, eager to finally destroy France, settled in the hearts of the French in the last phase of the Napoleonic wars. Fifteen years had passed, and those fears that seemed to be forgotten re-awakened. In late July, 1830, during the “three glorious days”, as the French called the July revolution in France, a new political regime was established — the July monarchy, headed by king Louis-Philippe of Orleans. The reaction of the Russian Emperor Nicholas I to this event provoked the Russophobic sentiments in France. That is because of the fact that Nicholas I negatively apprehended the news of the July revolution and the coming to power of the “king of the barricades” Louis-Philippe, whom he considered the usurper of the throne up to the end of his life and never addressed him in the official correspondence “the Emperor, my brother” in accordance with the etiquette. Moreover, driven by the desire to protect the inviolability of the Vienna system and the principles of legitimacy, at first, the Emperor was determined to organize, jointly with Austria and Prussia, the armed intervention into France in order to eliminate the spread of revolutionary contagion and return to the throne of the crowned brother Charles X. The French themselves, including the political elite in the face of the left-wing liberals, though supporting the idea of “the export of revolution” feared the intervention of the troops of Nicholas I, who in the West was compared with Attila. However, Nicholas I, in spite of his emotion, was a very pragmatic politician. After Louis Philippe was recognized by Great Britain and Austria and Prussia did not show the expected support, the Russian Emperor on September 18, 1830, recognized the regime that was born of revolution. However, the contacts between the two countries was extremely limited.

2. Problem Statement

The information wars as the phenomenon of modern international relations and modern communications have deep historical roots and are associated with the growing influence of mass media as forces that can influence the formation of public opinion and policy-making. In the 19th century, when the press acquired the meaning of the true fourth estate, the information war entered the political practice and the field of interstate communications. In Russia this phenomenon is called “magazine wars” (Milchina, 2006, p. 365). Though the problem itself does exist in the modern scientific discussion, it does not get enough research. Getting closely acquainted with the results of different research in this area allows us to state the fact there are almost no publications and research findings in this field of study. The closest research papers that can be found do not discover the basics of the issue or the reasons of its appearance (Degtyarev & Tchernous, 2012; Kunakova, 2012; Litvinenko, 2015; Shirinyants & Sorokopudova, 2014; Svitych, 2014). Taking it into account it seems relevant and significant to disclose the phenomenon and to share the findings with the academic society.

The phenomenon of “magazine wars” can be traced on the example of Russian-French relations during the reign of Emperor Nicholas I and King Louis Philippe of Orleans. The relations between two countries after the French Revolution of 1830, also known as the July Revolution, were extremely intense: Nicholas I, an ardent supporter of the principle of legitimacy, reluctantly recognized the regime that was established as the result of the revolution and considered King Louis-Philippe the usurper of the throne (Tanshina, 2005). All this was significantly worsening the bilateral relationship being complicated by such phenomena as the “Russian threat” and Russophobia provoked by the civilizational differences between Russia and the West as well as foreign policy actions: the active foreign policy of the Russian Empire, aimed to protect its national interests, was often perceived in the West as the expansion, the thread that must be stopped.

3. Research Questions

Through the press that was characterized by its party affiliation Russophobic sentiments became the subject of wide publicity; constantly repeated, through the indoctrination mechanisms action, they were quietly incorporated into the mass consciousness. Moreover, it was easier to report all sorts of nonsense and to form the right public opinion about the distant and unknown country. Our countrymen visiting Paris drew the attention to this very fact. In particular, the journalist and the writer V.M. Stroev, while in Paris in 1838-1839, noted that the newspaper canards were “the articles purely fictional, in order to arouse the terror on the stock exchange or in the living room” (Stroev, 1841, p. 90), “it is the easiest way to make up for they do not know us in Paris at all... There is a vast field for French imagination: it creates some extraordinary kingdom under the name of Russia and publishes stupid fables” about Russia and the Russians (Stroev, 1841, p. 91). The historian M.P. Pogodin, being in France during the same period of time, on the his way from Marseilles to Paris got into conversation with two old ladies traveling with him in the stage-coach who showed absolute ignorance regarding Russia and asked “funny” questions about “... whether we have a bed, whether we undress when going to bed... It is nothing to say about our cold weather” (Pogodin, 1844, p. 206). Moreover, Russia was poorly known not only to the inhabitants but also to the intellectually sophisticated people. So, the famous writer Alexander Dumas Father in the conversation with the Karatygin actor couple, who visited him in Paris in 1845, called the battle of Borodino as the Poltava battle, which once again confirms the scanty information of the French about Russia (Duryilin, 1937).

One of the most important issues arising in the study of the phenomenon of the information war is the question of whether it was initiated from above or whether there were manifestations of mass psychology, the reflection of Russophobic sentiments that always were characteristic of the Western society. To begin with, Russophobia in France and generally in Europe in 1830-1840-ies was the “fashion” phenomenon. While playing to the anti-Russian sentiment, it was possible to score political points, to make a name, to gain popularity and votes and to succeed financially. This detail was correctly noticed in the report of the Third Department of Chancellery: “The Professor of the Slavic literature in Paris Collegium, Cyprian Robert, may serve an example of the latter, as, contrary to his previous opinions about Russia, he now discovers to us the most implacable hatred. The reason for this change is that journalists declared him the supporter of Russia, that is why his lectures were left without an audience;

and having selected the direction within the spirit of time he again attracted listeners” (Milchina, 2006, p. 380).

As for the higher echelons of power, King Louis-Philippe refused to have anything to do with the Russophobic articles in the press and the power involvement in the information war. In particular, while talking on the 1st of January, 1834, with the Ambassador of Russia in France the Corsican Earl S.-A. Pozzo di Borgo about the anti-Russian articles in the pro-government French newspaper "Le Journal des Débats", he said: “the People who run the newspaper are rich and independent of me and my government. Although usually they support us, they often criticize us...” (Archives, vol. 11).

The information war in those years was a phenomenon with a permanent character sharpening at moments of acute political crises. Immediately after the July revolution, in 1831, Russia suppressed the uprising in Poland. It was the participants in the uprising having emigrated to France and Britain who played a significant role in the perception of Russia as a barbaric, oppressive state threatening the freedom of Europeans. The Russophobic publications, in which the Poles were involved, were appearing in France during the period of 1830-1840ies. In the report of the Third Department of the year of 1845 it was stated: “It is Polish immigrants who spread slander and lies on Russia; they also participate in the drafting of the French libels: it is found out, among other things, that in the articles and books containing slander all foreign proper names are distorted and only Polish names are spelled correctly...” (Milchina, 2006, p. 364).

It is the Third branch of the Imperial Chancellery that took upon itself the function of combating the spread of negative information about Russia. Thus the Emperor Nicholas I believed that the views of individuals do not deserve special attention. In particular, in 1835, he taught the heir to the throne Alexander: “Despise insults and libels, but fear your own conscience” (Filin, 2002, p. 214).

In order to create a positive image of Russia the Third branch was creating and funding special newspapers in the West, such as “The Frankfurt Newspaper” published by Charles Durand. As it was noted in the report of the Third Department of 1833, Durand “...with particular mastery and with commendable courage uses the received information in his newspaper to defeat the slander” (Milchina, 2006, p. 364). A few years later, however, Durant went over to another camp and founded the journal “Capitol” in Paris in 1839 acting in favor of Prince Louis Napoleon.

Besides journalists, subsidized by the Russian government, and secret agents, the tasks to combat Russophobic sentiments were attributed to people who were officially carrying out their duties. One of them was Prince Elim Petrovich Meshchersky (1808-1844), the first “intelligent officer” as he was named by the French explorer André Mazon (Mazon, 1937, p. 377). A young, charming, slim tall blonde – he was a real Parisian legend in his own lifetime. Despite the fact that the Prince was a striking disproof of Russophobic fear, the French were watchfully treating even such sophisticated and europeanized aristocrats. These concerns were precisely expressed by an influential French politician Duke de Broy who sketched the portrait of Russian aristocrats in Paris: dressed to the nines, knowing by heart the latest fashionable novel and talking about contemporary politics, as a Frenchman from the suburbs of Saint Germain. According to de Broy, you involuntarily start to talk with such a Russian like with a compatriot. “And suddenly some gesture, some tone of voice makes you feel that you are face to face with the most fierce enemy of your homeland” (Mazon, 1937, p. 478).

However, as Prince Elim was a dreamer and was nursing the ideas of the “Holy Rus” and Nicholas I needed someone, more sensitive to the reality than the theories so he found the replacement in the person of J. N. Tolstoy, the agent of the Third Department of the Imperial Chancellery. His responsibilities included the secret supervision of the Russian political refugees. As Prince Meshchersky, he regularly looked through the Paris newspapers and, having found any anti-Russian article in them, wrote a refutation. He published them in those Paris newspapers, to which the Russian government paid a “subsidy”, and signed those articles with French names to sound more persuasive.

In addition to the Polish problem, the regularly aggravating Eastern Question served the reason for the information war. It was after the aggravation of the Eastern Question in 1839-1841 in France when the famous book of Marquis de Custine “Russia in 1839” was published, which became the symbol of perception of Russia as a barbaric, oppressive state. The Marquis wrote: “when I was leaving France, I thought that only a strong alliance of France and Russia could make peace in European Affairs; but after having got acquainted with Russian people closer and having learnt the true spirit of their government, I felt that the people were separated from the rest of the civilized world by the powerful political interest based on religious fanaticism...” (Custine, 1996, p. 346). As the famous representative of French Studies P.P. Cherkasov rightly pointed out “the journey of the Marquis had negative consequences for the reputation of the Russian Empire, which was thoroughly “tarnished” at least half a century ahead” (Cherkasov, 2009, p. 76). This book turned into a bestseller, inspired a wave of imitators and sparked the information war between Russia and France.

In Russia the book was immediately banned making it one of the most widely read issues in 1843-1844. Despite the fact that it was officially decided to “look at everything that is published about Russia with perfect indifference... not caring in the least about any wing and rumors” (Milchina, 2006, p. 259), the Russian government was concerned about finding a decent answer to the acclaimed book-pamphlet. In the moral-political report of the Third Department of 1843 it was noted that “two refutations to the Custine’s book have already been published (Milchina, 2006, p. 340), one is still to be published. But the most impartial accuser of Custine’s slander will be his compatriot Auger, a natural Frenchman, who was in the Russian service in 1814-1817. Driven by the gratitude to the hospitable Russia, he publishes his journey and denies Custine in it in any possible way” (Milchina, 2006, p. 311).

“Our response to Custine” could come from the pen of the greatest novelist, Honore de Balzac who decided in the very midst of the dispute to go to St. Petersburg to his beloved Evelina Ganska. The Russian diplomats, first of all, charge d'affaires of Russia in France N. D. Kiselev decided to use this trip. In encrypted dispatch of Nesselrode from July, 24th (12nd) 1843, it was reported: “...in order to meet the cash needs of the Monsieur de Balzac, it could be possible to use this author, who still retains some popularity here, as in Europe in general, to write a refutation of the hostile and slanderous book by G. de Custine” (Grossman, 1937, p. 155). However, the count on Balzac was not justified: the writer arrived in Russia only after the publication of Custine’s book, the official Petersburg met his with icy cold and Balzac left Russia without writing a word about it.

The growth of anti-Russian publications was triggered not only by the work of Custine but was also fueled by the course of the foreign policy events. In June, 1844, Nicholas I, under the name of Count Orlov, made a trip to the UK. In France this visit caused great concern due to the prospects for Anglo-

Russian rapprochement and the conclusion of bilateral agreements on the Affairs of the East. Immediately after the Emperor's visit to London of about ten anonymous works of anti-Russian orientation were released in France. In particular, it was reported in the book of the French lawyer Charles Dues, published in 1844. Dues himself did not suffer from Russophobia, on the contrary, he very positively evaluated the activities of Emperor Nicholas I: "His intentions are vast and the manner is simple; none of the Emperors possesses that greater degree of mastery to easily perform the most complex cases promptly and to get out of difficulties. He knows how to punish but he is even more able to forgive" (Duez, 1844, p. 118).

Our countrymen, offended by the authorities, did not also lag behind in anti-Russian rhetoric. In 1845-1847 the book of the writer-emigrant I. G. Golovin "Russia during the reign of Nicholas I and Russian types and characters" was published as well as the book by N.I. Turgenev "Russia and the Russians".

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to study the phenomenon of the information wars and the origin of this phenomenon on the example of the "magazine war" between Russia and France in 1830-1840ies.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the article is the interdisciplinary synthesis methodology based on the classic historical analysis, the application of the historical documents content-analysis methodology and the hermeneutics methods in the analysis and interpretation of the texts.

6. Findings

Information wars have deep historical roots and are linked with the growing influence of the mass media as forces that can influence the formation of public opinion and policy-making. In the 19th century, when the press acquired the meaning of the true "fourth estate", the information war entered the political practice, political rhetoric and the field of interstate communications. The study of information war issues is closely associated with such an important phenomenon of political life as the Russian threat and Russophobia. On the one hand, the causes of Russophobia are the civilizational differences between Russia and the West. On the other hand, Russophobia was provoked by the active foreign policy of Russia, aimed at protecting its national and geopolitical interests. Such policies are often perceived in the West as the expansion, the flow that must be stopped. While studying the mechanisms of information wars it is necessary to consider the phenomenon of indoctrination that is the introduction into the mass consciousness of the desired schemes and structures with the help of the media.

7. Conclusion

Information war waged in France against Russia in 1830-1840-ies and was the reflection of xenophobic attitudes. Since the second third of the 19th century anti-Russian ideas were dominating not only in France but throughout Europe. The active and successful foreign policy of the Russian Empire,

the significant influence of Russia in Europe raised concerns about violations of the European status quo, although the Emperor Nicholas I sought to preserve the order of things, recorded by the Vienna Congress. If at the beginning of the nineteenth century Russophobic sentiments were held back in the face of the common enemy Napoleon I, so fifteen years later Russia began to be perceived as a new aggressor, seeking to subjugate not only the West but also the East. Xenophobic ideas are always easier to form the right public opinion, to gloss over their own problems in the face of an external enemy, whether real or imaginary; for the opposition it is always a reliable means of discrediting the power, the struggle for Ministerial posts and privileges, as well as the conquest for voters who are susceptible to this kind of questionable ideas. In the year of 1848, the French were not really caring about Russia. In February, the country was hit by the revolution that led to the collapse of the regime of the July monarchy. However, the information war is always fraught with escalation in the real war. That is what happened in 1853, when the Western powers united against Russia, having destroyed, thereby, the European balance that had been existing at that time for nearly forty years.

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