The Dulles Plan for Russia: Conspiracy Theories and Moral Panics in Post-Soviet Societies

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A conspiracy theory is a powerful explanatory model or way of thinking that influences many cultural forms and social processes throughout the contemporary world. Conspiracy theories can include a number of principal ideas and concepts that make them adaptable for a broad variety of discourses and forms of collective imagination; they are generally defined as "the conviction that a secret, omnipotent individual or group covertly controls the political and social order or some part thereof."[1] Conspiracy theories produce ethical models that oppose "us" to "them," "victims" to "enemies," "heroes" to "anti-heroes," explaining and identifying evil as a social and moral category. At the same time, conspiracy theories are extremely teleological; they do not leave any room for coincidences or accidents and explain all facts and events as related to intentional and purposeful activities undertaken by "evil actors." Quite often, conspiracy theories are grounded in a holistic worldview that leads, in turn, to a particular hermeneutic style. Reality is always considered to be deceptive; it provides "simple," "superficial," and "obvious" explanations, which must give pride of place to more complicated intellectual procedures aiming to disclose a "concealed truth." From this perspective, the concept of mystery appears to be the most powerful element

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1 Fenster 2008: 1.

of conspiratorial narratives that operate in both pre- and post-industrial societies. Recent academic research into conspiracy theories provides a set of interpretations, ranging from medicalization ("social/political paranoids") to the concept of "popular knowledge," as a specifically postmodern phenomenon. It is obvious, however, that the social, political, and cultural power of conspiratorial narratives should not be underestimated. Conspiracy theories often motivate political action and social praxis, accompany transformation of institutional and informational networks, and provoke moral panics and changes of identities in both modern and postmodern societies. Still, the roles played by conspiracy theories in various societies, discourses, and social contexts can be quite different, even in the age of globalization.

This chapter deals with present day conspiratorial discourse in Russia, which could perhaps be discussed as the universal symbolic language of post-Soviet collective imagination. That does not necessarily mean that most Russians today take conspiracy theories seriously and base their everyday behavior on social paranoia. Instead, this "language of suspicion" appears to be the most adaptable set of memes and meanings that link people to each other, thereby providing them with collective identities. Yet, it is necessary to explain how and why the language of suspicion has obtained this privileged position in Russian society and what mimetic advantages it possesses.

In his recent publications, Serguei Oushakine has suggested that post-Soviet conspiratorial thinking is a specific form of the "patriotism of despair, with its combination of the traumatic and the conspiratorial," that "has become especially emblematic of the postmillennial Russia."[2] As Oushakine argues, our

> … inability to convincingly explain individual or collective losses has resulted in an intensive production of popular conspiracy narratives aimed to bring to light hidden forces and concealed plans of "evil outsiders." … In these narratives, references to pain and suffering are often linked with fundamental economic changes in the country. Emerging market relations both polarized people and simultaneously activated what Jean and John Comaroff have fittingly called the "will to connect." … The post-Soviet uneasiness about the increasing social role of capital is translated into stories about universal lies and deceptions. The perceived exposure to foreign values and capital is often counterbalanced with ideas of an enclosed national community and unmediated values. Increasingly, Russo-Soviet culture is construed as "inalienable wealth," as a particular form of socially meaningful

2 Oushakine 2009: 74. On conspiracy theories in post-Soviet collective imagination see also Bennett 2011: 132–52; Yablokov 2018; Borenstein 2019.

property that could be shared among people, but that could not enter commercial circulation or exchange.[3]

Although Oushakine is certainly right in pointing to conspiratorial narration as a specific social device, one employed to make sense of "unsettling and dislocating experiences of the post-Soviet transformation,"[4] it is obvious that many of those narratives have appeared and become popular during the late Soviet decades; therefore, their popularity cannot be interpreted only in the context of economic and social transition.

The case that I will deal with in this chapter, and a number of other examples demonstrate that many post-Soviet conspiracy theories emerged in the late Soviet decades, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. This means, in turn, that in order to look for at least some roots of post-Soviet conspiratorial discourses, we will first need to pay greater attention to ideologies, social settings, and the everyday practices of the late Soviet period. This will also mean that we will have to deal with cultural continuity, rather than breaks and changes. What, then, was so peculiar about the decades under examination?

In his book about the "last Soviet generation," Alexei Yurchak argued that

> … the spectacular collapse of the Soviet Union was completely unexpected by most Soviet people and yet, as soon as people realized that something unexpected was taking place, most of them also immediately realized that they had actually been prepared for that unexpected change. Millions became quickly engrossed, making the collapse simultaneously unexpected, unsurprising, and amazingly fast. This complex succession of the unexpected and the unsurprising revealed a peculiar paradox at the core of the Soviet system.[5]

Yurchak explains the paradox by introducing the concept of "performative shift," i.e., the "process in which the performative dimension of ritualized and speech acts rises in importance (it is important to participate in the reproduction of these acts at the level of form), while the constative dimension of these acts become open-ended, indeterminate, or simply irrelevant."[6] In the context of late Soviet authoritative discourse

> … it became less important to interpret its texts and rituals literally, as constative descrip-

3 Oushakine 2009: 74–75.

4 Ibid.: 75.

5 Yurchak 2005: 282.

6 Ibid.: 26.

tions of reality, and more important to reproduce them with great precision. … The reproduction of the forms of authoritative discourse became powerfully constitutive of Soviet reality but no longer necessarily described that reality; it created the possibilities and constraints for being a Soviet person but no longer described what a Soviet person was. As a result, through its ritualized reproduction and circulation, authoritative discourse enabled many new ways of life, meanings, interests, relations, pursuits, and communities to spring up everywhere within late socialism, without being able to fully describe or determine them.[7]

Following this logic, it is possible to consider the shift as having challenged the very nature of social reality, making it dubious, deceptive, and susceptible. Perhaps this was at least one of the social factors that supplied fertile ground for conspiratorial imagination. There could be some others, though, and I will turn to them later.

We can ask what "performative shifts" from late Soviet discourse were adopted and transformed by "communities of loss" in the 1990s and 2000s: Why did the conservative nationalism of the 1970s become so significant for Russian popular culture forty years thereafter? What messages are encoded by the symbolic language of moral panics and conspiracy theories related to the "imaginary West" in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian society? These questions can be partly answered by an analysis of the so-called "Dulles Plan for Russia," a conspiratorial forgery that has been widely publicized in Russia since 1992. In the following analysis I will focus on the document's history, ideological contexts, and popular reception in present day Russia.

Ironically enough, on 7 April 2015, a local court in the Sverdlovsk region added the text of the Dulles Plan to the "federal list of extremist materials" (i.e., texts, images, videos, and websites that are banned for distribution in the country). The court resolution mentions that "in the city of Asbest, certain unrecognized individuals distributed flyers with the text of the 'Dulles Plan to Destroy the USSR (Russia)' on one side and the text of the 'Last Wishes for Ivans' on the other."[8] An expert from the local criminal laboratory of the Federal Security Service concluded that the flyer promoted "information aimed at stimulation of

7 Ibid.: 286.

8 «В г. Асбесте УФСБ России по Свердловской области выявлен факт распространения неустановленными лицами среди жителей г. Асбеста текстового материала "План Даллеса уничтожения СССР (России)" и "Последние пожелания Иванам'" экстремистского характера». – "Reshenie Asbestovskogo gorodskogo suda Sverdlovskoi oblasti po delu № 2-414/2015"

hatred of public agents in contemporary Russia."[9] Unfortunately, the full text of the expert's report is not available, but its final statement seems to be quite doubtful, if not an outright Freudian slip, since the only passage in some versions of the "Dulles Plan" that could be interpreted in that way is a vague mention of certain "officials" with their "bureaucratic despotism" and "flourishing of bribery and lack of principle."[10] In any event, the official ban of the "Dulles Plan" seems to be quite symptomatic, in terms of scope at least, of its receptive contexts in contemporary Russia. I will return to this topic later.

Generally speaking, the text of the "Dulles Plan" does not include any ideas that could be regarded as exclusively novel or as original in the history of modern conspiratorial thinking. It narrates a plan for the moral and social corruption of the Soviet Union, allegedly formulated in the mid-1940s by the American diplomat, lawyer, and the first civilian director of the CIA, Allen Dulles (1893–1969). According to the text, the secret postwar politics of the U.S. towards the Soviet Union was to concentrate on disseminating "false values," the "vulgarization of national morality," "weeding out all social significance from art and literature," making public administration chaotic and confused, the promotion of "the basest feelings," of drunkenness and drug addiction, nationalism, and ethnic hatred.

In fact, however, the text had no relation to American Cold War politics towards the USSR. The "Dulles Plan" was publicized for the first time in 1993, in two slightly different versions and was compiled from the novel *Vechnyi Zov* (*Eternal Call*, 1971–76) by Soviet writer Anatolii Ivanov (1928–1999), a prominent member of the Brezhnev period's literary establishment. Ivanov was the editor-in-chief (as of 1972) of the nationalistically oriented literary journal *Molodaia gvardiia* (the *Young Guard*), a member of the board of the Union of Soviet Writers, and even a member the USSR's Supreme Soviet between 1984–89. In 1984, Ivanov, whose books sold more than 30 million copies and appeared in screen-adapted versions produced by various Soviet studios, was awarded the honorary title of a "hero of socialist labor," one of the most prestigious awards in the USSR. In short, Ivanov's literary career, for a man who had been born to an ordinary peasant family in eastern Kazakhstan, must be considered a model social paragon of the late Soviet period. Meanwhile, in the 1970s and 1980s he was

9 Cf. "Reshenie Asbestovskogo gorodskogo suda Sverdlovskoy oblasti po delu № 2-414/2015"

10 Hereafter I quote the translation of the Russian original of the "Dulles Plan" by Eliot Borenstein (cf. 2019: 90–91). However, Borenstein proceeded from an incomplete version of the text, so in some cases I quote my own translation of its parts.

one of the informal leaders of the 'Russophile' or 'national-conservative' wing of Soviet writers.

Leaving to one side the details of Ivanov's literary biography and political views, I will focus on those episodes from his novel that were later used by the compiler(s) of the "Dulles Plan." The ideas, which were then ascribed to the director of the CIA, are here expressed by the most evil character of the book, Arnol'd Lakhnovskii. The reader learns about him for the first time in the prologue, in which he appears as an investigator from the Tomsk gendarmerie department (the events take place in 1908, and Lakhnovskii is about 35 years old) pursuing revolutionaries and forcing one of them, Petr Polipov, to become a traitor. Lakhnovskii then disappears from the scene for a long time, and we get to know about his life at the time of and following the October Revolution only in the second volume of the novel. Here, the setting is quite different with the year 1943 passing and Lakhnovskii, now an SS officer, in command of the collaborationist "People's Liberation Army" that fights against the Soviet forces. Ivanov, however, is now eager to tell his readers more about the biography of the vicious character. It appears that "before the end of the civil war in Siberia" Lakhnovskii "moved to Moscow where he took part immediately in the activities of Trotskyite groups."[11] The Trotskyites in the novel are portrayed according to the Stalinist political tradition and propaganda; however, as we will see, that is not the only meaning of imaginary Trotskyism for the writer. At any rate, as a Trotskyite, Lakhnovskii is mostly engaged in what was known as "wrecking" or "sabotage" (*vreditel'stvo*). In 1922, he establishes "sabotage groups" in Donbass; after that, he returns to Moscow and works at Trotsky's office. At the same time, however, he soon becomes an agent of the German intelligence and continues to spy after the fall of Trotsky. In 1941, Lakhnovskii joins the Nazis and later becomes the founder and chief commander of the "People's Liberation Army." It is in some village in the territory occupied by the Germans that he relates a Trotskyite plan for the post-war moral corruption of the Soviet Union and "the demise of the last unbroken nation on Earth" to an old acquaintance of his, Petr Polipov.

I have already mentioned that Ivanov, on the whole, follows the official Stalinist historical tradition and interprets the events of the 1930s in terms of a "Trotskyite conspiracy," the latter being responsible not only for the USSR's problems of social and economic development, but even for the "extremes" of Stalinist repression:

Due to Lakhnovskii and people like him, the Trotskyite underground penetrated most of

11 Ivanov 1981: 423.

the big cities of the country and many parts of the gigantic state machinery including the army. The Trotskyites were still active, they wrecked and perverted various good deeds and undertakings.[12]

At first glance, the aims of the underground seem to correspond with the principal ideas promoted by Stalinist propaganda. However, the very episode of the novel that was used for the fabrication of the "Dulles Plan" refers to more ambitious plans by Lakhnovskii and his brothers-in-arms. Their purpose, as it appears, is not only to restore capitalism in Russia, but also to subordinate the Soviet people to some mysterious forces.

Before discussing this passage's subtexts and possible meanings, I would first like to briefly examine the history of the "Dulles Plan" conspiracy theory and the public figures involved in its dissemination. Although the history of the forgery has been repeatedly discussed by Russian journalists, the only academic publication that deals with it, that I am aware of, is an article by Serghei Golunov and Vera Smirnova.[13] They argue that the passage from the novel by Ivanov was initially ascribed to Allen Dulles in the pamphlet *Kniaz' T'my: Dva Goda v Kremle* (*The Prince of Darkness: Two Years in Kremlin*) (1992) by the Ukrainian poet and member of the CPSU Central Committee between 1990–91 Boris Oleinik (Oliinyk). However, this statement is not correct. The text by Oleinik was published in two different editions between 1992–94,[14] and the full version of the "Dulles Plan" was included only in the second one. Furthermore, the first publications of the passage from *Vechnyi Zov* attributed to Dulles appeared in the spring of 1992 in a number of pro-communist Russian newspapers. Here the "Dulles Plan" was included in a set of partly falsified and partly distorted "statements by the enemies of Russia" (apart from Dulles, the list included Napoleon, Goebbels, John F. Kennedy, and James Baker). The first set of these "fake quotations" known to me was published in 1992 in St. Petersburg in the pro-communist newspaper *Narodnaia pravda* (the *People's Truth*) under the title "Otkro-

12 Ibid.: 435. «Благодаря деятельности таких, как Лахновский, троцкистское подполье было организовано в большинстве крупнейших городов страны, во многих ячейках гигантского государственного организма, включая и армию. Оно помаленьку действовало, вредило, занималось тем, что доводило до абсурда, до своей противоположности различные добрые дела и начинания».

13 Golunov/Smirnova 2015.

14 The first edition was published three times (Oleinik 1992, 1993a and 1994). The second was published in 1993 in two journals (*Roman-gazeta,* No 3, and *Molodaia gvardiia*, No 7; see Oleinik 1993b) and separately as Oleinik 1993c.

veniia zakhvatchikov" ("Revelations by Invaders").[15] Later that same year, the text was republished by a number of other newspapers.

However, the pamphlet by Oleinik addressed Mikhail Gorbachev directly and does indeed seem to boost the "Dulles Plan" as a separate conspiratorial narrative. After reciting the passage from *Vechnyi Zov*, Oleinik writes:

> You should recall this, Mikhail Sergeevich! The words are by Dulles himself, and he pronounced them even in 1945 when he was dealing with the postwar American doctrine against the USSR. Now, let's look around—haven't we made a reality of the dream by the American strategist, haven't we realized his program? And you are still living in your irrational world (or pretending to live), you still argue that the Perestroika is your invention. But even [James] Baker has clearly announced that "we have spent trillions and trillions of dollars over the last 40 years in winning the Cold War against the USSR," that is, following the Dulles' program![16]

Another publication that contributed to the popularity of the *Dulles Plan* was the article *Bitva za Rossiyu* (*The Battle for Russia*)[17] by Ioann Snychev (1927–1995), the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, and one of the leaders of the Russian nationalist movement in the early 1990s. It was published on February 20, 1993, in the newspaper *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (the *Soviet Russia*) and included a historical discussion of Russia's struggle against its imaginary enemies since the eleventh century and up until the present day. After paying a great deal of attention to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (with the remark that "the *Protocols* may or may not be authentic, but the eighty years that have passed since their appearance give us ample material for reflection" and "the world history … has followed the

15 Inozemtsev 1992.

16 Oleinik 1993b: 38. «Неужели не вспомнили, Михаил Сергеевич?! Да это же Даллес, да-да, тот самый, который сказал это еще в 1945 году, разрабатывая план реализации американской послевоенной доктрины против СССР. А теперь оглянитесь окрест: не правда ли – почти один к одному мы с Вами наконец исполнили заветную мечту американского стратега, то есть реализовали его программу? А Вы еще и до сих пор, пребывая (или, скорее, прикидываясь, что пребываете) в иррациональном мире, доказываете, что "перестройка" – Ваше изобретение! Когда даже Бейкер черным по белому заявил: "Мы истратили триллионы долларов за последние сорок лет, чтобы одержать победу в "холодной войне" против СССР", то есть реализовать программу того же Даллеса!»). The quotation from James Baker also comes from the *Revelations by Invaders*.

17 Snychev 1993.

plan laid forth in the *Protocols* to a surprising degree"[18]), Ioann finally presented the text of the "Dulles Plan."

The same ideas that link the "Dulles Plan" to imaginary "Zionist forces" were expressed by Oleinik in his publication in *Molodaia gvardiia*. Ironically, Ivanov still worked as the editor in chief of the journal, so he was obviously aware of this unusual use of this literary piece by Oleinik and other supporters of the "Dulles Plan" conspiracy theory. While referring to the Perestroika as a part of the "Dulles Plan," Oleinik did mention its original source however. In a footnote he wrote:

> As we got to know, these ominous words were included in the second volume of the novel *Vechnyi zov* by Anatolii Ivanov … . For more than a decade, however, they were not authorized by the censorship under Kremlin-Zionist control. For the first time, the author managed to publish the passage in the fourth volume of his collected works in 1981. However, neither the high and mighty nor our celebrated ideologists, neither literary critics nor intellectuals [intelligentsia], in short, nobody except ordinary readers paid attention to this warning about the plans by Zionist forces for our country and our people—plans that have already become real practice. Today, the results are obvious.[19]

I am not able to claim how accurate Oleinik was when he spoke about the censorship that had not allowed the publication of the full text of Lakhnovskii's confessions. However, a close analysis of this passage certainly reveals its three dif-

18 «Подлинны "Протоколы" или нет, но восемьдесят лет, прошедших после их опубликования, дают обильный материал для размышления, ибо мировая история, словно повинуясь приказу невидимого диктатора, покорно прокладывала свое прихотливое русло в удивительном, детальном соответствии с планом, изложенным на их страницах».

19 Oleinik 1993b: 38. «Эти зловещие слова писатель Анатолий Иванов, как нам стало известно, включил в текст 2-й книги романа "Вечный зов", опубликованной в 1970 году. Но в течение более 10 лет эти слова выбрасывались цензурой, находящейся под кремлевско-сионистским контролем, из всех изданий. Впервые автору удалось их опубликовать в 4-м томе собрания сочинений, вышедшего в 1981 году. Однако ни власть имущие в СССР, ни прославленные наши идеологи, ни литературные критики, ни интеллигенция – словом, никто, кроме рядовых читателей, не обратил внимания на это предупреждение писателя о намерениях сионистских сил в отношении нашей страны, нашего народа, намерениях, давно уже превратившихся в активную практику. Результаты этой практики ныне налицо».

ferent versions, presented subsequently in the first journal publication of the novel (1976), in its separate edition (1977), and in its final version included in Ivanov's collected works (published in five volumes in 1981). The second and the third redactions included more radical additions that could be interpreted as a nationalistic criticism of culture and society of the late Soviet decades. For that reason, it might have been subject to certain censorship corrections. More important, though, is what Ivanov himself wanted to tell his readers when he was writing his "ominous warning."

The most visible example, even though it still requires some competence in corresponding "cultural encoding," is the passage's anti-Semitic subtext. For members and supporters of the so-called "Russophile" (or "national-conservative") party in the late Soviet literary establishment, the label of Trotskyism (as well as Zionism) was a common euphemism for Jewishness and Judaism and, in this context, a part of conventional "language of struggle," to use the formulation of Nikolai Mitrokhin,[20] against imaginary Jewish (or Judeo-Masonic) conspiracy. It is possible that Russian nationalists of the late 1970s and 1980s see the passage from the novel as a kind of manifest of "legal anti-Semitism," so to speak, a short adaptation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* for a general but still "competent" reader. It was no accident, of course, that Ioann Snychev discussed the *Protocols* and their predictions "coming true" before introducing the "Dulles Plan" to his readers.

One more subtext of the confessions by Lakhnovskii is related to polemics between, roughly speaking, the Russophiles and the Westernized among Soviet intellectuals, writers, and artists of the 1960s–1980s. The mentioning of arts and literature lacking social significance and proclaiming "the basest of human feelings" as well as of the "cult of sex, violence, sadism and betrayal, in a word, immorality" promoted by the "so called creators" clearly refers to those debates that were recently analyzed by a number of scholars dealing with nationalistic trends in late Soviet literature and culture (e.g., Yitzhak M. Brudny, Nikolai Mitrokhin).[21]

This subtext or context, however, can be extended to political issues more broadly. Both the communist elite and the Soviet propaganda of the 1970s and 1980s paid a lot of attention to the imaginary moral degradation of the younger generations, which was allegedly induced by Western influences generally and by American popular culture in particular. This propagandistic trend perhaps accounts for ascribing the authorship of the imaginary conspiracy to the American

20 Mitrokhin 2003: 535.

21 Brudny 1998; Mitrokhin 2003.

intelligence agency. From this perspective, Allen Dulles was a perfect candidate for the position of chief conspirator, being generally considered to be a somewhat mysterious and suspect figure of the Cold War global political scene, the "king of spies," both in Russia and the U.S.[22] He was also well known enough for the Russian audience, due to the enormous popularity of the Soviet television series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (produced in 1973 by the Maxim Gorky studio, based on Iulian Semenov's novel) in which a Russian spy operating in Germany in 1945 is ordered to collect information about secret negotiations (known as the *Operation Sunrise*) between representatives of the German Military Command and the Western Allies coordinated by Dulles. As James von Geldern remarks, "Semenov … was retelling old Cold War myths of American treachery in *Seventeen Moments*. Yet he also managed to portray Nazi leaders with a sympathy unknown to Soviet viewers, and to use Nazi Germany to offer a sly critique of Soviet society."[23]

The late Soviet propagandist obsession with moral purity and dangers is obviously related to general politicization of moral reasoning in the USSR since the early years of the Khrushchev period. It is not easy to decide on the extent to which both Soviet society and its leaders believed in the twenty-year program of building communism, which had been proclaimed at the Twenty-Second CPSU Congress, but the idea that the "moral standards" of the average Soviet person standing on the threshold of communist society should be transformed met with a certain amount of support from the liberal intelligentsia. In this context, the notorious "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" included in the Third CPSU program was taken quite seriously by many, more seriously perhaps since it was the only part of the broader program oriented towards the formation of a new communist morality. In 1959, "the first scientific conference on aspects of Marxist-Leninist ethics" was held in Leningrad, and departments of ethics and aesthetics were set up in Moscow and Leningrad state universities a year later. In 1961, the first university textbook and the first reader on Marxist ethics were published. There is a strong analogy between this new moral culture and journalistic campaigns of the late 1920s against *meshchanstvo* and the "petty bourgeoisie."

22 Symptomatically enough, the American journalist David Talbot has recently published a book in which he accuses Dulles of manipulating and subverting American presidents and of being involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy – cf. Talbot 2015.

23 Geldern (n. d.).

It is possible to explain the new politics of morality taking into consideration a number of reasons including social and demographic changes (the rapid growth of the urban population in particular) as well as ideological expectations of the communist utopia. One might ask, however, what moral or ethical norms and standards were claimed to be "positive" and "negative," appropriate or inappropriate for the "builders of communism." Although the topic, of course, deserves a longer discussion, I would suggest that the debates did not result in any consistent model of ethics or moral reasoning. It is equally important that actual relations between moral habitus or moral practices and official moral ideologies, as well as moral identities, in late Soviet culture were quite complex and not necessarily consistent at all. Here I would return to the book by Alexei Yurchak in which he introduces the principle of performative shift as informing the logic of late Soviet ideological production. Still, moral meanings were produced and reproduced there, albeit in a more complicated way. If we look back at the "Dulles Plan," we might assume that "immorality" and "false values" here generally refer to individualistic and consumerist trends of everyday social life. Perhaps this is the key to understanding the continued popularity of this conspiratorial narrative. Ivanov obviously intended to criticize the current state of affairs in the USSR in the 1970s, and explained what he thought to be the moral degradation of contemporary Soviet society in terms of a Trotskyite or Zionist or Jewish conspiracy. His narrative also appeared to be effective and adaptable in a much wider context as a tool for what can be called social self-description or even self-criticism related to the social changes of both the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In arguing this, I mean that the reasons behind the fabrication of the "Dulles Plan" might be explained not only in terms of "Cold War mythology" or "emotional adaptability" of the text by Ivanov, but also as related to continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet society. The *Dulles Plan*, then, seems to be a kind of self-representation of a society that witnesses suspended and authoritarian modernization, as well as the relatively rapid growth of consumerist culture.

Let me return, in conclusion, to the post-Soviet history of the "Dulles Plan" conspiracy theory. We have already seen that it was initially disseminated by the "anti-liberal" opposition of the early 1990s, which comprised both secular communists and religious nationalists. Quite soon thereafter, however, the narrative became perhaps the most popular "indigenous" post-Soviet conspiracy theory and penetrated many different political, religious, and ideological communities in Russia. Like many other conspiratorial narratives, the "Dulles Plan" has not lost its popularity in the aftermath of the disclosure of its actual sources that have been made known by journalists since the late 1990s. At present, its supporters discuss either Ivanov's prophetic gift that allowed him, somehow mystically, to

learn about the intentions of Dulles or his contacts with certain KGB officers that shared their knowledge of the CIA's secret plans with him. The variety of post-Soviet social, cultural, and economic phenomena discussed in terms of the "Dulles Plan" is really broad, from Scientology and juvenile justice to urban graffiti. Both the "Dulles Plan's" huge popularity in present day Russia and ambivalent reception given to it by Putinist officials (bearing the legal ban of 2015 in mind) seem to prove its effectiveness as a tool of social self-description or, in terms of psychoanalytic anthropology, projective inversion. A popular meme that could be found on the Russian Internet presents a black frame that reads as follows: "The 'Dulles Plan'—does not exist, but is still effective."[24] Anybody who cares to can upload a picture of his or her own to the frame, informing potential viewers of particular aspects of everyday life that should be interpreted in relation to the imaginary American conspiracy. To my mind, this meme presents the clearest idea of how this and other conspiracy theories work in contemporary post-Soviet societies and beyond.

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Abstract

This chapter deals with present day conspiratorial discourse in Russia, which could perhaps be discussed in terms of the universal symbolic language of the post-Soviet collective imagination. That does not necessarily mean that most Russians today take conspiracy theories seriously or that they base their everyday behavior on social paranoia. Rather, this "language of suspicion" appears to be the most adaptable set of memes and meanings that link people to each other and provide them with collective identities. Still, it is necessary to understand the messages that are being encoded by the symbolic language of moral panics and conspiracy theories related to the "imaginary West" in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian society. These questions can be at least partly answered by an analysis of the so-called "Dulles Plan for Russia," a conspiratorial forgery that has been widely publicized in Russia since 1992. This chapter focuses on its history, ideological contexts, and popular reception in present day Russia.