

# Putin's Useful Idiots: Britain's Left, Right and Russia

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## Executive Summary

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- Over the past five years, there has been a marked tendency for European populists, from both the left and the right of the political spectrum, to establish connections with Vladimir Putin's Russia. Those on the right have done so because Putin is seen as standing up to the European Union and/or defending "traditional values" from the corrupting influence of liberalism. Those on the left have done so in part because their admiration for Russia survived the end of the Cold War and in part out of ideological folly: they see anybody who opposes Western imperialism as a strategic bedfellow.
- In the UK, individuals, movements, and parties on both sides of the political spectrum have deepened ties with Russia. Some individuals have praised Putin and voiced their support for Russia's actions in Ukraine; others have travelled to Moscow and elsewhere to participate in events organised by the Kremlin or Kremlin-backed organisations; yet more have appeared on Russia's propaganda networks. Some movements have even aligned themselves with Kremlin-backed organisations in Russia who hold views diametrically opposed to their own; this is particularly the case for left-leaning organisations in the UK, which have established ties with far-right movements in Russia.
- In an era when marginal individuals and parties in the UK are looking for greater influence and exposure, Russia makes for a frequent point of ideological convergence, and Putin makes for a deceptive and dangerous friend. But what does this mean for the UK? And what can other countries learn from this experience? There are a number of recommendations that follow from the conclusions this paper draws:
  - Activists, journalists, and politicians should point out the pro-Russian connections of individuals and parties across the political spectrum and challenge the credibility of these entities via political debates.
  - The personal and organisational connections of left- and right-wing politicians and parties and their Russian counterparts should be mapped across Europe.
  - As individuals and movements on the left and right grow in influence across Europe, the continent must wake up to their insidious means of funding.
  - Parliaments across Europe should amend current legislation or pass new legislation that forces politicians to declare all media appearances they make, whether they receive money for them or not.
  - Academics, commentators, and others should raise awareness in the West of the nature of the Russian regime.

## 1. Introduction

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When Russia seized Crimea in March 2014, one European state annexed the territory of another through military force for the first time since the Second World War. Vladimir Putin's behaviour broke what had seemed to be a very solid taboo, and one might have imagined that this would have been condemned across Britain's political spectrum.

Alas not. Instead, Russia's President found a ready-made supply of defenders, or at the very least apologists. They include those on the left who can be relied upon to stand up for the West's enemies whoever and wherever they may be, and those on the right who see Moscow as a defender of conservative values. Many on the left and right have not been bribed, blackmailed or otherwise cajoled, but instead have taken the positions they have because of misguided ideology. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the service of praising Putin and defending Moscow, the British left and right have grown increasingly close to their Russian counterparts. What is surprising is that in doing so they have grown increasingly close to each other. Indeed, on the issue of Russia, the similarities between the left and right so outweigh the differences that the latter are barely discernible.

The contradictions of this situation are as plain as day. Many of the arguments put forward by the right for supporting Putin focus on his having made Russia great (again) and his consistently high domestic approval ratings and stellar performances in elections. These arguments overlook the extent to which Putin's actions have actually made Russia weaker, that public opinion polls are unreliable in authoritarian states, and that elections are fixed and forged. The arguments put forward by the left are similarly flawed. The left opposes Western imperialism but does not recognise Russian imperialism; it opposes the "expansion" of NATO into Eastern and Central Europe but does not consider why the countries of this region might rather like the protection of a multinational military entity; it was at the forefront of the struggle for LGBT rights but supports a country that persecutes those of "non-traditional sexual orientations". The list goes on.

This is a situation of Russia's creation. When Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000 he established an international outreach policy for the Kremlin that followed the Soviet tradition of cultivating friendly movements. In contrast to the Cold War, during which the Soviet Union's behaviour was - officially, at least - guided by strict adherence to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the Kremlin now embraces a fluid approach to ideology. This allows it to embrace activists, groups and movements who, on the face of it, have contrasting and competing aims - from the far-left, through anti-globalists, and greens, to conservatives, nationalists, and the far-right, and everything in between - but who collectively exacerbate divides and dissension in the West and, unwittingly or otherwise, create an echo chamber of Kremlin support.

This policy paper explores the development of relations between the UK left- and right-wing and Russia. It does this through first exploring the deepening of relations at a European level, before looking specifically at the UK. It extrapolates beyond the UK experience to draw broader conclusions and make recommendations relevant to Europe and beyond.

## 2. Russia's Flirtations with Europe's Left and Right

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In December 2014, France's Front National party, founded by the right-wing Jean-Marie Le Pen, took 9.4 million Euros (£7.4 m) from the Moscow-based First Czech-Russian Bank. The loan made perfect sense. The Front National's leader, Marine Le Pen, has made no secret of her admiration for Vladimir Putin. Her party has links to senior Kremlin figures. In June 2013, Le Pen visited Moscow and met with Dmitry Rogozin, Deputy Prime Minister, and Sergey Naryshkin, then-Chairman of the State Duma and currently head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).<sup>1</sup> Rogozin had earlier, in 2008, helped to establish the Paris-based Institute of Democracy and Cooperation, an instrument of Russian soft power, where the British right-wing writer John Laughland is based.<sup>2</sup> For Russia, the loan was not an act of altruism. In the preceding May's elections for the European Parliament, Le Pen's party won an unprecedented 25 per cent of the vote in France, and the resulting 25 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) immediately formed a pro-Russia bloc. The loan not only helped consolidate the Front National's domestic support but has also been used to fuel Marine Le Pen's run for the French presidency, elections for which take place next year and for which she is (at the time of writing) polling in second place.

As disturbing as the Front National's loan may be, it is only the tip of the iceberg; Russia's behaviour is both more profound and more sinister. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union used "active measures" to sponsor sympathetic initiatives and organisations in the West, including pro-Moscow communist parties and their affiliates. Between its creation in 1930 and 1974, the Communist Party of Great Britain's daily *Morning Star* newspaper (it was initially known as the *Daily Worker* before being renamed in 1966) was bankrolled by the Kremlin with direct cash contributions;<sup>3</sup> from 1974 onwards, Moscow funnelled cash indirectly by placing a bulk order of 12,000 copies every day.<sup>4</sup> The Kremlin did not invent Europe's right and left parties, just as it did not invent the *Morning Star*, but in an analogous way Moscow is now lending them political and financial support, thereby boosting their prominence.

Since at least 2009, Moscow has actively cultivated links with Europe's right-wing parties, particularly in the east of the continent. Russia has established ties with Hungary's Jobbik, Slovakia's far-right People's Party, and Bulgaria's nationalist, anti-European Union (EU) Ataka movement. Here, political elites have become increasingly sympathetic to pro-Putin views and have promoted Moscow's economic and political interests in their respective countries. But it is not just in Eastern Europe that the Kremlin has been active, as the case of the Front National shows. Indeed, so extensive have the Kremlin's activities been, notes the Budapest-based Political Capital research institute, that it is now a "phenomenon seen all over Europe".<sup>5</sup> Over recent years, and certainly since 2014, Russia has also been cultivating (or, in some cases, reactivating) links with Europe's left-

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<sup>1</sup> Jourdan, S. and A. Stroganov, 'Quand la Russie flirte avec le FN' [When Russia flirts with FN], *Slate*, 16 July 2013, available at: <http://www.slate.fr/story/75047/russie-fn>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'Russia and Front National: Following the Money', *Anton Shekhovtsov's blog*, 2 May 2015, available at: <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/russia-and-front-national-following.html>, last visited 12 October 2016. Laughland is also a Trustee of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group, a left-leaning Oxford-based organisation that claims to monitor human rights in the 57 member states of the OSCE. See Aaronovitch, D., 'PR man to Europe's nastiest regimes', *The Guardian*, 30 November 2004, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/nov/30/pressandpublishing.marketingandpr>, last visited 12 October 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Platt, E., 'Inside the Morning Star, Britain's last communist newspaper', *New Statesmen*, 4 August 2015, available at: [www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/red-all-over-article](http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/red-all-over-article), last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Political Capital Institute, 'The Russian Connection', *Political Capital*, 14 March 2014, available at: [www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc\\_flash\\_report\\_russian\\_connection.pdf](http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc_flash_report_russian_connection.pdf), last visited: 12 October 2016, p. 2.

wing. Germany's Die Linke, the Polish Democratic Left Alliance, and the Communist Party of Greece all sent "independent observers" to Crimea in March 2014 to oversee the referendum there. Die Linke has gone further than most: in February 2015, some of its leaders delivered "humanitarian aid" to the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> In Greece, Syriza, which governs in coalition, has allied itself with the Kremlin on numerous issues, not least those relating to defence, energy, and foreign affairs.<sup>7</sup> In Spain, the left-wing Podemos party is broadly pro-Russian. Both the left and the right have, separately, reflected the Kremlin's world view in the European Parliament. In the case of the former, the radical left group European United Left/Nordic Green Left (led by Gabriele Zimmer of Die Linke) overwhelmingly project the Kremlin's worldview,<sup>8</sup> while in the case of the latter, the Europe of Nations and Freedoms group (led by Le Pen and Marcel de Graff of the Netherlands' Party for Freedom) are the chief culprits.

The marriage between extremist politicians in Europe and Russia is in part about ideology. Both the European and Russian right are united by their opposition to the EU and their promoting of their respective nationalisms. Since returning to the presidency for the third time in 2012, Putin has been busy promoting his vision for a Eurasian Union: a rival, alternative political bloc meant to encompass the now-independent Soviet republics, with Moscow rather than Brussels as the dominant pole. Similarly, the European and Russian left are united by their opposition to NATO's so-called "expansion" into Central and Eastern Europe as well as by their respective critiques of Western imperialism. Both the left and the right are also united by opportunity. On both ends of the political spectrum, Russia is exploiting the popular dissent against the post-Cold War international order. These same processes are playing out in the UK.

### 3. Russia and the UK Right

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Even before Russia's annexation of Crimea led to increased tension between the UK and Russia, the Kremlin was strengthening ties with the UK right-wing. Its chief tool for doing this was using the already-existing networks of prominent Russian nationalists and fascists. A case in point is Aleksandr Dugin. Dugin travelled around Europe in the early 1990s, meeting with representatives of the far-right and establishing connections with pan-European movements, in particular those who adhered to the theories of the New Right promoted by the French philosopher Alain de Benoist.<sup>9</sup> Dugin maintained these contacts through the 1990s, and as his prominence in the West increased (the media represented him as a leading conservative thinker whose views informed the development of a new Kremlin ideology), so did his popularity. When the British New Right was established in 2005 by the nationalists' Troy Southgate (who had previously been a member of several far-right movements, including the National Front) and Jonathan Bowden (formerly of the British National

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<sup>6</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'German Die Linke delegation visits right-wing terrorists in Eastern Ukraine', 19 February 2015, available at: [www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2015/02/german-die-linke-delegation-visits.html](http://www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2015/02/german-die-linke-delegation-visits.html), last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Krekó, P. and Lóránt Győri, 'Russia and the European Far Left', *Political Capital Institute*, N.D., available at:

<http://www.statecraft.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Peter%20Krekó%20Far%20Left%20definitive.pdf>, last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Krekó, P., Marie Macaulay, Csaba Molnár, and Lóránt Győri, 'Europe's New Pro-Putin Coalition: the Parties of "No"', *Institute of Modern Russia*, 3 August 2015, available at: [www.inrussia.org/en/analysis/world/2368-europes-new-pro-putin-coalition-the-parties-of-no](http://www.inrussia.org/en/analysis/world/2368-europes-new-pro-putin-coalition-the-parties-of-no), last visited: 12 October 2016

<sup>9</sup> Benoist's theories reanimated the European Liberation Front, the neo-fascist group that had earlier split from Oswald Moseley's British Union Movement, and Dugin's National Bolshevik Party (which he co-created with Eduard Limonov) subsequently joined after its creation in 1993. See Laruelle, M. 'Dangerous Liaisons? Eurasianism, European Far Right, and Putin's Russia' in Laruelle, M. (ed) *Eurasianism and the European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. 11-12.

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Party, or BNP), Dugin was invited to speak at its launch.<sup>10</sup> Later, in 2010, when the New Right established its own publishing house, Arktos, it began to translate Dugin's works into English.<sup>11</sup>

The connections made by Dugin and others over this period paved the way for the Kremlin in its search for right-wing allies abroad. As part of this search, Moscow has invited individuals from the UK right to monitor elections, speak at conferences, and otherwise undertake pro-Russian diplomacy. In doing so, the Kremlin has further entrenched connections between the UK and European far-right.

In 2011, the BNP's Nick Griffin was invited to Moscow by Citizens' Watch, a St. Petersburg-based Kremlin-backed non-governmental organisation, to observe the State Duma elections.<sup>12</sup> Others who participated in the observations included<sup>13</sup> Mateusz Piskorski, the far-right leader of Poland's pro-Russia Zmiana party; Anna Churdova, a Czech representative for the Netherlands-based International Expert Center for Electoral Systems who has previously said that elections in Azerbaijan meet "all the required [international] standards";<sup>14</sup> and, Johan Bäckman, a Finnish neo-Stalinist who does not recognise Estonia and Latvia as independent states.<sup>15</sup> Afterwards, Griffin announced that "Russian elections are much fairer than Britain's" because Russia does not engage in the "grotesquely unfair and undemocratic practices [that are seen] in the UK's electoral process".<sup>16</sup> Two years later, in November 2013, Griffin visited Moscow again. This time, he did so in order to attend a conference that he jointly hosted with Roberto Fiore, the head of Italy's far-right New Force.<sup>17</sup> At the conference, he spoke alongside Mikhail Kunetsov, the Russian nationalist and Orthodox Christian extremist.

If the ties between the British right and Russia were only embryonic in early 2014, then since the annexation of Crimea they have developed notably; the right-wing has been much more blasé in expressing their support for Russia and praising Putin. In March 2014, Nigel Farage, the then-leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and an MEP, named Russia's President as the world leader he most admires, and praised the "brilliant" way "he handled the whole Syria thing".<sup>18</sup> Diane James, Farage's short-lived successor as leader of UKIP, praised Putin in 2015 for his "nationalism" and also declared that she "admire[s]" him.<sup>19</sup> It is not only UKIP's leadership who have connections to the Kremlin; one of its members is Graham W. Phillips, the amateur-blogger-cum-gonzo-journalist who has spent much of the past two years working for the Kremlin's

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<sup>10</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'Aleksandr Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism: The New Right à la Russe', *Religion Compass*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (2009), pp. 697-716.

<sup>11</sup> Laruelle, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Eurasianism, European Far Right, and Putin's Russia', p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> The organisation's name, Гражданский контроль, can also be translated as 'Civil Control'. Although it shares the same name, it is distinct from the other, independent, St. Petersburg non-governmental organisation formed in 1992. The Kremlin's creation of a pro-government organisation with the same name as a long-established and admirable organisation is a classic form of disinformation. Since 30 December 2014, the independence Citizens' Watch has been classified as a "foreign-agent" by the Russian authorities. I am grateful to John Crowfoot for pointing this out.

<sup>13</sup> Regnum, 'Международные наблюдатели из Японии встретились с представителями российских НПО' ['International observers from Japan met with representatives of Russian NGOs'], *Regnum*, 30 November 2011, available at: [www.regnum.ru/news/1473462.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/1473462.html), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>14</sup> AZERNEWS, 'Czech observer says Azerbaijan's election preparation meets all requirements', *AZERNEWS*, 8 October 2013, available at: [www.azernews.az/nation/60439.html](http://www.azernews.az/nation/60439.html), last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'Pro-Russian extremists observe the illegitimate Crimean "referendum"', 17 March 2014, available at: <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/pro-russian-extremists-observe.html>, last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Griffin, N., 'Russian elections "much fairer than Britain's" - initial verdict from Nick Griffin', *British National Party*, 9 December 2012, available at: [www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/russian-elections-%E2%80%9Cmuch-fairer-britain%E2%80%99s%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-initial-verdict-nick-griffin](http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/russian-elections-%E2%80%9Cmuch-fairer-britain%E2%80%99s%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-initial-verdict-nick-griffin), last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>17</sup> British National Party Television, 'For those who cannot speak', *British National Party*, 7 September 2013, available at: <http://bnptv.org.uk/2013/12/for-those-who-cannot-speak/>, last visited: 12 October 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Press Association, 'Nigel Farage: I admire Vladimir Putin', *The Guardian*, 31 March 2014, available at: [www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/mar/31/farage-i-admire-putin](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/mar/31/farage-i-admire-putin), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Lyons, K., 'Ukip's new leader says she counts Vladimir Putin as a political hero', *The Guardian*, 18 September 2016, available at: [www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/sep/18/new-ukip-leader-says-she-counts-vladimir-putin-as-a-political-hero](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/sep/18/new-ukip-leader-says-she-counts-vladimir-putin-as-a-political-hero), last visited: 13 October 2016.

propaganda networks, apologising for Putin's behaviour, and supporting the pro-Russian separatist entities in eastern Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

Such sentiments within UKIP are best understood in the context of the party's main donor Arron Banks, an insurance entrepreneur who, the journalist Neil Barnett has noted, has "colourful links" to Russia.<sup>21</sup> In the early 2000s, the former Liberal Democrat MP Mike Hancock intervened in the Home Office's attempts to deport a Russian citizen, Ekaterina (Katya) Paderina, from the UK. Paderina subsequently become Banks' wife. MI5 later accused Hancock's parliamentary assistant, another Russian called Ekaterina (Katya) Zatuliveter, of being a Russian agent, although she was subsequently cleared in court.<sup>22</sup> Banks went on to bankroll the "LEAVE.EU" campaign during the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU and hired the US-based PR firm Goddard Gunster to provide strategic support;<sup>23</sup> the firm had earlier advised Russian President Boris Yeltsin in his 1996 re-election effort.

As 'LEAVE.EU' shows, Russia's influence has not solely been on existing movements and parties. In September 2014, Nick Griffin helped to establish a new pan-European political organisation called the Alliance for Peace and Freedom.<sup>24</sup> Headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, it is formed of right-wing politicians, is explicitly anti-NATO, and is deeply critical of the US's "warmongering" in Ukraine. In interviews, Griffin has insisted that the new organisation is funded exclusively by the European participants and their respective parties and that none of its sponsors is affiliated to Russia. He is, however, open to the possibility of the latter: "If someone offered you a pot of money," he rhetorically asked the *Financial Times* in 2015, "would you take it?"<sup>25</sup>

In March 2015, Griffin again travelled to Russia to participate in a conference. On this occasion, it was the International Russian Conservative Forum, held in St Petersburg. The Forum was organised by Yuri Lyubomirsky, a little-known Russian nationalist.<sup>26</sup> Many of Europe's leading far-right and anti-establishment parties, including UKIP, did not attend, and many of Russia's own far-right stayed away, including Dugin. Instead, there were people such as Udo Voigt, the former head of Germany's far-right National Democratic Party, and Georgios Epitideios from Greece's far-right Golden Dawn. Also there was James (Jim) Dowson, a Scottish anti-abortion activist who founded UK Life League in 1999, and who was a leading BNP campaigner until he quit the party in 2010. After leaving the BNP, he went on to establish the far-right Britain First, which he subsequently quit in 2014.<sup>27</sup> "In the west", Dowson decried, "we have been brainwashed to hate Vladimir

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<sup>20</sup> Phillips, Graham W., @GrahamWP\_UK, *Twitter*, 20 March 2015, available at: [https://twitter.com/grahanwp\\_uk/status/576405813130092544](https://twitter.com/grahanwp_uk/status/576405813130092544), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Barnett, N., 'Who Funded Brexit?' *The American Interest*, 26 July 2016, available at: <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/07/26/who-funded-brexit/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Goddard Gunster, 'LEAVE.EU Announces Campaign Strategist Firm Goddard Gunster For U.K. Referendum', *PR Newswire*, 24 September 2015, available at: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/leaveeu-announces-campaign-strategist-firm-goddard-gunster-for-uk-referendum-300148608.html>, last visited 13 October 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Alliance for Peace and Freedom, N.D., available at: <https://apfeurope.com/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Weaver, C., 'To Russia with love, from Europe's far-right fringe', *Financial Times*, 22 March 2015, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/556ed172-d0b9-11e4-982a-00144feab7de>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>26</sup> "Every European nation has had its time leading Europe and indeed the world," Griffin told the crowd of assembled Russian nationalists and their European sympathisers. "The Greeks. The Romans. The Spanish. The French. The Germans. The British. Every great people - except the Russians. And now it becomes historically Russia's turn." See Weaver, C., 'To Russia with love, from Europe's far-right fringe', *Financial Times*, 22 March 2015. For an overview of the conference, see 'Europe's far right flocks to Russia International conservative forum held in St. Petersburg', *Meduza.ru*, 24 March 2015, available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/03/24/europe-s-far-right-flocks-to-russia>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Dearden, L., 'Britain First founder Jim Dowson quits over mosque invasions and "racists and extremists"', *The Independent*, 28 July 2014, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-first-founder-jim-dowson-quits-over-mosque-invasions-and-racists-and-extremists-9632770.html>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

Putin ... [But] Vladimir Putin understands ... the west has been polluted by the virus of decadence, of liberalism, of homosexuality, of the destruction of the family."<sup>28</sup>

Since 2014, the Kremlin has invested significantly in new media aimed at influencing European public opinion and improving its international image, and the British right-wing have played a key role in this. The reorganisation of Russian state media in December 2013 created a powerful media holding company, Russia Today, that controls several television, radio, online and newspaper initiatives. The RT television channel (formerly known as Russia Today, and separate from the holding company), based in London, promotes right-wing figures; from March 2014 onwards, Nigel Farage made almost monthly appearances on the channel until July 2016 when he stepped down as leader of UKIP, after which he was rumoured to have been offered his own show.<sup>29</sup> UKIP MEPs, including Deputy Leader Paul Nuttall and Steven Woolfe, also frequently appear.

In August 2016, the Sputnik radio station, which is part of the Russia Today holding company, set up its first UK base in Edinburgh, Scotland. The executive producer of the station is Johanna Ross, an ardent Scottish nationalist who, like her employers, enjoys peddling conspiracy theories.<sup>30</sup> Prior to joining Sputnik, Ross worked at Russia Insider, a Moscow-based website run by the right-wing German-born commentator Charles Bausman (himself a regular on RT) and seemingly funded by Konstantin Malofeev, an oligarch and ideological bed-fellow of Aleksandr Dugin.<sup>31</sup> Malofeev is himself closely involved with Europe's right: he was instrumental in helping Jean-Marie Le Pen, former leader of the Front National, to obtain a £1.6 million loan from a Cyprus-based company close to the Russian state-run bank VEB Capital, in December 2014.<sup>32</sup>

## 4. Russia and the UK Left

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The trend with the right is repeated with the left, although this relationship is rather more complicated. The left's admiration for Russia survived the end of the Cold War undented, and so did the basic setting of its world view: the West, in particular the UK and the US, are to blame for the world's ills, and the rest of the world are their victims, including Russia. For much of the 2000s, the left's focus was on campaigning against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and promoting regimes that opposed Western power; frequently these were self-avowedly socialist and could be found in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela. Russia was a focus, to be sure, but not the primary focus. Russia also, from 2005 onwards, became one of the left's key facilitators; ever since the launch of Russia Today in the UK, the channel has sought out left-leaning figures to critique Western behaviour. Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party, and Seumas Milne, Corbyn's chief advisor,

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<sup>28</sup> Weaver, C., 'To Russia with love, from Europe's far-right fringe', *Financial Times*, 22 March 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Foster, P., 'Kremlin-backed broadcaster RT offers Nigel Farage his own show', *The Telegraph*, 7 September 2016, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/07/kremlin-backed-broadcaster-rt-offers-nigel-farage-his-own-show/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Tweedie, N., 'As Kremlin sets up propaganda HQ in (of all places) Edinburgh, are Putin's beauties on a secret mission to break up the UK?', *Daily Mail*, 10 August 2016, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3732324/As-Kremlin-sets-propaganda-HQ-places-Edinburgh-Putin-s-beauties-secret-mission-break-UK.html>, last visited: 13 October 2016. In an article for the Russia Direct website on the destruction of the Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 in July 2014, Ross (using her married name Ganyukova) wrote, "Seriously, where is the 'evidence' ? There is just as much evidence to suggest that it was the Ukrainian army who shot down the plane in the first place." See Ganyukova, J., 'Daily Mail: Leave Russia to Those Who Know What They're Talking About', *Russia Insider*, 12 May 2015, available at: <http://russia-insider.com/en/daily-mail-leave-russia-those-who-know-what-theyre-talking-about/r16667>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'Is Russia Insider sponsored by a Russian oligarch with the ties to the European far right?', *Stop Fake*, 23 November 2015, available at: <http://www.stopfake.org/en/is-russia-insider-sponsored-by-a-russian-oligarch-with-the-ties-to-the-european-far-right/>, last visited 13 October 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'Russia and Front National: Following the Money', *Anton Shekhovtsov's blog*, 2 May 2015. See also Mezzofiore, G., 'Former "London KGB agent" Yuri Kudimov "lent €2m to FN's Jean-Marie Le Pen"', *International Business Times*, 1 December 2014, available at: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/former-london-kgb-agent-yuri-kudimov-lent-2m-fns-jean-marie-le-pen-1477450>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

have both been perfectly happy to appear. Corbyn has even encouraged his supporters to watch the network. Amid the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, Corbyn tweeted, “Try Russia Today ... more objective on Libya than most.”<sup>33</sup> This began to change from late 2013 onwards, when Russia’s vocal opposition to the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine led it to become, once again, the focus of the left. It was at this time that George Galloway, the left-wing former MP for the Labour and Respect parties, was given his own show, *Sputnik: Orbiting the world with George Galloway*, on what by then had been rebranded RT.<sup>34</sup>

In October 2014, Ken Livingstone, the left-wing former Mayor of London and currently co-convenor of Labour’s foreign policy review, gave an interview to RT in which he justified Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as an act of self-defence against NATO.<sup>35</sup> In a line that could have come straight from the Kremlin, Livingstone argued, “You cannot blame Putin that this is a bit of a mess [the Ukraine crisis] going on there. This is an absolute tragedy, but it is not something planned and plotted by Putin. And that is the line being dished out from Washington and the British government.” He later emphasised, “Let’s make it clear, Russia did not destabilize Ukraine.” Livingstone, like others on the left, frequently treats Russia with considerably more warmth than he shows to Western countries that are the UK’s allies or to Western institutions of which the UK is a member.

And it is not just those associated with the Labour Party that have been invited on to RT. In the run-up to the referendum on Scottish independence in September 2014, Colin Fox of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) appeared regularly on the channel. So too did Tommy Sheridan, formerly of the SSP and currently of Solidarity. During the Cold War, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was bankrolled, via the Communist Party of Great Britain, by the KGB, the Soviet secret police.<sup>36</sup> And the link between the CND and Russia remains strong. Kate Hudson, the General Secretary of the CND, and Carol Turner, Chair of London’s regional CND, have both appeared on RT. The Stop the War Coalition, which sees Russia as a victim of American imperialism and which decries the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe, has also provided a steady stream of guests. A number of the organisation’s Patrons have appeared, including Diane Abbott, an MP and member of the Labour Party, and Mark Serwotka, who is also General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union. So too its Officers (Lindsey German, John Rees, Carol Turner, Andrew Murray and Chris Nineham) and Steering Committee (Shadia Edwards-Dashti, Abbas Edalat, Matthew Willgress, Joe Glenton and others).<sup>37</sup>

The empathy between the left and the Kremlin goes far beyond appearing on RT. In October 2014, Seumas Milne attended the Valdai International Discussion Club, held in Sochi.<sup>38</sup> Funded by the Kremlin, Valdai is an annual propaganda and ego-boosting event for Putin that was established in 2004. Milne had a rather prominent role: he opened the final session of the conference (entitled

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<sup>33</sup> Corbyn, Jeremy, @jeremycorbyn, *Twitter*, 26 April 2011, available at: <https://twitter.com/jeremycorbyn/status/62790355829002240?lang=en-gb>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>34</sup> The first episode can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpnBazy31lw>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Livingstone, K., ‘Ukraine is a dysfunctional country, not because of Russia’, *Russia Today*, 21 July 2014, available at: <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/174420-ukrainian-government-civil-war/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Murray, D., ‘CND cannot rewrite its own history’, *The Spectator*, 29 April 2013, available at: <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2013/04/cnd-cannot-rewrite-its-own-history/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Stop the War Coalition, ‘Stop the War Patrons, Officers and Steering Committee’, *Stop The War Coalition*, 9 May 2013, available at: <http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/about/stop-the-war-patrons-officers-steering-cttee>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Kremlin, ‘Meeting at the Valdai International Discussion Club’, *President of Russia*, 24 October 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

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'New Rules or No Rules in the Global Order') and moderated a discussion between Putin and former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin (for which, allegedly, he was paid by the Kremlin)<sup>39, 40</sup> Elsewhere, Milne has shown himself to be a horribly subservient admirer of Putin and apologist for the worst ills of the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup> Ken Livingstone, for his part, travelled to Moscow in 2015 to speak at a conference organised by RT to mark the channel's ten-year anniversary. Entitled 'Information, messages, politics: the shape-shifting powers of today's world', Livingstone spoke about 'Frenemies: defining foes and allies in proxy politics'.<sup>42</sup>

By endorsing and condoning Putin, the left is not just making the West's enemy their friend; they are also allying with the right. In foreign policy, Jeremy Corbyn, Seumas Milne, Lindsey German and those who go along with them stand with Nick Griffin, Nigel Farage, James Dowson and their ilk. Even more concerning, the left also stands with the Russian right, and the far-right in particular.

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## 5. Russia's Right and the UK's Left

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In June 2014, more than 150 people packed into a room at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London,<sup>43</sup> to attend the launch of the left-wing campaign movement 'Solidarity with Antifascist Resistance in Ukraine'.<sup>44</sup> The event included a broad discussion of issues related to the ongoing Ukraine crisis, and the speakers at the event were drawn from the usual left-wing circles: there was Richard Brenner from the revolutionary communist Workers Power organisation; Lindsey German from Stop the War; Andrew Murray from the Communist Party of Britain;<sup>45</sup> and Alan Woods from Socialist Appeal and the International Marxist Tendency. All the speakers, that is, apart from one: Boris Kagarlitsky from the Moscow-based Institute for Globalisation and Social Movements, who spoke via Skype.<sup>46</sup>

Two months later, on 27 August 2014, Stop the War organised a rally for Kagarlitsky in London. Entitled 'On the eve of the NATO summit, how to stop the spread of war', Kagarlitsky used to opportunity to dismiss the overwhelming evidence that suggested pro-Russian rebels had been responsible for the destruction of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, killing 298 people over eastern

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<sup>39</sup> Edwardes, C., 'Seumas Milne: Labour spin doctor, political firebrand and Jeremy Corbyn's guardian angel', *Evening Standard*, 2 December 2015, available at: <http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/london-life/seumas-milne-political-firebrand-and-corbyns-guardian-angel-a3128121.html>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Walters, S. and Will Stewart, 'Red handed! Photograph shows Jeremy Corbyn's pro-Kremlin spin chief held in Putin's iron grip at propaganda summit', *Evening Standard*, 1 November 2015, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3298550/Red-handed-Photograph-shows-Jeremy-Corbyn-s-pro-Kremlin-spin-chief-held-Putin-s-iron-grip-propaganda-summit.html#ixzz4K1w6Y7vc>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>41</sup> In an article for *The Guardian* in 2006, Milne argued, "For all its brutalities and failures, communism in the Soviet Union, eastern Europe and elsewhere delivered rapid industrialisation, mass education, job security and huge advances in social and gender equality. It encompassed genuine idealism and ... provided a powerful counterweight to western global domination." See Milne, S., 'Communism may be dead, but clearly not dead enough', *The Guardian*, 16 February 2006, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/Columnists/Column/0,,1710891,00.html>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>42</sup> 'International Conference: Information, messages, politics: the shape-shifting powers of today's world', RT, 10 December 2015, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr16p-5KPSg>, last visited: 17 October 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Ukraine Antifascist Solidarity, 'Campaign launch meeting in London, June 2nd', *Ukraine Antifascist Solidarity*, 25 May 2014, available at: <https://ukraiantifascistsolidarity.wordpress.com/2014/05/25/campaign-launch-meeting-in-london-june-2nd/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Murray is an apologist for Joseph Stalin. Writing in 1999 in the *Morning Star*, he argued, "His career is the subject of a vast and ever-expanding literature. Read it all and, at the end, you are still left paying your money and taking your choice. A socialist system embracing a third of the world and the defeat of Nazi Germany on the one hand. On the other, all accompanied by harsh measures imposed by a one-party regime. Nevertheless, if you believe that the worst crimes visited on humanity ... have been caused by imperialism, then [Stalin's birthday] might at least be a moment to ponder why the authors of those crimes and their hack propagandists abominate the name of Stalin beyond all others. It was after all, Stalin's best-known critic, Nikita Khrushchev, who remarked in 1956 that, 'against imperialists, we are all Stalinist.'" See Mosbacher, M., 'Putin has his Useful Idiots on the Left and the Right', *Standpoint*, July / August 2014, available at: <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/5641/full>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Stand for Peace, 'Stop the War Coalition invites Kremlin-funded far-Right academic to discuss Ukraine', *Stand for Peace*, 22 August 2014, available at: <http://standforpeace.org.uk/stop-the-war-coalition-invites-kremlin-funded-far-right-academic-to-discuss-ukraine/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

Ukraine. Four days later, Stop the War hosted Kagarlitsky at a 'No to NATO' summit in Cardiff, in which he attacked Western media "lies" about Russia's role in Ukraine. "Don't believe what they're saying, that Russian troops are there", he said, "They are not". Kagarlitsky spoke at a third Stop the War rally on 25 October 2014, in London, alongside Jeremy Corbyn and Seumas Milne.

Solidarity with Antifascist Resistance in Ukraine and Stop the War are not alone in giving a platform to Kagarlitsky. He has also been assiduously promoted by Counterfire, a leftist organisation established in 2010 by Lindsey German,<sup>47</sup> and by the left-wing Canary website,<sup>48</sup> whose editor, Kerryanne Mendoza, is a regular guest on RT.<sup>49</sup> Kagarlitsky has also written in the *Weekly Worker*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Britain.<sup>50</sup>

Kagarlitsky may like to associate himself with the left in Britain, but in Russia he keeps rather different company.<sup>51</sup> Russian investigative journalists have established that Kagarlitsky has been cooperating with the Kremlin since at least 2005.<sup>52</sup> His task has been to help control the Russian left-wing movement outside the sphere of influence of the Communist Party (which is itself controlled by the Kremlin). As the academic Anton Shekhovtsov has documented, Kagarlitsky is also closely involved with a number of far-right movements. He has spoken at events hosted by the Florian Geyer Club, a right-wing Russian movement founded by three notorious extremists, of whom two were once members of the neo-Nazi "Black Order of the SS".<sup>53</sup> The Club is headed by Russian right-wing Islamist Geydar Dzhemal, who is a close friend of Aleksandr Dugin (with whom Kagarlitsky has also shared a platform<sup>54</sup>). Kagarlitsky frequently organises and participates in conferences that are almost exclusively attended by the far-right.

In July 2014, Kagarlitsky's Institute for Globalisation and Social Movements, which is partly funded by the Kremlin,<sup>55</sup> organised one such conference in recently annexed Crimea, entitled "The world crisis and the conflict in Ukraine".<sup>56</sup> The conference was co-organised with the ultranationalist *Novaya Rus* (New Russia) group, headed by the fascist Aleksey Anpilov.<sup>57</sup> The conference saw Russian fascists and ultranationalists fete, among others, Richard Brenner and Alan Freeman.<sup>58</sup> Freeman is a member of Socialist Action and a supporter of Brenner's Solidarity with Antifascist

<sup>47</sup> Ismail, F., 'Ukraine's uprising against Nato, neoliberals and oligarchs - an interview with Boris Kagarlitsky', *Counterfire*, 8 September 2014, available at: <http://www.counterfire.org/interview/17422-ukraine-s-uprising-against-nato-neoliberals-and-oligarchs-an-interview-with-boris-kagarlitsky>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Sykes, E., 'This is the cynical way Putin is maintaining his grip on power', *The Canary*, 7 February 2016, available at: <http://www.thecanary.co/2016/02/07/cynical-way-putin-maintaining-grip-power/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Bloodworth, J., 'Beware those critics that prefer Putin's propaganda to the BBC', *International Business Times*, 9 May 2016, available at: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/beware-those-critics-that-prefer-putins-propaganda-bbc-1559123>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>50</sup> *Weekly Worker*, 'Boris Kagarlitsky', *Weekly Worker*, N.D., available at: <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/authors/boris-kagarlitsky/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., 'Boris Kagarlitsky, a Kremlin's mole in the leftist movement (updated)', 9 September 2014, available at: [www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/boris-kagarlitsky-kremlins-mole-in.html](http://www.anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/boris-kagarlitsky-kremlins-mole-in.html), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Stringer, 'Продаются левые. Дешево.' ['Sold left. Cheap.'], *Stringer*, 19 March 2009, available at: <http://stringer-news.com/publication.mhtml?Part=48&PubID=10989>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Umland, A., 'New Extremely Right-Wing Intellectual Circles in Russia (II)' *Geopolitika*, 16 August 2013, available at: <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=6188>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Proyect, L., 'Is Russia imperialist? A reply to Roger Annis and Sam Williams', *Louis Proyect: The Unrepentant Marxist*, 22 June 2014, available at: <https://louisproyect.org/2014/06/22/is-russia-imperialist-a-reply-to-roger-annis-and-sam-williams/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Rubin, M. and F. Rustamov, 'И «Нашим», и «агентам»' ['And "our", and "agents"'], *RBC*, 20 June 2014, available at: <http://www.rbc.ru/newspaper/2014/06/20/56be6f639a7947299f72ccc9>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Nugent, C., 'A Popular Front for Russian Nationalism', *Workers' Liberty*, 23 July 2014, available at: <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2014/07/23/popular-front-russian-nationalism>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Alliance For Workers Liberty, 'Another Yalta conference', *Workers' Liberty*, 29 August 2014, available at: <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/23635>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Both Brenner and Freeman put their names to the conference's declaration, which argued, "They [Ukraine's provisional government, which came to power in February 2014] aim to open Ukraine up to investment for international finance and capital. The US also aims to further its long-standing project of countering Russia's power in the Eurasian region by its drawing neighbouring countries into the orbit of NATO. This can only further destabilize the region." See 'A Popular Front for Russian Nationalism', *Workers Liberty*, 23 July 2014.

Resistance in Ukraine campaign.<sup>59</sup> After working for the Greater London Authority for more than a decade during Ken Livingstone's time as London mayor,<sup>60</sup> he set up an initiative called the Geopolitical Economy Research Group.<sup>61</sup> Based in Canada, the Group invited Kagarlitsky to give a keynote lecture at its inaugural annual conference in September 2015.<sup>62</sup>

Anpilogov's *Novaya Rus* later held a second conference called 'Russia, Ukraine, New Russia: global problems and challenges'.<sup>63</sup> This event dispensed with the left-wing decoration and invited international fascists such as Luc Michel from Belgium's National-European Communist Party; Márton Gyöngyösi from Jobbik; Mateusz Piskorski from Poland's Samoobrona; and Nick Griffin.<sup>64</sup>

The Solidarity with Antifascist Resistance in Ukraine campaign is not the only pacifist and anti-imperialist movement to have aligned itself with the Russian far-right. Stop the War has too, in its case with the Anti-Globalisation Movement of Russia. Described by Chatham House's Orysa Lutsevych as a "key actor" in Russia's international "soft power" efforts,<sup>65</sup> the Movement is supported by the Russian National Welfare Fund, an initiative created in 1999 by Putin and which has provided it with significant funding since 2014.<sup>66</sup> Headed by the Russian nationalist Alexander Ionov, it counts Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as its only two Honourable Members.<sup>67</sup> Stop the War is, according to the Movement, one of its 14 Russian and nine foreign "partners".<sup>68</sup>

The Movement, which has offered support and legal advice to Scottish nationalists who claim that the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence from the UK was rigged, organises publicity campaigns against the West and hosts an annual conference in Moscow.<sup>69</sup> Its 2015 conference was held on the topic of "self-determination and independence" and representatives of various secessionist movements were invited, from those of 'Novorossiya' to those of Hawaii, Catalonia and Puerto Rico. The SSP were invited but did not attend, nor the Scottish activists Unilateral Declaration of Independence. But Republican Sinn Féin, the Irish party, did send a representative: Diarmuid Mac Dubhglais. Dubhglais has previously been active with the Socialist Fight movement,<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Socialist Resistance, 'The imperialist carve-up of Ukraine: where does the left and anti-war movement stand?', *Socialist Resistance*, 8 August 2014, available at: [www.socialistresistance.org/the-imperialist-carve-up-of-ukraine-where-does-the-left-and-anti-war-movement-stand/6613](http://www.socialistresistance.org/the-imperialist-carve-up-of-ukraine-where-does-the-left-and-anti-war-movement-stand/6613), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Geopolitical Economy Research Group, 'Director Alan Freeman', *Geopolitical Economy Research Group*, N.D., available at: <http://geopoliticeconomy.ca/people/alan-freeman/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>61</sup> See '2015 GERG Conference Photos', *Geopolitical Economy Research Group*, N.D., available at: <http://gergconference.ca/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>62</sup> See '2015 GERG Conference Photos', *Geopolitical Economy Research Group*, N.D.

<sup>63</sup> Alliance for Workers Liberty, 'Another Yalta conference', *Workers' Liberty*, 29 August 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Shekhovtsov, A., '19/84! Russian and European fascists reverse the 1945 Yalta Conference', *Anton Shekhovtsov's blog*, 28 August 2014, available at: <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.co.uk/2014/08/1984-russian-and-european-fascists.html>, last visited: 13 October 2016. See also Coatesy, T., 'Allegations of link-up between Socialist Action, Workers Power and Russian Far-Right', *TendanCoatesy.wordpress.com*, 30 August 2014, available at: <https://tendancoatesy.wordpress.com/2014/08/30/allegations-of-link-up-between-socialist-action-workers-power-and-russian-far-right/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Lutsevych, O. 'Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood', *Chatham House*, April 2016, available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/research/2016-04-14-agents-russian-world-lutsevych.pdf>, last visited: 17 October 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Beard, N., 'Global separatist groups meet up in Moscow - but no one criticises Russia', *The Independent*, 20 September 2015, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/global-separatist-groups-meet-up-in-moscow-but-no-one-criticises-russia-10510344.html>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>67</sup> The Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia, N.D., available at: [http://anti-global.ru/?page\\_id=160&lang=en](http://anti-global.ru/?page_id=160&lang=en), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>68</sup> The Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia, 'Our Partners', N.D., available at: [http://anti-global.ru/?page\\_id=10564&lang=en](http://anti-global.ru/?page_id=10564&lang=en), last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Gilligan, A. 'Stop the War linked to Putin puppets', *The Sunday Times*, 16 October 2016, available at: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/stop-the-war-linked-to-putin-puppets-s6fdwq968>, last visited: 18 October 2016.

<sup>70</sup> Socialist Fight, 'Speech by Diarmuid Mac Dubhglais RSF', *Socialist Fight*, 10 April 2013, available at: <https://socialistfight.com/2013/04/10/speech-by-diarmuid-mac-dubhglais-rsf/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

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which counts John McDonnell, the Deputy Leader of the Labour party, as a supporter.<sup>71</sup> Sinn Féin's support was not a one-off: Mac Dubhglais also attended the Movement's second annual conference in 2016.<sup>72</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

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Those individuals and parties on the left and right of the political spectrum in the UK who are inherently, and variously, critical of the US, the EU, liberalism or multiculturalism, ceased to be mere critics after Russia launched its war with Ukraine in 2014. Instead, they were seen by the Kremlin as important tools in its programme of "active measures"; they were engaged by Russian state-owned media, not least RT and Sputnik, in order to give their views credibility and visibility. Some became defenders of, and apologists for, Vladimir Putin. This was not a wholly one-sided relationship. For the individuals and the parties themselves, Russia's friendship was a strong asset. After all, many had up to that point rarely enjoyed the luxury of high-level diplomatic support.

Many of those on the extremes of the political spectrum, particularly the left, have appeared on RT. If they received appearance fees, then they have also taken money from the Kremlin, thereby establishing financial links between themselves, their organisations and Moscow. Similar connections existed during the Cold War, of course. There is, however, a danger in making too much of these appearances, for it amplifies the minor impact these outlets have in the UK. According to the latest data released by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB), for the week of 3 October 2016 to 9 October 2016, RT's average daily reach in the UK was 194,000 people, or just 0.33 per cent of the viewing public.<sup>73</sup> By exaggerating RT's importance, an impression is given that what it says actually matters: it does (and Ofcom, the regulator, has shown a willingness to investigate RT when it lies or distorts the truth), but not in the way that is implied.

The more disturbing issue is the extent to which figures in the UK have established connections with individuals and entities in Russia. By travelling to Russia, participating in election monitoring or discussions at the Valdai Club, speaking at conferences organised by pro-Kremlin organisations, or meeting with high-ranking Russian officials, individuals are frequently (though not always) acting against not only the UK's national interests but also their own. This is especially true in the case of the left, which has grown close to the far-right in Russia. And the Kremlin, for its part, has amplified such connections both for its own power projection and to exacerbate divides and dissent in the West. Ideological slippage is not sufficient to explain this, nor overlapping or shared interests. As in Europe, the root causes of populism in the UK – economic insecurity, the rise of tabloid politics, immigration – need to be tackled, but it is possible to do this within mainstream politics and without allying with a grotesquely corrupt and murderous regime.

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<sup>71</sup> Socialist Fight, 'Public Speakers', *Socialist Fight*, N.D., available at: <https://socialistfight.com/public-speakers/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>72</sup> Lally, C. and Colin Cortbus, 'Republican Sinn Féin to send delegate to Moscow conference', *The Irish Times*, 24 September 2016, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/republican-sinn-f%C3%A9in-to-send-delegate-to-moscow-conference-1.2803539>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

<sup>73</sup> BARB 'Weekly viewing summary, 12-18 Sep', *Broadcasters' Audience Research Board*, available at: <http://www.barb.co.uk/viewing-data/weekly-viewing-summary/>, last visited: 13 October 2016.

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## 7. Recommendations

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There is no silver bullet available to solve this problem. Individuals and entities on the UK's political margins, as with those on Europe's political margins, have frequently over the past century looked to despotic regimes abroad for greater exposure and support. A combination of actions by government, concerned citizens and journalists can help fashion a response, but the fundamental problem will likely remain. That being said, there are a number of recommendations that follow from the conclusions this policy paper has drawn:

- **Activists, journalists and politicians should point out the pro-Russian connections of individuals and parties on the left and right of the political spectrum and challenge the credibility of these entities via political debates.** For those on the left, the contradiction of preaching peace and equality at home while supporting an aggressive kleptocracy abroad should be publicised and responded to. Similarly, those on the right should have their belief challenged that Putin is a successful president because he “does what is in Russia's interests”. Those on the left and right should be held to account by activists, journalists and politicians for their insouciance towards Putin and Russia.
- **The personal and organisational connections of left- and right-wing parties and their Russian counterparts should be mapped across Europe.** During the Cold War, the KGB played a key role in establishing networks of sympathetic individuals and organisations abroad in order to use them for active measures. Such “comrade networks” likely still exist, and where they do not they are likely to have been created. As such, there is a need to assess in more detail the extent and implications of these connections. Funding should therefore be directed to research centres for this purpose.
- **As movements on the left and right grow in influence across Europe, the continent must wake up to their insidious means of funding.** The Kremlin discovered long ago that the Western political system is weak and susceptible to money. Putin has always believed that European politicians, like Russian ones, can be bought if the money is right. The Panama Papers leak shows that that an international consortium of activists, journalists and civil-society actors can be extremely effective in confronting corruption. A similar approach is needed to uncover Russia's funding of political movements and parties in Europe.
- **Parliaments should amend current legislation or pass new legislation that forces politicians to declare all media appearances they make, whether they receive money for them or not.** One of the most obvious ways that European politicians show their support for Russia is by appearing on its state-run propaganda networks. Often politicians, unless they receive monies for these appearances or unless those monies are above a certain value, do not have to declare these appearances to their own parliaments. This should be changed so that all media appearances, paid or unpaid, must be declared. And this should apply to all media outlets, not only those owned by the Russian state.
- **Academics, commentators, and others should raise awareness in the West of the nature of the Russian regime.** Outside of the expert community, there is a general lack of awareness of the Russian regime's use of selective terror and its criminality – the

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regime's dubious origins in the 1999 apartment bombings; its involvement in the murder of people like Anna Politkovskaya, Sergei Magnitsky, and Boris Nemtsov; its military tactics in Syria. By raising these points widely and vigorously, academics, commentators, and others can do a lot to discredit Russia's efforts to increase its influence in the West.

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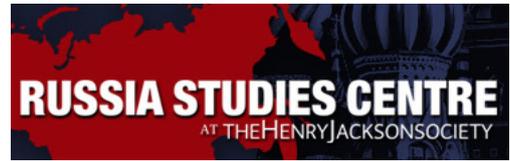
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