

MODERN RUSSOPHOBIA:

CANCEL CULTURE AS A TOTALITARIAN CULT

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The processes underway in the collective West countries, associated with the attempts to “cancel Russia”, reveal themselves through totalitarian trends in the development of Western civilization and can be understood in the context of ideas and conclusions of European philosopher who studied in detail the social and cultural phenomenon of the “exceptionalism of the West” ideology up to its most radical manifestation – Nazism.



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Modern Russophobia and Its Origins

The phenomenon of aggressive Russophobia was known in various historical periods, but the modern times are characterized by its outburst since the late noughties of the twenty first century.

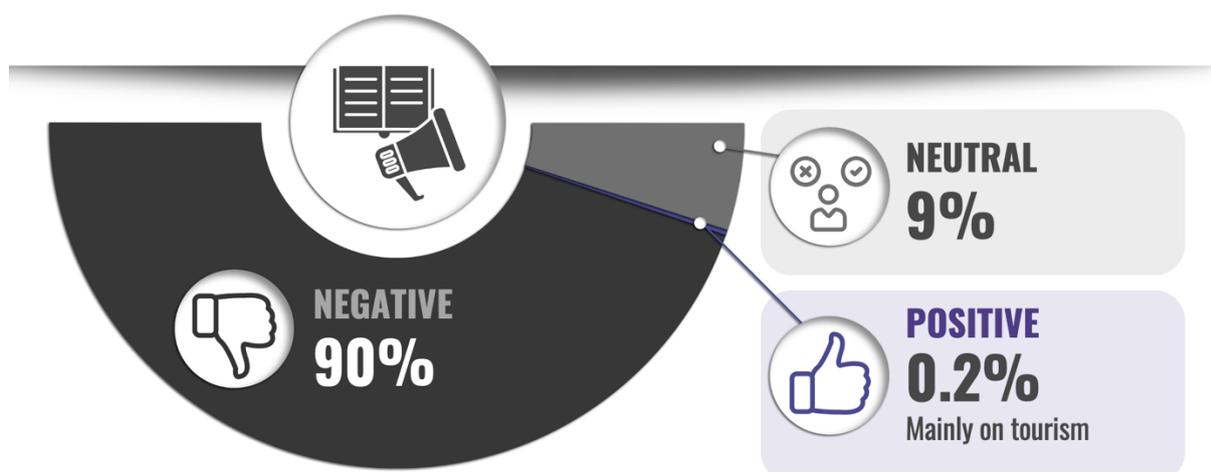
Like any xenophobia, Russophobia has a number of inherent forms, defamation, discrimination, culturocide and genocide among them.

Defamation of Russia and Russians has been continuously on the rise since the early 2000s. In this context, Russophobia is characterized by a high index of aggressiveness expressed by a number of Western media in their coverage of Russia, supported by a massive preponderance of negative publications over neutral or positive ones.

It is worth noting that the process of discrimination against Russia in the media field was not related to the start of the special military operation on the territory of Ukraine in February 2022.

U.S. PUBLICATIONS ABOUT RUSSIA

The U.S. alone made about **12.5 thousand** publications about Russia during **6 months**, according to the 2019 study.



The editorial policy of the majority of Western media was based on the “presumption of guilt” of Russia in all problematic situations that happened to be in their focus.

Discrimination against Russians became a vivid sign of Russophobia, illustrated most blatantly by disfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of Russians residing in Latvia and Estonia. A number of countries with large Russian communities also have cloaked discrimination: restrictions on hiring Russians, especially in the civil service; counteraction to economic and cultural activity.

Restrictions on the scope of the Russian language use is a form of discrimination, even in the regions where Russians are the majority. Thus, a series of campaigns to displant the Russian language from education, culture, and governance was launched in Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine.

Persecution of Russians on the grounds of ethnic hatred became widespread in the 1990s. Many Russians were forced to leave their homes and repatriate to the Russian Federation challenged by physical violence, overt and covert discrimination, defamation in the media and in the education system. **The total estimated number of forced repatriates to Russia over the past twenty-five years is eight million.** The most important factor contributing to this resettlement turned out to be Russophobia, manifested both at the grassroots and political levels.

In certain situations, Russophobia acquired pronounced signs of genocide. This happened the 1990s in the areas controlled by terrorist groups in the North Caucasus, and then in Donbass after 2014, becoming one of the main reasons for the launch of the special military operation in February 2022 to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine.

Ukraine remains a territory with the broadest possible range of Russophobic manifestations, up to open genocide. It is noteworthy that Russophobia has not been that much on ethnic, but rather on language, cultural and, lately, religious grounds.

Russophobia has its pronounced specificity in the countries of the collective West, where it reveals itself in the most deep-rooted and extensive practice of defamation, discrimination and culturocide. The scale of these phenomena makes us recall similar actions against the Jewish population of Germany during the first five years of the Nazis in power, from 1933 to the events of Kristallnacht in 1938.

The Term Cancel Culture

A special term “cancel culture” has emerged. It symbolically designates the totality of measures aimed at eliminating any, especially positive, factors of the presence of Russian civilizational and cultural agency in the common information, cultural, and economic environment. An exception is made only for certain phenomena that are instrumentally significant as elements of information warfare against Russia.

It is characteristic that the term itself is often associated by Western scholars and public figures with totalitarianism as a socio-political and ideological phenomenon.

University of Michigan professor Lisa Nakamura described *cancel culture* as a desire to control freedom of expression by utilizing the power given by social media [2][3]. Former US President Donald Trump compared cancel culture to “totalitarianism, a political weapon used to punish and humiliate dissenters by taking away their jobs and forcing them into submission” [4].

It is important to emphasize that the *cancel culture* ideology, although in other terms, has long been in the focus of attention of major Western thinkers. In particular, the French philosopher, cultural theorist and historian Michel Foucault published his *Discipline and Punish* in 1975 with the subtitle *The Birth of the Prison* [5].

As Michel Foucault pointed out, some conclusions and methods of the Frankfurt School were close to him, however, he considered the nature of power in a fundamentally different way than Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Jürgen Habermas [6].

Power is a “plurality of power relations”, according to Foucault. These relations come from heterogeneous points distributed throughout society, they are not localized in a single center that would exercise universal coercion. On the contrary, power relations are expressed in a multitude of foci of tactical pressure and violence, which act anonymously and always refer to something else.

Foucault believes that such dispersed power is characterized by a much greater degree of totalitarianism than the *classical* variants of social order, where the power of suppression was usually concentrated in some form of sovereign power.

Another most important property of power is that it does not act as an agent, albeit a multiple one, that would coerce other subjects into actions favorable to it. According to Foucault, power is incorporated into practices that are performed by subjects of any status and class, that is, it manifests itself in ways of speaking, organizing space and everyday life, sexual practices, etc.

Hence, it is entirely natural that *cancel culture* as applied to Russia comes about the entire spectrum of socio-psychological perception, rather than along specific vectors. This phenomenon is characterized by a significant induction without visible limits yet: even an object that has indirect connections with the stimulus, is subject to canceling, even if its connection with the *permissible* category “Ukraine” is stronger and more obvious.

For instance, the Soviet guerilla warrior Sidor Kovpak from the Kharkov province who died in Kiev, General of the Army Rodion Malinovsky from Odessa, the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, born in the Dnepropetrovsk province, and many other historical figures were subjected to *canceling* in Ukraine.

One of the most important reasons for Russophobia sits in the value otherness of Russian society from the pseudo-values of the post-Christian New West which seeks to control all spheres of human life, down to sexual practices, in full accordance with Foucault's ideas.

It is fundamentally important that *cancel culture* has virtually no polemic opposition in the current circumstances]of the New West, the alternative point of view is absent in many cases, not represented in the media. Noteworthy, the main functions of power of the new type, according to Foucault, include discipline, surveillance, control, etc., and power itself is closely related to knowledge: "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relation" [6]. **Power expresses itself not through law, but certain techniques of power, not through legislation, but norms, not through punishment, but control, and realizes itself at such levels and in such forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus [7].**

Thus, the refusal to follow *cancel culture* would require that a representative of Western civilization first go beyond the domain of this civilization, its power [8].

In this sense, Foucault's works overlap with the works by Hannah Arendt, who introduced the idea of totalitarian-oriented masses in the captivity of the "tyranny of logicity" while studying the variations of totalitarianism.

"The fall of the protecting class walls, Arendt wrote, transformed the slumbering majorities behind all parties into one great unorganized, structureless mass of furious individuals... Therefore they did not need to refute opposing arguments and consistently preferred methods which ended in death rather than persuasion, which spelled terror rather than conversion." According to Arendt, totalitarianism is created by a combination of repression and people's internal self-coercion, the "tyranny of logicity" of totalitarian ideology.

With the social media developed and information flows increased by orders of magnitude, Arendt's "mass" plays a huge role both in the realization of *cancel culture* and in filling this policy with new meanings, in the search for phenomena and relations subject to *canceling*.

In the preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [9], Hannah Arendt emphasizes that the totalitarian regime undermines the harmonious combination of the public and private spheres. Totalitarian domination leads to the deformation of the very existence of individuals, because it is based on the imbalance towards publicity due to an exaggerated role of power structures and bureaucracy. Tellingly – and this is another sign of apparent totalitarianism of the *collective West* – a totalitarian regime ruthlessly destroys family and interpersonal relations, according to Arendt, and creates conditions under which "conscience is silenced" and cannot serve as a guide to behavior, bringing the actual behavior of each individual under the logic of events. **The consistent patters described by Michel**

Foucault and Hannah Arendt fall completely in line with the peculiarities of the current development of Russophobia.

The Memorandum of the Expert Center of the World Russian People's Council on Russophobia [10] is important as it describes various parameters of this phenomenon. The document stated that Russophobia is one of the radical forms of xenophobia, and the content of this ideological phenomenon is revealed through the dislike or hatred of Russia and Russians, as well as of any manifestation of their ethno-cultural, religious and national state identity.

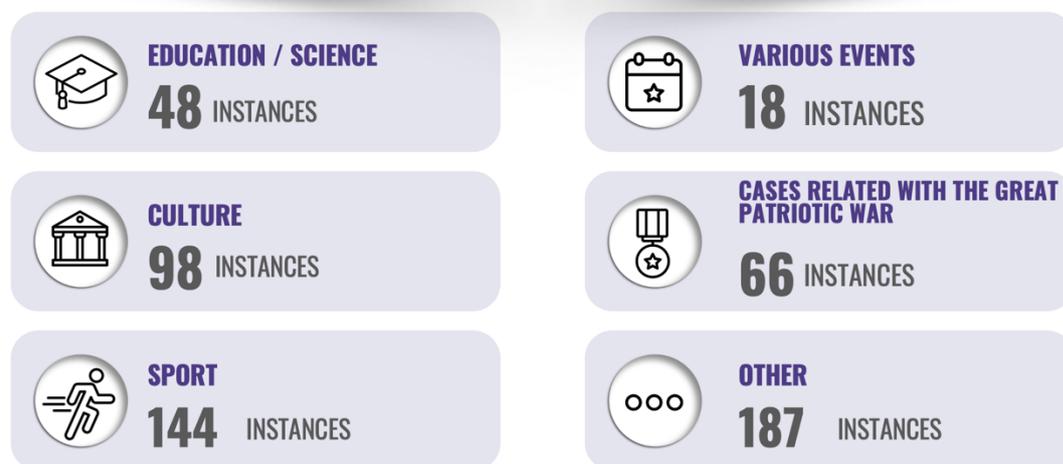
Experts note, that xenophobia can be of grassroots and ideological nature. Grassroots xenophobia is local in space; as a rule, it is limited to the place of contact of those who have different ethno-cultural stereotypes. Such xenophobia is characterized by contextuality, it arises against the background of emotionally colored interpersonal conflicts. Besides, it is contradictory and dualistic. Persons displaying grassroots xenophobia are often ready to combine negative and positive assessments of the same group depending on the context and their own immediate state of mind.

Cancel Culture Exempla

The phenomenon of Russophobia presents a vast field for research from the point of complex systematization.

There were 586 incidents of *canceling* registered in various categories from February 2022 to August 2023 alone [11].

VARIOUS GROUPS OF INCIDENTS RELATED TO CANCEL CULTURE FROM FEBRUARY 2022 TILL AUGUST 2023



Ideological xenophobia is not directed against individuals, but against the whole nation as a socio-historical phenomenon. It is of comprehensive imperative nature and leads to far-reaching conclusions that determine political decisions with dire consequences.

In 2015, the Memorandum On Russophobia noted [10] that xenophobia formally turns into a political ideology in rather rare cases, and becomes a result of a long historical process. It can be stated that such transformation has taken place at least at the factual level with Russophobia: the conclusions the State Commission for the Study of Russia's Influence on the Internal Security of the Republic of Poland in 2007-2022 began to acquire political significance [12].

Among other things, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismissed all diplomats who had studied in the USSR and the Russian Federation; the ministry explained this decision being part of the “decommunization” process [13].

At the pan-European level, totalitarianism manifested in *cancel culture* has reached the format of *canceling* Western politicians themselves. For example, former Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl was forced to leave Europe and move to Lebanon because of her neutral stance toward Russia. Kneissl emphasized that she left Austria because of constant threats to her [14].

The implementation of Russophobic *cancel culture* is a dynamic process, in particular due to the trends described above, which makes the spectrum of things and concepts subject to *canceling* constantly expand. Thus, a quantitative

assessment of this phenomenon can be given only approximately and in relation to a specific point in time.

It is important to note in this context, that a number of instances of *cancel culture* are now frankly surrealistic and rather illustrate the level of cultural and educational degradation of the countries of the collective West.

Thus, the University of Florida (U.S.) renamed Karl Marx classroom because of Russia's special military operation [15]. Fourteen classrooms had been earlier named after internationally famous figures in various fields, as evidenced by the door-plates, one of them reading "Karl Marx Group Study Room". The exact link between Karl Marx and Russia's special operation was not specified, but the university administration must have regarded Marx to be a representative of Russia. The Riga Puppet Theater reported that the play "Gena the Crocodile and Cheburashka" would be removed from the repertoire "due to the unacceptable use of favorite children's characters in Russian military propaganda" [16]. An incident in Tartu illustrates the expansion of the range of persons and phenomena to be *cancelled*: The exhibition of Israeli artists Tenno Penta Sooster and Sergei Bunkov was canceled there as they must have been considered *Russian*, probably because the name of one of the artists sounds Russian.

In Krakow, Poland, a movement was initiated at the local administrative level to cancel a concert by Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters because of his "controversial" views on Ukraine. "It would be shameful to Krakow, ... if Roger Waters, an open supporter of Putin, appears in our city. Let him sing in Moscow," city councilor Łukasz Wantuch said.

The film crew from Hollywood, led by the famous director Ridley Scott, was forbidden to decorate Westminster Cathedral (UK) as the Moscow Kremlin for the shooting of a biographical movie about Napoleon Bonaparte. The director intended to recreate the Kremlin to describe the historical events and received permission from the Catholic Church, but later the Church banned disguising the cathedral "for something Russian".

One more curious episode is connected with attributing musical instruments to *Russia*. The Swedish folk group Södra Bergens Balalaikor was banned from performing because "they play balalaikas associated with Russia". The Swedish officials who sanctioned the ban were not embarrassed in the slightest that the musicians wanted to support the Kiev regime with their concert. According to the local press, "the infuriated Swedes believe that the use of balalaikas is comparable to the demonstration of swastikas" [17].

The Fédération Internationale Féline (FIFe) imposed restrictions on Russian cats and their owners, whereas dogs from the territory of the Russian Federation also lost the right to participate in international shows.

Currently, *cancel culture* shows itself in virtually every sphere of Western society. Speaking about education, the humanitarian policy of canceling because of Russophobia is realized at two levels: the pedagogical process proper and scientific communication of academic circles.

Linguicide - a type of culturocide aimed at the destruction of the Russian language – takes a special place among the cancel culture practices. Thus, in 2022, a

directive was announced in Ukraine, according to which the Russian language can be replaced by other subjects in Ukrainian schools beginning with the new academic year, contrary to Ukraine's constitutional norms which still guarantee a free development of the Russian language [18]. At the regional level, the initiative began to be implemented independently: the city of Zhytomyr announced that they would exclude the Russian language from the school program on their own [19]. A year later, on June 28, 2023, Vladimir Zelensky sent a bill to the Verkhovna Rada proposing to grant English the status of an international language for communication in Ukraine.

The Latvian Council of Ministers approved an amendment to the Law on Education which reads that all school and pre-school education in the country will be done in Latvian, while education in Russian is prohibited by law under the threat of a fine. According to the order of the Latvian Ministry of Culture, all Russian-language performances of the Latvian Puppet Theater will also be removed from the repertoire. Neighboring Estonia signed a law canceling schooling in Russian. The law stipulates that the language of instruction at all schools and children's institutions is Estonian.

Lithuania withdrew the Russian language textbook for comprehensive schools [20]. The official reason for the decision was the alleged glorification of Russia in the textbook. Lithuanian Minister of Education, Science and Sports Jurgita Shyugzhdinene stated, among other things, that she believed it abnormal that about seventy percent of the country's schoolchildren chose Russian as the second foreign language. Speaking at a meeting of the parliamentary committee on education and science, she called on parents to exert their influence on the situation. For her part, Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonite advocated that Polish should become the most popular second foreign language in the country's schools instead of Russian [21]. Shimonite also noted that "there is a certain intoxication with Russian culture" in the republic.

The German Ministry of Education and Research [22] announced the suspension of all academic scientific collaboration with Russia. The Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of Spain joined this position, and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, in addition to freezing the relations at the administrative level, recommended the country's universities to refrain from cooperation with Russian universities. The ministry emphasized that "new projects should not be launched, and existing cooperation should be suspended for a while".

The Polish Ministry of Education and Science predictably joined the *canceling trend* [23]. In particular, cooperation within the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, near Moscow, and the International Center for Scientific and Technical Information was terminated. At the domestic level, nationalists waged a systemic terror campaign against the Polish Association of Russian Language Teachers which had organized a meeting of Russian language teachers in the Sedlec Secondary School. The conference presented new methods of teaching the Russian language.

The actual seizure of the school building at the Russian Embassy in Warsaw by the Polish authorities became a blatant act of lawlessness, contrary to all international diplomatic norms [24]. The police came to the school; later a representative of the embassy, Minister Counselor Andrei Ordash, arrived and

called the actions of the Polish authorities illegal. Earlier, the Polish Foreign Ministry had turned to government agencies with a request to file a case against “two real estate properties used not for diplomatic and consular purposes that are in illegal possession of Russia”. The first of the addresses specified was the school subordinated to the Russian embassy.

It is necessary to mention systemic and profound attempts of the countries of the collective West to isolate Russia from the world science, while hindering the scientific research on the territory of the Russian Federation itself at the same time.

In this case, the cancel culture apologists actively employed a whole range of defamation and discrimination measures. For example, Western scientists were forbidden to cooperate with Russian peers in the field of plant genetics. The International Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnologists, which was to be held from on May 25 - 31, 2022, was canceled in St. Petersburg; the in-person convention of the International Congress of Mathematics (ICM) was also canceled, and Russian mathematicians were excluded from participation. The event had been scheduled to be held in St. Petersburg and took 6 years to prepare.

It was announced that all sales and services of major world publishers have been suspended for Russian scientific organisations. The list of publishers includes ACS Publications, Apple Academic Press, Brill, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, De Gruyter, Elsevier, Emerald Publishing, Future Science Group, IOP Publishing, Karger Publishers, Springer Nature, The Geological Society, The Institution of Engineering and Technology, Thieme Group, Wolters Kluwer.

One of the two leading international scientific citation databases Web of Science, which provides information on publications and their citation in scientific journals, has become inaccessible for researchers from Russia. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) has excluded Russian universities from its ratings, and Cisco Webex web conferencing and webinar service has stopped servicing Russian clients.

The names of Russian scientists are excluded from publications in foreign scientific journals [25]. For example, Vadim Bataev, a leading researcher at the Laboratory of Molecular Spectroscopy, Chemistry Department, Moscow State University, was denied publication of his article in the international Journal of Molecular Structure.

Restrictions and discrimination certainly include the prohibition of access to research facilities for scientists from Russia. This contradicts a number of UN provisions that emphasize the importance of a joint scientific search in the interests of humanity.

Russian scientists have been denied access to a number of important scientific facilities in France [26], the LULI2000 laser facility at Ecole Polytechnique being one of the examples. Russia's representatives were excluded from the Antiproton and Ion Research in Europe project (FAIR).

The European XFEL which operates the world's largest X-ray free-electron laser built with Russia's participation, suspends existing projects with Russian scientists and has no plans to launch new ones.

The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) has indefinitely suspended Russia's status in the organization and banned the start of new projects with Russian institutes [27]. CERN scientists have terminated their participation in all scientific boards of institutes located in Russia. All conferences and other events organized jointly by CERN and Russian organizations were canceled.

The European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) revoked the licenses of Russian users and terminated bilateral cooperation with Russian meteorologists. The organization also stopped cooperation with Roshydromet (the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring) on data exchange and training.

The restrictions affected the sphere of distance education: the American educational platform Coursera and the British educational company Pearson have suspended their work in Russia [28].

The incident at the International Mathematics Olympiad (Oslo) is an example of direct discrimination against Russian citizens, when the silver medals of the Russian Federation representatives were given to somebody else. High-school students from Russia participated virtually, they won 3 gold and 3 silver medals, losing only to the team from China. Nevertheless, the second place in the overall score was given to schoolstudents from South Korea.

This example is not the only one. Students from Russia who won the European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad were removed from the overall score. Four girls from the Russian team scored the maximum number of points and won gold, but this was not indicated in the final ranking of the international competition.

The Czech Republic has become one of the most ardent countries in terms of *cancel culture*. In particular, students from Russia regularly face discrimination on the territory of the Czech Republic, including the requirement to leave classes, and public exposure to collective guilt (Prague University of Economics, Prague Technical University, Mendel University). The Czech Republic has limited the number of students from Russia who will be able to study in the country's higher education institutions – down to 15 students per institution.

Applicants to the Transport Department at the ČVUT (Czech Technical University) started receiving letters in spring 2022 stating that Russian citizens would not be allowed to take the entrance exams due to the sanctions. A student at the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic had returned to Russia before the start of the special military operation for health reasons. She was denied an opportunity to take her final exams on-line – as an explanation, she was given an official response that consisted of insults and an invitation to take part in anti-Russian actions.

Since 2022, the Czech Republic has been restricting the possibility to study technical specialties at universities for Russians. They are also discussing restrictions to be introduced for the so-called *unsafe majors* where the abuse of knowledge may be unsafe for international law, human rights and peace in general.

Some universities in the United States canceled internships for students from Russia, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) suspended applications for scholarships from Russian students. A Russian student at a university in Poland was threatened with expulsion for alleged non-payment, ignoring the fact that she had previously paid her tuition. The student also complained to journalists on a very biased attitude towards Russian citizens not only from other students, but from teachers either[29].

The discrimination against everything connected with Russia in the international theater and opera life is an undeniable symptom of *cancel culture*. The Covent Garden canceled the Bolshoi Theater's tour in London, La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera refused to work with opera singer Anna Netrebko.

The Prague State Opera canceled the staging of opera *Cherevichki* by Tchaikovsky under the pretext of the "imperial ideas" it contained [30]. The Polish National Opera canceled performances of Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov, and the decision was made at the national level to ban Russian music and plays. Specifically, philharmonic societies are no longer to play music by Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Dmitri Shostakovich, and theaters are not to stage works by Anton Chekhov and other Russian or Russia-related authors.

The Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse and the Konzerthaus in Vienna refused to work with Russian conductors Tugan Sokhiev and Theodor Kourtenzis, respectively. The Bord Gais Energy Theater (Dublin) suspended performances of the St Petersburg Ballet Theater.

Russian conductor Vladimir Spivakov was suspended from his duties as artistic director of the Festival International de Colmar (France), which he had led since 1989.

Carnegie Hall in New York canceled concerts by Valery Gergiev and Denis Matsuev. Gergiev's concerts at La Scala, Milan, and the Mariinsky Theater concerts under his direction at the Philharmonie de Paris were canceled. Gergiev was fired from his position as chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra. Italy's Teatro Arcimboldi canceled two shows of the ballet *Rasputin* with dancer Sergei Polunin. The Russian theater in Estonia fired the stage director Philip Los, who has Russian citizenship, for making statements against the background of the special operation on the Ukrainian territories and the sanctions, whereas the operasinger Elnara Shafigullina was fired by an e-mail notice without any specific comment in the Netherlands [30].

A special place in *cancel culture* is held by cases when Russian identity of an object is re-attributed and changed to a different one, for example, *Ukrainian*.

For example, the Russian ballet *Swan Lake* became Ukrainian in Lisbon (Portugal). The city posters announced the performance as Ukrainian, the word 'Russian' was replaced by 'Ukrainian', and the letters were painted in the Ukrainian national colors. The National Gallery (London) renamed a work by Edgar Degas from the series exhibited in museums around the world under the title *Russian Dancers*. The pastel is now shown on the Gallery's website with the caption *Ukrainian Dancers*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) changed the annotation to the painting *Red Sunset* by Arkhip Kuindzhi, which is on display in its collection. Kuindzhi is labeled as a Ukrainian artist; the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Amsterdam changed the origin of Russian painter Kazemir Malevich, listing him as

Ukrainian. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York changed the captions to the canvases painted by Ilya Repin, Ivan Aivazovsky and Arkhip Kuindzhi. From now on, these are works of art by “Ukrainian artists”.

It should be noted that such practices were considered as possible scenarios of cultural policy by the ideologists of Nazi Germany. For example, after the Anschluss of Austria, the Nazis offered the prominent composer Imre Kalman, who was ethnic Jew and lived in Vienna, to become an “honorary Aryan”, but Kalman refused the offer, and his works were banned for performance in a while.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, expressly prohibits any discriminatory actions against culture, particularly sanctions in this area [31].

Part two of Article 27 of the Declaration states that “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”, and part two emphasizes that “Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.”

Nevertheless, there are numerous instances of breach of the Declaration besides those already mentioned. The list can be continued by the called-off exhibition “*Russian Avant-garde: Revolution in Art*” in the Dutch Museum, and “*The Holy Family (Madonna with Beardless Joseph)*” from the collection of the State Hermitage Museum, which was supposed to be one of the important exhibits at The Credit Suisse Exhibition: Raphael at the National Gallery in London and was excluded from the list of participating works.

The Moscow Kremlin museums were to host “*The Golden Age of Vienna*”, an exhibition dedicated to Art Nouveau, the Vienna Secession. However, a number of Austrian museums refused to provide exhibits. A display devoted to the Trans-Siberian Railway was scheduled for July in York (UK), but the British side canceled the exhibition. The International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) suspended the accreditation of the Moscow International Film Festival and the Message to Man International Film Festival; the organizers of the 45th International Circus Festival in Monte Carlo refused to have participants from Russia.

Regional screenings of the 15th Sputnik Over Poland festival of Russian films were canceled, as well as the 16th festival was called-off in Warsaw.

While the Berlin International Film Festival excluded representatives of Russian agencies, delegations and persons “supporting the Kremlin” from the forum, the Cannes Film Festival refused to accept the Russian delegation precisely because of they are “Russian”, as did the Venice Film Festival. The Russian delegation of filmmakers was denied admission for the same reasons. Famous Russian writer Sergei Lukyanenko said that several projects for the screen adaptation of his novels were put on hold. It is known that the rights to the screen adaptation had been bought out by Netflix.

Works by four Russian composers – Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky and Glazunov – were removed from the final part listing of the Rodolfo Lipitzer International Violin Competition.

The World Federation of International Music Competitions excluded the International Tchaikovsky Competition from its membership, and the Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra in Wales decided not to perform some works by the Russian composer. The Youth Orchestra in Lindlar (Germany), was also banned by the city administration to perform Tchaikovsky's 2nd and 3rd Symphonies. Pyotr Tchaikovsky's opera "*The Maid of Orleans*" was removed from the St. Gallen music festival program (Switzerland).

Chubu Philharmonic Orchestra (Japan) replaced "*The Year 1812, Solemn Overture*" with Sibelius' symphonic poem "*Finlandia*". The concert of Russian organ-player Elena Privalova in Riga (Latvia) was canceled with the same reasons behind. According to Privalova herself, this happened due to a complaint received by the congregation of the Riga Old Church of St. Gertrude, where the concert was to take place. The essence of the complaint was that the musician had previously played a concert in Russia, so she was dangerous for the citizens of Riga. Even natural objects become victims of *cancel culture*. For example, the 198-year-old oak tree planted by the writer Ivan Turgenev was excluded from the international contest "European Tree of the Year".

The Sibelius International Violin Competition excluded Russian musicians who had already been selected from the list of participants, and international piano competitions in Ireland and Canada disinvited Russian musicians.

***Cancel culture* has shown itself not only in classical music, but musical pop culture also happened to be stained by discrimination to an overwhelming degree.**

The Eurovision organizers imposed a ban on the participation of the Russian Federation in 2022, made it impossible for Russians to vote for participants in the music contest, and Facebook and Instagram (outlawed in Russia) blocked Russians from accessing songs presented at the contest.

There are known cases of terminated contracts with Russian representatives of music labels (Clone Records), canceled concerts of popular Western performers (Rammstein, Till Lindemann), frustrated music festivals (Wild Mint), sanctions against music groups (Hands Up) and numerous instances against musicians and performers from Russia.

It is noteworthy that cancel Russian culture is prioritized over such cultural codes as the Holocaust which is *sacred* for the progressive Europeans and Western public, in general. For example, Dmitri Shostakovich's Babi Yar Symphony was removed from the poster of the Easter Beethoven Festival in Warsaw.

It should be said that cancel culture, in full accord with Foucault's and Arendt's predictions, has become an all-consuming strategy favored by prominent intellectuals and professionals whose competencies once suggested a moral basis and intellectual responsibility.

The famous American writer Stephen King, in a conversation with Russian pranksters V. Kuznetsov and A. Stolyarov, who introduced themselves as Vladimir Zelensky, suggested that all Russian writers should be *banned*, his books should no longer be published in Russia and movies based on his works must not be shown there any more. Resonating the pranksters that Russians must be banned as a nation, he replied, "Yes! And not only that". And when they prompted, "All those

Russian writers are nothing compared to you”, King responded by saying, “I think you are right. I think Russian writers need to shut up!”

Harvard and Stanford graduate, Slavic scholar, Pulitzer Prize finalist and American author Elif Batuman accused Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoevsky of colonialist sentiments.

French director Michel Hazanavicius changed the title of his comedy “Z” (*Comme Z*) to “*Final Cut*” (“*Coupe*”, in French), and the Russian cybersports team Virtus.pro was disqualified from a Dota 2 qualifier after Ivan “[Pure]” Moskalenko drew the letter Z on an in-game map.

A significant element of *cancel culture* is the isolation of Western information environment from any, especially media-related, sources of alternative viewpoints.

In a number of countries (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Montenegro, and Moldova) the possibility of viewing Russian TV and media, at least partially, was prohibited by law; three Russian state-run broadcasters were denied access to the airwaves at the EU level. Similar actions were taken by the U.S. and Canada.

There is a direct and obvious connection between the amplitude of cultural influence and *soft power*, related to Russia's agency at the global level, and the intensity of attempts to ban it.

The history of the Great Patriotic War with related monuments, musical works, historical sources, movie and game products is an undisputed leader in this rating.

Helsinki (Finland) dismantled the monument “*Worldwide Peace*” donated by the Soviet Union. Germany wanted to separate the remains of Soviet soldiers into those of Russians and Ukrainians. The German Hamburg War Graves Commission said it wanted to “*differentiate*” Soviet Union soldiers by their ethnicity.

Yuliya Prokhorova, who danced the Russian folk dance *Kalinka-Malinka* with the Russian flag at a rally of Ukrainians in Landshut, Bavaria, was interrogated and prosecuted in Germany.

This paper is not enough to consider the entire scope of discriminatory measures taken in sport against Russian citizens and athletes representing Russia. This would require a separate highly specialized study. Suffice is to say that practically all types of competitions in any sports on any continent were characterized with some sort of Russophobic outbursts within cancel culture.

This applies both to bans on the participation of Russian athletes in current competitions, and the revision of medal charts retroactively with the in absentia divestment of Russian athletes of their well-deserved awards, received in the past. Characteristically such restrictions take place even in a new area of competition, namely, cybersports. Discrimination is experienced not only in the course of competitions, but is actually built-in at the level of software distribution.

For example, the developers of the *Gotham Knights* computer game announced that it will not be translated into Russian, there will not be even subtitles. S.T.A.A.L.K.E.R. 2 treated their users with more *loyalty*: they removed the Russian

voiceover, leaving only subtitles. Bethesda (owned by Microsoft) removed the Russian localization from the Starfield game.

Cancel culture has shown its Russophobic character in Western attempts to damage the national identity of the Russian people, its traditions in the sphere of household culture.

Dozens of restaurants around the world have stopped serving Russian dishes as a sign of protest. Thus, more than 16 Michelin-starred restaurants in Europe and America have excluded borscht from their menus since the beginning of March.

The German supermarket chain Edeka has changed the name of its *Moscow-style* Plombières ice cream to *Kiev-style*. The company itself commented such a step as follows: “We can confirm that this is not a photo collage. The events in Ukraine continue to have a strong impact on us. It is important for us to continue with expressing our solidarity. And we are convinced that this can be shown even through small gestures.”

Even the catering industry has been affected by the changes in attribution. For example, U.S. bars are renaming cocktails with the word *Moscow* in their names (e.g. “Moscow Mule”) to *Kyiv Mule*, *Peace Mule*, *Ukrainian Mule* or *Snake Island Mule*.

The Estonian dairy farm Halinga Piimajõgi, whose cowsheds are traditionally named after major cities, renamed one of its stable from “*Moscow*” to “*Kiev*”.

Analyzing the data array related to specific instances of Russophobia and *cancel culture*, it is worth highlighting the irrationality of many forms of Russophobia as a separate feature of the process. Similar things were happening in human history during the Nazi regime in Germany, where the irrationality of xenophobia was commented on by George Orwell.

It is interesting that he studied the phenomenon on the territory of Great Britain, which means that antisemitism turned out to be an international phenomenon that revealed itself in the states very different in their political structures and pursuits.

In “Antisemitism in Britain” (1945), Orwell made attempts to understand the nature of the phenomenon, but admitted his failure [32].

“I have no hard-and-fast theory about the origins of antisemitism. The two current explanations, that it is due to economic causes, or on the other hand, that it is a legacy from the Middle Ages, seem to me unsatisfactory, though I admit that if one combines them they can be made to cover the facts. All I would say with confidence is that antisemitism is part of the larger problem of nationalism, which has not yet been seriously examined, and that the Jew is evidently a scapegoat, though *for what* he is a scapegoat we do not yet know,” Orwell concluded.

The writer, who actually defined the image and structure of totalitarianism for several generations, could only structure the features inherent in antisemitism, without attempts to determine their causality. The main conclusion is that antisemitism is an irrational “thing in itself”.

“The Jews are accused of specific offences (for instance, bad behaviour in food queues) which the person speaking feels strongly about, but it is obvious that these accusations merely rationalize some deep-rooted prejudice. To attempt to

counter them with facts and statistics is useless, and may sometimes be worse than useless. <...> people can remain antisemitic, or at least anti-Jewish, while being fully aware that their outlook is indefensible. If you dislike somebody, you dislike him and there is an end of it: your feelings are not made any better by a recital of his virtues,” Orwell wrote.

The creator of a civilization theory, sociologist Arnold Toynbee, considered the West's Russophobia to be historical. “The Russians incurred the hostility of the West through being obstinate adherents of an alien civilization, and, down to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, this Russian 'mark of the beast' was the Byzantine civilization of Eastern Orthodox Christianity,” the researcher wrote [33, p. 169].

However, as the problem is vast, complex, and deep-rooted, it would be wrong to link the nature of the 21-century Russophobia with denominational differences.

Here it will be appropriate to refer again to the mentioned article by Orwell, where personal observations of the writer, who surveyed a significant number of fellow-citizens about the nature of their antisemitism, are of some value. “[I]t is generally admitted that antisemitism is on the increase, that it has been greatly exacerbated by the war, and that humane and enlightened people are not immune to it,” Orwell writes.

The consistent implementation of *cancel culture* in Western countries which position themselves as consistent supporters of international law, is in clear contradiction to the letter and spirit of the fundamental documents in the sphere of humanitarian interstate relations, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted by General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI) of December 16, 1966), which states in Article 2 of Part II that each State “undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” [34]. This rule is clearly not respected with regard to Russians or even persons associated with them.

The provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [35], as well as a number of UN resolutions, such as “Inadmissibility of Certain Practices that contribute to fueling of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” (2005), are breached likewise. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation emphasized [36], this resolution, among other things, is directed against the glorification of Nazi and nationalist movements, including the Waffen-SS in a number of states.

Nevertheless, the provisions of this resolution are systematically ignored by the West, which goes hand in hand with Russophobia growing progressively worse.

In June 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation published an extensive report “On Violations of the Rights of Russian Citizens and Fellow Citizens”, indicating numerous cases of discrimination against Russian citizens and foreigners who sympathize Russia in various countries recorded by the Foreign Ministry [37].

The current *cancel culture* and Russophobia – in particular, due to its irrationality – can hardly be compared with anything except the antisemitism of the Third Reich, the phenomenon so deeply studied by Hannah Arendt.

Like antisemitism in Nazi Germany, Russophobia has embraced broad strata of Western society and become the “Russophobia of the masses”, the danger Arendt warned about. A number of episodes show how deeply this phenomenon has penetrated the middle-brow thinking. For example, a sign with a Russophobic inscription was seen on one of the buses running through the streets of Riga. It read that “seats for Russian speakers are only in the back of the bus”. A video made in a bank of Gothenburg, Sweden, appeared in the Internet: A bank employee asked a female visitor to leave the office because she was Russian. Cases were registered when Russian tourists suffered confiscation of cash euros “for safekeeping” at the border with Finland.

It is important to note that Russophobia has become not just a social norm in a number of regions, but a legally recorded standard of behavior, deviations from which entail legal consequences.

Thus, there were forty-six ‘Russian’ criminal cases registered in Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) from February 2022 to June 2023, seven of which were for public statements in support of Russia. Twenty criminal cases were filed by the police in Magdeburg, 16 in Dessau-Roslau, 11 in Stendal, and 6 in Halle.

One can draw certain regrettable analogies with the legislation that was implemented by Nazi Germany. Numerous cases when Russian citizens were and are being denied the right to check into hotels or evicted from rented housing bring to mind the German “Jewish Tenancy Law” which paved the ground for the relocation of all Jews to special houses (Judenhauser). The law was justified on the grounds that *Aryans* disapproved of co-residence with Jews. Germans who empathized with Jews were accused of betraying their own people, and those who deliberately helped Jews could be subjected to preventive arrest (Schutzhaft) and placement in a concentration camp.

It is fundamentally important that Orwell referred to the pseudo-rational basis of antisemitism in his article (Orwell emphasized that every radical antisemite considered himself to be a very rational person) linking it with the presence of Jews in the sale of food, clothing, etc., i.e. factors of an economic nature.

Think also of the unseasonably high inflation rate which negatively affects the people’s level of comfort and quality of life and remains currently the key problem for the West. At the same time, the leading Western media, speakers, opinion leaders are consistently broadcasting the idea that it is Russia and Russians who are to be blamed for all economic problems, inflation, etc.

It seems possible to predict that this trend will persist, and *cancel culture* inspired by the authorities of the collective West will imbue the mass consciousness deeper and deeper. This seems logical, since any xenophobia, especially that which takes such radical forms as antisemitism and Russophobia, has a common feature of a pronounced superiority complex over those who are considered to be “inferior people” or “subhumans”.

In this sense, it is logical that *cancel culture*, or, given the irrational nature of this phenomenon, the *cancel cult*, is closely linked to the revision of the World War II

results and the creeping rehabilitation of Nazism which is becoming self-evident in the West: From the refusal to condemn the glorification of Nazism from the UN General Assembly rostrum to the heroification of contemporary Nazis from the terrorist group Azov.

Conclusions

1. Russophobia has become a complex phenomenon with socio-psychological, cultural, and political dimensions in the twenty first century.
2. *Cancel culture* aimed at Russia and Russians can be correlated by a number of parameters with the repressive practices against the Jewish people in the first period of the Nazi dictatorship (1933 - 1938). There is good ground to speak about the semantic identity of antisemitism and modern Russophobia, which is confirmed both by examples of grassroots discrimination and the state policy of Western countries, down to repeating the notorious situation with the cutting off the scientific and cultural spheres from representatives of Russian culture and science.
3. The conceptual framework of the current events is formed on the basis of technologies of power in the postmodern society, where the repressive apparatus has a dispersed structure, in line with Michel Foucault's ideas, and developed information technologies allow to isolate the phenomena subject to *canceling* most tightly and quickly, ensuring effective control over the course and results of canceling.
4. The social-psychological profile of Russophobia shows many similarities with the phenomena that once characterized xenophobia in Nazi Germany and agrees with the phenomenon of totalitarian-oriented masses described by Hannah Arendt.
5. In a number of cases the emphasized irrationality of Russophobia gives it the features of an archaic social ritual, when any involvement with Russia and Russians is perceived as toxic, correlates with the breach of taboo and ritual impurity in archaic cults.
6. It is not only Russians who fall victims to Russophobia today, but also representatives of many other ethnicities, speaking the Russian language and sharing the values of Russian culture.
7. In the light of this, Russophobia poses a threat to both the Russian people and Russian citizens.

Russian Citizens' Attitude to "Cancel Cult"

On August 8 - 14, 2023, Russian Field, a social, political, and marketing study company, conducted a nationwide telephone survey addressing the topic of the *cancel Russia cult* abroad.

The sample size is 1600 respondents. The maximum margin of error for this sample with a 95% probability does not exceed 2.45%. The drawing is representative by gender and age within the Russian Federation and federal districts. The quality of data collection was controlled by audio recordings of the interviews.

The survey results demonstrated a negative attitude of Russians to *cancel culture (cult)*. Seventy seven percent of respondents expressed a negative attitude to bans and restrictions on the Russian Federation and its citizens abroad. The Russians show unanimity of opinion on this issue, regardless of their socio-demographic portrait.

Men and women expressed negative attitudes in the same proportion: 78% and 77% respectively. A negative attitude to the *cancel cult* was also observed among respondents of all age cohorts: 18-29 years old (72%), 30-44 years old (74%), 45-59 years old (79%), 60 + (82%).

The level of education had no effect on the respondents' opinion on the issue of bans and restrictions either. Both respondents with higher education (78%) and those without it (77%) were negative about them. The same situation was observed among the income-based groups: total family income below 40 thousand rubles (78%), 50-80 thousand rubles (80%), over 90 thousand rubles (79%).

Twelve percent of the respondents spoke positively about bans and restrictions. They were mainly men (13%), and respondents aged 30-44 years (15%).

The most common reasons why Russians have a negative attitude to the *cancel cult* are as follows:

- Damage to world culture, sports, economy, tourism, etc. – 33%;
- damage to Russia and its citizens – 17%;
- discrimination, violation of human rights and freedoms – 15%.

Another six percent of respondents noted the injustice and fallaciousness of such bans as the reason, and five percent called them a symptom of Russophobia.

There is a widespread opinion among those who positively perceive the restrictions against Russia that these measures have become an incentive for the development of Russia's industry (43% of respondents).

Thus, the data speaks for the consolidation of Russians as well as their general patriotic attitude towards cancel culture. The majority of respondents express a negative attitude to the restrictions and bans regardless of their gender, age, level of education and income. At the same time, a significant proportion of

Russians who have a positive attitude to restrictions see them as a new opportunity for the country's economic development.

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